

# Political factors affecting education



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“ Education is the most important shared experienced in our lives it is so important and so all-pervasive that it is almost impossible to define. Education will not supply all the answers to the problems that beset us, either as individuals or as a nation, but if we set about it the right way, it is the best single means of promoting intellectual, moral, physical and economic wellbeing” (Aldrich 1996 ). Education teaches us the joy of learning and gives us the qualifications for employment, which builds confidence and self esteem and gives us the skills and values to meet the demands of a fast changing worlds and society. (Estelle 2001 quoted in Chitty, C 2009). As education meet the demands of society so society is itself is a product of that knowledge or education which informs societal attitudes towards life and its problems, the value it attaches to the things of the world in general, the place of man in the universe in particular and the norm sets to which our thoughts and behavior must conform.

The two contrasting regions of Peshawar and Khyber Agency in Pakistan have been selected for critical analysis and evaluation of the impact of varying social and political forces on the provision and type of education available in each area. Peshawar is a large city having a population of 2. 9 million in 2005. The population is growing by 3. 2 % annually and this growth rate is higher than most other Pakistani cities (Hayat 2006). Peshawar’s residents consist mainly of Pashtoon people with Hindkowan as the minority group. Languages such as Pashto, Persian, Urdu, Khowar, Dari, Hindko, Saraiki and Punjabi are spoken in Peshawar. Peshawar can be sub-divided into two distinct regions, namely the urban region, which accounts for 51. 32 % of the population, and the rural area with holds the remaining 48. 68 % of

the population. The population had increased two fold in the previous two decades. (Gaffar 2005) . The area of Peshawar district extends from Warsak north to south Matani, a distance of over 30 miles, and 18 miles from Hayatabad east to Taro Jaba in the west. It is located at an altitude of 1138ft above sea level. Most of the city's dwellers are Muslims with some Hindus, Sikhs and Christians minorities. Historically Peshawar was the centre of the Indus civilization and home to many other communities like Bukharan Jews and Zoroastrians (Arbab 2000).

The second area to be evaluated is that of Khyber Agency. Khyber Agency is a Federally Administered Tribal area of Pakistan. It encompasses an area ranging from Tirah valley to the Peshawar district. It borders Afghanistan to the East, Orakzai Agency to the north and Peshawar to the west. There are four main tribes the Mullagori, Shalmani, Shinwari and Afridi in Khyber Agency. According to 2007 estimates, Khyber Agency had a literacy rate of 34. 2%. In world literacy rankings, Pakistan is listed as 160th of 177 countries, with an overall literacy rate of 49. 9 %( Noreen 2008).

The reason for selecting these Peshawar and Khyber Agency is that, whilst they are geographically close, they demonstrate clear differences in the type and standard of education they provide. These differences can, therefore, be usefully evaluated in terms of the social and political forces acting upon them. One such significant factor, is that Khyber agency has become a focal point for the war against terrorism which, this paper will argue, has been a dominant cause in the deterioration of the education system in that region.

Before analyzing and evaluating the provision of education by the state, it is a matter to be taken in notice that high regard is accorded to education in Pakistan is enshrined in the constitution with education on the agreed legislative list of the central and provincial government. The 1973 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan recognizes the importance of education and says that the state shall:

1. Encourage unity and observance of the Islamic moral standards
  2. Endorse with special care the educational and economic interests of backward areas.
  3. Eradicate illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education.
  4. Make technical and professional education generally available and higher education accessible to all on the basis of merit.
  5. Enable the people of different areas, through education, training, agriculture and industrial development and other methods, to participate fully in all forms of national activities including employment in the services of Pakistan.
  6. Ensure full participation of women in all the spheres of national life
- (National education policy 2010)

In many developed countries of the world the school system has been divided into the state school and private school sectors. The commentators Adonis and Pollard have recently complained that the education system in England is based on a division between state and private (so – called ‘ public ‘) schools with prestige and resources going mainly to the later rather than to the former (Adonis, A and Pollard S 1998). Like Great Britain, education

system in Pakistan is also divided into state and private school. The existing state school systems in both Peshawar and Khyber agency are almost the same as that are provided in the rest of Pakistan. In Peshawar and Khyber agency, however, the school system has a further sub-division having state schools, private schools and madrassa schools. Private schools are considered schools for the upper classes, entry to which are generally limited to students from rich families, whilst state schools are generally for lower, middle class people. Madrassa, however, are for those children from lower class family backgrounds who do not have an access to any of the above mentioned schools for a variety of reasons; a key factor being accessibility. The students of madrassa depend solely on charities provided by the general public. In Peshawar only 4.6 million students are enrolled in the Public Sector, Private Sector and Madrassa. The remaining 2.8 million children have no access to formal education (Hussein 2007). Average dropout rates up to Matriculation level are at 38% annually. There are many factors that impact on the drop out including access problems, social and cultural issues particularly among females, poverty, ignorance, lack of financial resources, (with government and families) corporal punishment and so on. More than half of the children in Peshawar drop out of school before completing the fifth grade. On average, females remain in school for 1.3 years and males for 3.8 years. (Sohrab 2007)

The education system in both areas is broadly divided into three stages namely; Primary, Secondary and Higher education. The pre school stage is introduced for children less than 5 years old and is further divided into three stages, play group, Nursery and Kinder Garden. Students progress from

Primary schools to Middle schools and then High school. After completing High school (SSC), successful students progress to college, and is called Higher Secondary State Education (HSSC). After Primary Education, unisex education is the communities preferred choice but co-education does exist in Private Institution in Peshawar although not in Khyber Agency. The curriculum is usually designed by the federal curriculum bureau in Islamabad with prominent educationalists setting the objectives of the curriculum. Every province has its own text book boards who implement the curriculum made by the federal curriculum bureau. The provincial text book board has limited authority but can make some changes to the curriculum, subject to the approval of federal curriculum bureau. The provincial text book board conducts and monitors exams through different exam boards. (Iqbal 2007)The curriculum designed by the federal bureau is implemented in both private and state schools in Peshawar and Khyber Agency. O level and A level education system is employed in private sector in Peshawar. In Both private and state institutions the common subjects are Urdu, English, Maths, Social Studies, Islamyat, Computer science, and other science subjects like Chemistry, Physics and Biology. In Private schools, the medium of instruction is English whilst state schools teach in Urdu. (Majeed 2007). Secondary education teaches the boy{sic} to apply the principle he is learning, and so to learn the principles by applying them, or so to use the instruments he is being made to know, as to perform or produce something, interpret literature or a science, make a picture or a book, practice a plastic or a manual art, convince a jury or persuade a senate, translate or annotate an author, dye wool, weave cloth, design or construct a machine, navigate a ship or command an army (Bryce 1895). Secondary education is viewed as <https://assignbuster.com/political-factors-affecting-education/>

preparing students for entry into a career and that is why, after gaining the higher secondary school certificate (HSSC), students in both areas can appear in the entry test for professional institutions like medical and engineering colleges. Those who are unsuccessful in the entry tests follow the arts path or other science subjects.

Higher education takes students up to PhD level. Since 2002, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has been empowered to carry out assessment, improvement and promotion of higher education, research and development, devise policies, guiding principles and priorities for higher education institutions and to set down conditions under which institutions, including those that are not part of the State educational system, may be opened and operated. The mandate of HEC encompasses all degree granting universities and institutions, both in public and private sectors and supports the attainment of quality education by facilitating and co-coordinating self-assessment of academic programs and their external review by national and international experts. HEC also supervises the planning, development and accreditation of public and private sector higher education institutions. Its goal is to facilitate the educational reform process (Ghani 2006).

The main distinguishing features in the provision and type of education system in each area is due to differences in the implementation of educational strategies and the number and types of educational institutions available. There are plenty of schools, colleges and universities flourishing in Peshawar but not in Khyber Agency. Indeed, in Khyber Agency there are no universities or other professional colleges at all. After graduating from secondary school, the students of Khyber Agency must move to Peshawar or <https://assignbuster.com/political-factors-affecting-education/>

other parts of Pakistan, depending on their family circumstances, if they are to continue their education. Students from Khyber Agency face an additional problem when seeking admission to the institutions in Peshawar because of their tribal domicile, as the constitution of Pakistan limits, via a fixed quota, the number of Khyber Agency residents who can be admitted to State Professional colleges. Those students who do not come in the quota system have to pay for their education in private institutions. Those who can not afford these expenses are left/remain without further education.

There are number of social factors that play into the poor public provision of education in Khyber Agency. These include low level of awareness among parents, low income status, lack of administration and control, less parental involvement, less opportunity to study, parents relationship with institutions and teachers, low literacy ratio, peer rejection, regarding its outcomes and impact on household well-being. The parents in Khyber Agency often lack the necessary vision to see the benefits that education can bring to the future of their children. Further difficulties such as the non-availability of transportation, communication and health, social and family priorities, influence often negatively the educational opportunities of students.

Clear differences exist in the administration of education within the two regions. The expenditure of funds and the nature and scope of educational planning has affected the education system in Khyber Agency. Poor Economic conditions is another factor that lower the literacy rate of Khyber agency to below that of Peshawar region. The persistent under-investment by successive governments in Khyber Agency has left many schools, poorly resourced and lacking in physical infrastructure.



Academic institutions, with few exceptions face financial problems and constraints. Mostly Public sector schools face financial constraints due to the high burden of students in crowded institutions where facilities for students are minimal. If financially possible, parents utilize the services of private institutions to help their children get better education. Alternatively, parents may employ external/private tuition or coaching to enhance their children's competence because, as mentioned, most state schools are overcrowded with high student's numbers per class which prohibits adequate student - teacher interaction. In Khyber Agency, the average income of parents prevents most families from seeking to enroll their children into the higher standard and more competitive institutions or opt for external tuition and coaching. It is generally acknowledged that the education department as a whole is the most badly administered governmental sector in Pakistan in spite of the fact that education plays such a vital role in the development of any country. As mentioned earlier, the national government has never allotted the necessary resources to this department, resulting in a poor literacy rate country-wide. A structured system for funding education is necessary based on local community needs and subject to audit control at regional level.

In both regions, especially in Khyber Agency, current provision is characterized by poor governance and management, a traditional way of teaching, an outdated and inflexible curriculum, lack of qualified educators, inappropriate utilization of existing infrastructure, political interference in teacher selection and infrastructure development, poor supervision and control by government, gender discrimination and a poor evaluation and

assessment system, that has made the existing provision of the education system incompatible with modern education system and therefore changes must be made.

Khyber Agency has been totally isolated from the main stream political system. Political activities were not allowed and people could not participate in politics till 1998. The people were given the right to vote in 1998 general elections. The political party system is still very fragile in the area and controlled by the Federal government through the governor of Khyber Pashtoon khawa. Commissioner and political agent are answerable to the governor in what is a very complicated political system. There still prevails the most hated laws called FCR (frontier crime regulation) imposed by the British in colonial times. These were the draconian rules that were imposed by British government to suppress the people of Khyber Agency.

Political involvement plays a vital role in the administration and governance of education. Peshawar's regional government has a long established record of political interference in the administration and control of education while Khyber Agency is being weakened daily due to the insurgency and acts of terrorism, lack of accountability and nepotism. Teachers in the areas have many serious concerns. They are generally low paid, given the prevailing economic depression, and have often been driven to desperate measures to gain a modicum of their urgent demands such as improved working conditions. It is necessary to meet these demands to ensure that teachers, as " the makers of the nations", can contribute to the development of students which in turn will result in the development of nation.

Education is a constitutional right of every male and female. The high level of social anxiety and low literacy rate clearly indicate the need for fundamental changes in education system; such improvements would include a single medium of instruction for text books, sufficient funding and proper implementation of strategies and plans. Due to social and political pressure the government announces special reforms for the development of education sector that also applies in these two areas. At the start of the 21st Century, the Government of Pakistan took several initiatives underlining the education sector reform. Some of these reforms are National Education Policy (1998-2010); Education Sector Reforms (ESR) (2001-06), Education for All (EFA) by 2015, Ten Years Perspective Development Plan (2001-2011), Ten Years Perspective Development Plan (2001-2011), National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) 2005-10, and Education Millennium Development Goals.(National education policy 2010) Despite the above mentioned reforms which has been introduced by the government at various times, their positive impact has yet to reach many rural areas like that of Khyber Agency. As a consequence these areas have become breeding grounds for terrorism which will not only endanger Pakistan but will export terrorism to other countries of the world and thus endangering the whole world.

The following recommendations, if properly implemented could improve the current education system in both regions but particularly in Khyber agency.

The existing system of education needs to be thoroughly scrutinized and audited to ensure transparency in order to address poor governance and

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management issues. A specialized Management Centre in Elementary and Secondary Education Department to provide accountability and proper training without nepotism and bias should be introduced. There is a need to empowering school heads to ensure they are free from political interference and control. A separate commission in the style of the public service commission could make appointments and standardize all grades. Maximum administrative and financial autonomy needs to be devolved down to school level with accountability of the school heads to community level. This make the monitoring and evaluation process more efficient and effective and new technology could be devised for the process.

A revolutionary emphasis on education, social and economic development is critical in order to lay the foundations for educational development and poverty reduction in both of these areas. Without social and economic development, change cannot occur, as change never occurs in a vacuum. Private partnerships are critical for capitalizing upon social and other stakeholder such as NGOs, voluntary organizations, general public and private sectors. All stakeholders could be subject to regulatory mechanisms to ensure effective education development in both Peshawar and Khyber Agency.

In both the regions rigid and hard line behavior has breed a biased and inflexible system allowing no space for students' analytical thinking. This also prevents the development of life long skills that prepare students to face challenges in their daily life by exercising problem solving skills. In order to address these drawbacks the design of the curriculum should be based upon native, behavioral, unbiased and scientific research so that concepts

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taught should be made vertically and horizontally clear and should incorporate local, regional and global values of democracy, secularism, federalism, broadmindedness and non-violence.

Finally to improve the education system in these areas education could be alignment with market demands, a uniform medium of instruction, the strengthening of the science facilities, Knowledge Park, Science and Technology Park should be established in both regions to impart standards through robust control and administrative techniques. All these efforts will help to improve the standard of education by replacing traditional modes of instruction with the use of technologies and productive work and problem solving skills will take the place of routine types of activities which will in turn help develop a knowledge based economy that responds to the needs of the people in a sustainable manner.