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**Problems Faced by the Private Sector at the Primary Level  
in Pakistan**

**Maqsooda Hussain, Ph. D.**

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**Abstract**

Primary education has been recognized as the basic human right of every child and it is the duty of the government to provide this basic facility to all its citizens. But the governments alone are not able to do this because of their scare resources. The private sector, therefore, is required to come forward and share the burden. In spite of many efforts, the private sector has not yet delivered and there is a need to find out the problems that hinder its advancement. To highlight this problem a national study on the subject was carried out.

The main objective of the study was to find out and prioritize the problems faced by the private sector at primary level in Pakistan. The data was gathered from all four provinces of Pakistan. Questionnaires were prepared for the heads of private schools to find out their views. These were administered either by hand or were posted to sample private schools. All sample places were visited. Telephone proved to be the most effective source in the collection of data, as it was frequently used to remind the respondents. The main problems highlighted by the respondents were: Attitude of the government, registration process, policies of government towards private sector and payment of utility bills.

**Key words:** Primary education, Private sector, Problems of private sector, Primary education in Pakistan

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## Introduction

Nations progress through the development of the individuals. It is evident from the fact that all the developed countries have their present status after attaining almost hundred percent literacy rates. Education contributes to the mental, physical, social and cultural development of the individual. Therefore, nobody should be denied access to it.

Education sector is an important sector as is evident from the fact that nearly one out of every five persons alive today, is either a pupil or a teacher in a formal system of education, As per the report of 1998 Census of Pakistan, over thirty-nine million persons were found to be either attending educational institutions or had attended earlier (Govt. of Pakistan, 1998 a).

Education is considered as the cheapest defence of a nation, as is stated by Iram Saleem (2010). She further stated that though 62 years have been passed and 23 policies and action plans have been introduced yet the educational sector in Pakistan is waiting for an arrival of a savior.

### 1.1 Pakistan

Official name of the country is Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is the father of the nation and Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal is the national poet. Pakistan got independence from the British rule on 14 August 1947. It is yet a developing country and is facing a number of problems due to various reasons. Kashmir, an unresolved issue since 1947, wars with neighboring country, separation of its eastern wing, East Pakistan, Russian invasion in Afghanistan, Military Governments for over more than 30 years and war on terror are among some of the problems. According to Basic Facts as given by the government of Pakistan:

It is a country of more than 165 million people consisting of about 50% youth. According to the census of 1998, the population was about 132 million. Pakistan is divided into four provinces, viz., Punjab, Sind, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Baluchistan. The tribal belt adjoining Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa is managed by the Federal Government and is named FATA, i.e. Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Kashmir region and Northern Areas have their own respective political and administrative machinery, yet certain of their subjects are taken care of by the federal Government through the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas. <http://www.infopak.gov.pk/BasicFacts.aspx>

As education is the provincial domain, therefore, the study was conducted in all four provinces to have a true picture, at national level, of problems of private sector. Three districts headquarters from Punjab, two from Sind, two from Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and two from Baluchistan were taken as sample. Rawalpindi, Multan and Faisalabad were sample cities from Punjab, Hyderabad and Sukkur from Sind, Peshawar and Abbottabad from Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Quetta and Pishin from Baluchistan were samples for this study.

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## 1.2 Primary Education

Primary education is the most important stage of education. It is the foundation on which the whole building of education stands. It has the maximum rate of return among all levels of education. It provides basic learning skills like reading and counting to primary children. The school provides a place to young children where they can learn socialization that will help them in practical life. In a report published by the Government of Pakistan (2000), primary education has been defined as "Primary education comprises classes I to V and enrolls students of age- group 5+ to 9+".

Primary education has been recognized as a basic human right of all children by the United Nations. According to the Constitution of Pakistan this right has been admitted by the Government of Pakistan. Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) has been considered as a tool to achieve hundred percent literacy rates in any country. Education for All (EFA) is an international initiative first launched in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 to bring the benefits of education to "every citizen in every society." Being a signatory, Pakistan has also taken responsibility to provide compulsory and free basic education to all its citizens.

In order to realize this aim, a broad coalition of national governments, civil society groups, and development agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank committed to achieving six specific education goals:

- Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free, and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs.
- Achieve a 50 % improvement in adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- Achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure the excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

<http://web.worldbank.org>

The governments have recognized the importance of primary education. Almost in all Education Policies and their respective Five Year Plans, measures to achieve universal primary education have been suggested and planned. Unfortunately this target has been constantly shifted farther and it is still out of reach.

## 1.3 Private sector

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According to the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* private sector means the part of a country's economy that consists of privately owned enterprises. The private school, according to the same dictionary, is a school under the financial and managerial control of a private body or charitable trust accepting mostly fee-paying students. Private sector is a part of country's economy, which consists of privately owned enterprises. A school under the financial and managerial control of a private body or charitable trust, accepting mostly fee-paying students, is called private school. Thus, private institutions mean those institutions that are not provided funds and financed by the state.

#### 1.4 Private Sector in Pakistan

Private Sector has always played a significant role in providing the educational facilities to a vast number of pupils. In the past, the private sector was more active in providing the welfare facilities, like health and education to the majority of population. According to Fayyaz Baqir (1998, p.179), a long tradition of community work in education has existed in the sub-continent. He elaborates,

This system of [...] literacy based on the concept of voluntary work and self-help, was not then known as NGO work and was much larger in scale compared to present NGO initiatives.

At the time of the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the private sector had a major share in providing education through schools at various levels. These private schools were run by both societies motivated by the cause of promoting education as well as by individuals making their living through education and teaching. Baqir (1998) has stated that, "The government owned 4 per cent of primary schools, the private sector owned 43 per cent of these schools and various local bodies ran rest of the schools, i.e. 53 % of primary schools". Following table shows the situation at the time of independence.

**Table 1 Percentage Breakdown of Different Sectors in 1947**

	Primary	Middle	High
Government (%)	04	03	09
Private (for-profit)	43	47	83
Local Bodies (NGO's)	53	50	08

Source: Fayyaz Baqir, (1998)

However, during the twentieth century, governments all over the world intervened and gave private sector a less important role for a long time. During 1970's the government of Pakistan Peoples' Party nationalized all private schools with the exception of a few prestigious institutions like Aitcheson College Lahore etc. The main motive behind this was to provide equal educational opportunities to the masses. However, the nationalized process could not achieve its targets. It loaded a heavy financial burden on the national

exchequer on one hand, and the standard of education on the other hand, also deteriorated.

During nineties of the previous century, this trend was again reversed and the privatization of every sector of the economy was started including social sector. Pakistan is no exception to this worldwide trend. Private sector was allowed to work and nationalized institutions were denationalized. Asian Development Bank has reported that,

According to Pakistan Education Statistics 2007-08, published by the Academy of Educational Planning and Management, percentage share of public and private sector is as follows:

There are 182,477 (71 %) educational institutions in the public sector and 73,611 (29 %) in private sector. Enrollment wise, public sector has an enrollment of 25,213,896 (67 %) in various categories of educational institutions whereas 12,248,990 (33 %) enrollment is in private sector.

### **1.5 Problems Faced by the Private Sector**

Education plays vital role in the economy of any country. It has direct influence on the development of individuals as well as the societies. Unfortunately the education sector in Pakistan is not presenting a promising picture. Pakistan is still far behind the targets set for Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Education for All (EFA). The government of Pakistan alone is not capable to provide educational facilities to all school going children.

The private sector has to come forward and help the government to accomplish this colossal task. Each government has publicized through Education Policies that private sector will be provided incentives to participate wholeheartedly in educational activities. The private sector has not yet come up according to the aspirations and requirements of the country. This study was designed to find out and prioritize the problems faced by the private sector so that these problems could be taken care by the government.

In a report published by Academy of Educational Planning and Management it has been described that,

The pattern of ownership of educational institutions that emerges from the census is also somewhat worrying. The institutions in the private sector are not evenly spread out at all levels. Thus, the private sector has more schools at secondary and middle level (61 %) than the government has. Again the private sector operates more technical, vocational and professional institutions, such as poly-technical, vocational and professional institutions, such as mono-techniques, (70 %) than the government is running.

## 1.6 Problems reported by the Private Sector

Following question was asked from the heads of private schools.

Do you find any problem in dealing with the government? If yes, please state these problems. The responses received are presented province-wise, in the following section.

### 1.6.1 Punjab

Following table shows the number and location of respondents in Punjab.

**Table 2** Number of sample schools

Province	Places	Number of sample schools
Punjab	Rawalpindi	70
	Faisalabad	70
	Multan	70
	Total	210

Overall, 58 per cent responses were received from Punjab who reported that they have problems in dealing with government or by the government. Quite a large number of respondents i.e. 42 per cent did not respond to the question. Probably they did not want to disclose their observation due to some reasons. Following table shows priority wise opinions of respondents.

**Table 3** Priority wise opinions of respondents

Statements	Total n	Responses	Percentage
Attitude of government	117	41	35
Tax	117	29	25
Registration	117	21	18
Policies of government	117	18	15
Examination	117	14	12
Utility bills	117	12	10
Grant/Loan	117	08	07
Monitoring	117	03	03
School building	117	02	02

### A Attitude of Government Officials

Respondents from Multan reported that:

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- 1 The government officials are corrupt and they take bribery and harass the owners of private schools.
- 2 Lack of departmental cooperation among various educational departments.
- 3 The behavior of government officials is rude and unjust.

From Rawalpindi respondents stated that,

- 1 The government discourages private sector and does not cooperate with the private sector.
- 2 They suggested that better coordination between both sectors would contribute for the development of primary education.
- 3 The government does not provide any type of information willingly to the private sector.
- 4 They further stated that the private sector faces unnecessary interference from the government. They suggested that one window operation should be introduced and education departments of government should be merged into one, wherever possible, to make smooth functioning of routine matters.

Respondents from Faisalabad reported,

- 1 Non-cooperative, rude and unfair attitude of government officials, who are always ready to create problems for private sector.
- 2 They further blamed that government officials are unaware of the importance of education. They demanded that highly qualified officers with missionary spirits should be employed in education departments.
- 3 Various departments of government black mail the heads of private institutions and corruption is at its peak at present. Corruption creates a lot of problems like unnecessary delay and baseless allegations.
- 4 At times AEO's / DEO's call heads of private sectors in their offices for minor issues but they themselves remain absent from their offices. This wastes their precious time.
- 5 Government officers do not consider that private sector is providing national service and they are always demanding something in the shape of bribery. Whenever the concerned officer is contacted he is either in meeting or is on visit etc. One respondent stated that they have to wait for months even to get a signature from an education officer.

## **B Taxes**

Responses received from Multan complained about the following:

- 1 Harassment of tax department in spite of the factor that they pay heavy amount in form of tax.

Respondents from Rawalpindi reported problems of

- 1 Heavy taxes levied by the government. They suggested that the fiscal year for the assessment of income tax should be in accordance with the academic year i.e. from April to March.

Respondents from Faisalabad reported,

- 1 The behavior of tax department as harsh, insulting, rude and harassing. They reported that number of taxes is imposed on private schools. They suggested that income tax on those schools that charge fee less than Rs. 200 should not be levied. Government departments treat private schools as industry without recognizing their contribution and impose heavy amount of taxes.

### **C Registration/ Affiliation Process**

Responses received from Multan complained about the following:

- 1 Complicated process of registration/affiliation and suggested that it should be made simple and registration fee should be reduced.

Responses received from Rawalpindi reported that

- 1 Registration process is laborious and teasing attitude of government officials makes it more difficult. It takes almost half a year to get the provisional registration and recognition and that even after hectic efforts of at least one year. To get counter signatures of DEO and AEO takes a lot of time and efforts. They reported same difficulties during up-gradation process or renewal of registration. Too much paper work and lot of formalities delay registration process and make it a tiring activity.

Respondents reported from Faisalabad reported,

- 1 That unnecessary documentation is required to get a school registered. Registration fee should be reduced and annual increase should be stopped. All registered schools should be allowed to issue school-leaving certificates for smooth functioning. Registration fee should be fixed according to the fee that the school charges from its students.

### **D Government Policies towards Private Sector**

Respondents from Multan suggested:

- 1 The government should liberalize policies towards private institutions and it should be given relaxation like other industrial entrepreneurs.

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Respondents from Rawalpindi stated that

- 1 Policies regarding private sector should be changed.
- 2 The built-in mechanism in government offices causes delay in many urgent matters.
- 3 Sudden changes in policies during academic session without communicating timely cause a lot of problems.
- 4 A respondent stated, “It is very surprising that we need a license to drive a small vehicle like motor cycle, but people are allowed to open a school without any condition. These people are playing with the lives of children. To acquire a license should be mandatory for opening a school after fulfilling necessary requirements.

Respondents from Faisalabad stated:

- 1 Offensive rules of government, difficult official procedures, delay in office work and unnecessary correspondence just to disturb the private sector are among some of the major problems.
- 2 Non-cooperation on minor issues like sending admission of class V is a great obstacle in their functioning. Time is wasted in minor formalities. Staff in government offices is never available.
- 3 No information like date sheet, roll number slips and intimation of examination centers is conveyed timely.

## **E Examination/ Admission Forms**

Respondents from Multan stated that

- 1 They face a lot of difficulties in the attestation of examination forms.

Responses received from Rawalpindi said that

- 1 They are facing a lot of problems in obtaining examination forms because of non-cooperative attitude of government officials.
- 2 They further reported that normally the examination centers are established far away from the schools.

Respondents from Faisalabad stated that

- 1 Method of taking examination of class V is not appropriate and suggested that they should be allowed to take home examination of their students.
- 2 They further reported that the schedule of Board Examination is unreasonable and there is an unnecessary condition of attestation of certificates.
- 3 Respondents also reported poor standard of examination centers.

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- 4 Roll number allotted to class V students are not intimated timely and biased behavior of EO's to students of private sector is another problem.

## **F Utility Bills**

Responses received from Multan suggested:

- 1 Utility bills should be charged on domestic rates. They said that they are doing a noble job but every government treats private institutions as commercial projects and charges utility bills on commercial rates.

Responses received from Rawalpindi and Faisalabad also reported that

- 1 Commercial rate of utility bills is unfair. They further stated that ultimately this increase has to be borne by the students, as the institution will increase the tuition fee to generate extra finances.

## **G Grant/Aid/ Financial Support**

Respondents from Multan suggested that

- 1 Private sector should be provided grant or financial support.

Respondents from Rawalpindi and Faisalabad suggested that

- 1 The government should provide matching grant/ aid for the smooth functioning of private sector.

## **H Monitoring by the Government**

Respondents from Multan suggested that

- 1 There should be a check and balance system for the employees of private schools devised by the government.

Respondents from Rawalpindi suggested

- 1 Regular monitoring by the government to check the shortcomings in administration and academic procedures of private sector.

## **I School Building**

Respondents from Multan Rawalpindi stated that the non-availability of school buildings is a great problem for them.

### **1.5.2 Sind**

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**Table 4**      **Number of sample schools from Sind**

Province	City	Number of sample
Sind	Hyderabad	42
	Sukkur	23
	Total	65

A      Respondents from Hyderabad reported that

- 1    Unnecessary interference of government officials causes embarrassment for the management of private schools
- 2    Sudden change in policies without prior consultation or information causes a lot of inconvenience.
- 3    Private sector is providing free education to some poor children. The government should provide books and uniform to these students.
- 4    Social Security Fund and Old Age Benefit Fund is great financial burden.
- 5    The government should provide land free of cost for private schools
- 6    Government should give financial support for the payment of teachers, salary.
- 7    Utility bills being charged on commercial rates is a problem.

B      Respondents from Sukkur reported that

- 1      The government should provide up to date information.

### **1.5.3      Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa**

**Table 5**      **Number of sample schools from Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa**

Province	City	Number of sample
Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa	Peshawar	36
	Abbottabad	24
	Total	60

A      Responses from Peshawar reported that

- 1    The government should give registration / recognition automatically if the school completes five years. They complained that the renewal of registration/ recognition is delayed unnecessarily by the government officers.
- 2    They further suggested that there should be no compulsory examination for class V by the government.
- 3    Another respondent stated that it has become very difficult for an honest person, to run an educational institution because the government discourages the private sector instead of helping them to flourish. He further said that there are thousands and one problems in dealing with the government what to talk about one or two.

B Respondents from Abbottabad reported that

- 1 Co-education should be allowed in Abbottabad like all other parts of the country. They said that Abbottabad Board is insisting to keep separate premises for girls and boys, while in their opinion students from co-education are more daring and confident to participate in practical life.
- 2 The government office process is very slow.
- 3 Instead of helping the government officers put hurdles in their way. They cannot concentrate on their main cause that is to provide better educational facilities to the children.

#### 1.5.4 Baluchistan

**Table 6** Number of Sample schools from Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa

Province	City	Number of Sample
Baluchistan	Quetta	19
	Pishin	05
	Total	24

A Respondents from Quetta reported that

- 1 Delayed process in the handling of matters
- 2 To go through too many formalities,
- 3 Lack of devotion and honesty, especially among upper class (officials) of the government officials.
- 4 The attitude of government officials is insulting and they are not ready to give due respect to the teachers of private sector.

#### 1.6 Consolidated list of Problems

Priority-wise problems of the private sector are presented in the following table.

**Table 7** Priority-wise opinions of respondents

Statements	Total n	responses	Percentage
Attitude of government	215	50	23
Registration/ affiliation process	215	32	15
Taxes	215	31	14
Policies for private sector	215	22	10
Examination system	215	17	08
Utility bills	215	14	07
Grant/ aid	215	12	06
Monitoring system by the government	215	03	01

School buildings	215	03	01
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Above table shows that the attitude of government officials, complicated and time consuming registration/affiliation process, heavy taxes and policies of the government are the problems which are at the top of the list. System of examination for class V and utility bills at commercial rates are also reported as problems. The respondents charged the government officials with the charge of bribery, insulting attitude and non-cooperative behavior. However, from Baluchistan respondents reported that they have no problems.

The private sector also suggested that the government should provide financial help in form of grant in aid and to buy land for school buildings or provision of land free of cost by the government. The private sector also demanded monitoring system by the government to have a check on private sector.

## 1.7 Summary

The study was carried out to find out the problems of private sector at primary level. In spite of all government efforts the private sector is still shy to come forward and participate wholeheartedly in this noble cause of providing educational facilities to all children of relevant age group. The main problems highlighted by the private sector are:

- 1 Attitude of government officials
- 2 Lengthy and laborious registration/affiliation
- 3 Heavy taxes
- 4 Policies of government made for private sector without consulting them
- 5 Examination system of class V
- 6 Utility bills at commercial rates

The private sector gave some suggestions also presented in the following;

- 1 Grant in aid to motivate private sector
- 2 Proper monitoring system by the government
- 3 Land for school buildings free of cost or provision of loan or provision of school buildings.

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