

## **ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION STATUS IN PAKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

*Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as an independent state came into existence on 14th August 1947. The Government of Pakistan holds its self-responsible to fulfill and ensure the provision of basic human rights including education, to all its citizens. Education has great importance in general and for women in particular. It also plays a major role towards uplifting of society and its qualitative contributions in economic prosperity. Women comprise about half of the total population in Pakistan (i.e. 49 percent of the total population) and actively participate side by side with men in many fields of life. However, women have remained deprived of their basic human rights including education. Government of Pakistan has made serious efforts to upgrade women's education status. However, the scenario of women's education in Pakistan is not satisfactory. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the role of Government of Pakistan in education sector during past decades with special focus on the status of women's education. Furthermore, the study focuses on identifying major factors that supposed to be responsible for low rate of women's education in Pakistan. Different indicators including education policy, five-year plans, literacy rates, enrolment trends, female teachers in education institutions*

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*and government education expenditure has been selected for study. The results of the study show that besides all the aforementioned initiatives, the situation of women's education has not shown satisfactory improvement. The government is still not able to achieve the required education standard. It is suggested that Government of Pakistan should have to develop a strong and effective education system with proper policy implementation.*

**Key words:** *Education, Literacy Rate, Enrolment, Status of Women, Government, Five Years Plans, Education Policies, Insufficient Education Expenditures, political instability and Policy Implementation.*

### **Introduction**

Since independence Pakistan has been suffering by economic instability. The weak and unstable economy of Pakistan demands highly educated and efficient human resource to develop their economy (Syeda, et al., 2006). Women make about half of the total population in Pakistan and accessibility of education to them is necessary for economic and non-economic development of this country (Social Policy and Development Centre, 2003). Government of Pakistan realizes the importance of education and developing series of efforts at policy level in order to influence progress in education. However, women in Pakistan frequently suffer from multiple disparities including education. Therefore, this research study evaluates public sector initiatives and their impact with special focus on women education scenario in Pakistan. The study also identifies the factors and socio-economic impediments in the direction of women education in the country. The research paper is splitting up in three different parts. Part one give introduction, part two provides literature review and the methodology. Part three explain study results, conclusions and suggestion.

### **Review Literature**

The word Education refers to “a process of teaching, training, and learning especially in school or college to improve knowledge and development skills” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s dictionary, 2005, p.488). Education is the most

significant instrument used to enhance human capacity and abilities in order to achieve productive and skilled labour force therefore, investment for getting educated human resource is supposed to be the best investment in human capital. According to Fateh (1998) a country which is not able to develop knowledge and skill of its male-female population and unable to make best use of their human resource is likely to lag behind. Female education is the most fundamental prerequisite for empowering women in all spheres of society and enables them to change their lives for the better. Women education enhances women efficiency to work-in economic activities and uplifts the women status inside and outside the home over the world wide. Today educated female playing constructive role however, large proportion of women in many pockets of the world still discriminated into various fields of life same as in access to education.

Pakistan is a developing country located in south and west Asia region associated with unsustainable social economical development. In order to develop the Pakistan's weekend economy of recent year's women also need to work side by side with men in all fields as well as at decent employment positions; this can be achieved through enlarging the proportion of highly educated women, so that they can make their full contribution for socio-economic development of their country. Pakistan inherited British education system at the time of independence in August 1947 (Isani & Virk, 2003). In December 1947 National Educational Conference was organized for determination of future education policy for newly born state (Bengali, 1999). Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan provided basic principles and guidelines for the education system in country. Later on, Government of Pakistan took various initiatives to achieve long-term sustainable educational growth in the country. Government of Pakistan has planned its economy including education sector for forty (40) years through eight optimistic five year plans. The mechanism of five years plans attempt to make education system according to the socio-economical, national and ideological needs of an independent sovereign state Pakistan (Anwar Mohammad Nadeem, 2005). Government of Pakistan since early independence had launched various milestones oriented policy documents and several action plans periodically for boosting up the education system in the country. Structure of education system in Pakistan consists of number of stages such as pre-primary, primary, middle, secondary, higher secondary and higher education (Annual Status of Education

Report, 2013). In Pakistan education sector in large scale is supposed to be public sector. However, on a limited scale private education institutions also impart education at all levels. Overall there are 194, 151 (i.e. 72 %) public education institutions accommodating 66 percent of total students and 76, 674 (i.e. 28 %) Private education institutions accommodate 34 percent of total students (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2010-11). The Government of Pakistan has also developed various education policies however, “Still almost 44 million Pakistani population in working age (i.e. 15 plus) have not had the opportunity to learn how to read and write, about two third (28 million) of whom are women” {Ministry of Labour and Manpower Government of Pakistan, 2009, p.18}.

It is summarized that the development of underdeveloped country Pakistan depends on high educated human resource. Government of Pakistan realized the importance of women education and developed various plans and policies with special focus on women but half human resource (i.e. women population) in Pakistani are not properly educated and not equally participated at all education stages and at decent employment positions. Therefore this study largely focused to analyze the Women’s education status and the role of government in the education sector of Pakistan. Study also focused to explore the key issues responsible for lower women’s education status in Pakistan.

### **Research Methodology**

This research study is based on secondary data. Different indicators including education policy, five-year plans, literacy rates, enrolment trends, female teaching staff and government education expenditure have been selected. The annual time-series data on selected variables was collected from the website of State Bank of Pakistan, Federal Bureau of Statistics of Pakistan and Economic Surveys of Pakistan. In order to measure the progress and to predict the female literacy rate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) was applied. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and MS-Excel were used to analyze the data and to present the findings.

### **Regression Equation:**

$$y = b_0 + bx + e$$

Where:

y= Dependent Variable (i.e. Women Literacy Rate)

b<sub>0</sub>=Intercept/Constant

b = Coefficients

x= Years

e= error term

### **Results and Findings**

Results and finding regarding role of Government to upgrade women's education status in Pakistan presented are as following.

### **Education Laws & policies of Government of Pakistan**

The brief review of major education policies, plans, programmes and schemes with reference to women education in Pakistan presented as below.

#### **State Constitution**

- Consistent Article 37 stated that the state shall remove illiteracy and provides free and compulsory secondary education within the minimum possible period. Makes technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on merit (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2011).
- According to Constitutional Amendment No 18, free and compulsory education for the children aged 5 to 16 years has been declared a fundamental right (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2011).
- Article 25-A of the Constitutions stated that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by the law (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, 2011).

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2010), at international level Pakistan also committed to provide equal access to education for both men and women into various international forums such as in Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), World Declaration on Education For All (2000), Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: 2000 and The Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

### Five Years Plans (1955 to 1998)

Table 1 highlights Five Year Plans in Pakistan with special focus on women Education.

**Table-1: Five Year Plans in Pakistan with Women Education Focus**

Plans	Years	Women Education Focus
First Five Year Plan	1955-60	To establish separate primary schools & scholarships for girl's students.
Second Five Year Plan	1960-65	Improved female enrolment ratio at all levels, Enlarging physical facilities for girl's students
Third Five Year Plan	1965-70	Improved female enrolment ratio at all levels.
Fourth Five Year Plan	1970-75	Improve female literacy rate, Remove gender discrimination by region at all education stages
Fifth Five Year Plan	1977-83	Improve female literacy rate, Remove gender discrimination by social classes and regions at all education stages, To expand girl's enrolment at secondary stage
Sixth Five Year Plan	1983-88	To increase girl's enrolment at all levels with particular focus on primary stage, Literacy program for females
Seventh Five Year Plan	1988-92	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls, Integrated development of female education through Social Action Programme (SAP), Provision of technical training facilities for women
Eighth Five Year Plan	1993-98	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls, Free text books for girl's in class one, To increase girls enrolment at secondary level

Source: Isani & Virk (2003), Zaidi (1999), Social Policy Development Centre Annual Review (2003) & Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (2011).

- Throughout history Government of Pakistan made only eight five years plans (Isani & Virk, 2003).

Assessment of all plans taken together reveals that in general every five year plan acknowledges the great significance of education. The common focus of almost every plan was to achieve universal primary/basic education particularly for girl's shows that beside forty years of five years of planning, Pakistan remains unable to

provide basic education to all its peoples whereas, girls remain more deprive. Policy makers realized that the development of five year plans was not practicable due to rapid changes in domestic and global economy therefore, policy of five years plans were further not proceed.

### Education Policies (1970 to 2010)

Table 2 highlights the summarized key aspects of education policies in Pakistan with women education focus. Deep inside study of the policies framework indicates that more or less all education policies documents revised same desired goals this indicative that previous policies was not successfully achieved its settled targets.

**Table-2: Education Policies in Pakistan with Women Education Focus**

<b>Education Policies</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Women Education Focus</b>
New Education Policy	1970	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls & separate schools for girls
National Education Policy	1972	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls, Equalizing female enrolment at all levels. To appoint female teachers.
National Education Policy	1979	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls, Establish two women universities
National Educational Policy	1992	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls. To enhance female teaching staff.
National Educational Policy 1998-2010	1998	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls. Enhance female teaching staff; To establish women universities, Female teachers training.
National Education Policy	2009	To achieve universal primary/basic education for girls, elimination of gender biases from text books &adequate female representation in curricula and text-books reviews committees.

Source: (Isani & Virk, 2003), (Zaidi, 1999) Social Policy & Development Centre Annual Review, 2003) & (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2011).

Government of Pakistan has made serious efforts to address the issue of girls' education, at the macro-level. All education policies, plans and reforms were giving some importance in order to remove gender disparity and to upgrade women education status in Pakistan. However, policy formulation is not enough criteria to develop a strong and effective education system, in fact successful education system depend on proper implementation of policy which further depends upon honest and hardworking staff, sufficient funding and political stability of country unfortunately, Pakistan lack of all these properties. Due to political instability different education Programme was abandoned without giving fruitful results, for example Nai Roshni School.

### **Impact of Government Initiatives on Women Education Status in Pakistan Literacy Rate**

Literacy rate is defined as the ability to read and write a language whereas, literacy rate of a country refers to particular proportion of population able to read, write, to understand and to speak a language (Chitrakar, 2009). In Pakistan literacy rate among both genders is not encouraging. The presented linear regression outcomes in table 3 show that in Pakistan female literacy rate has been significantly increased. However, Economics Survey of Pakistan 2016-17 reported that 52 % female population remains illiterate in Pakistan.

**Table-3: Regression Results for Female Literacy Rate in Pakistan n=17  
Years (2000 to 2016)**

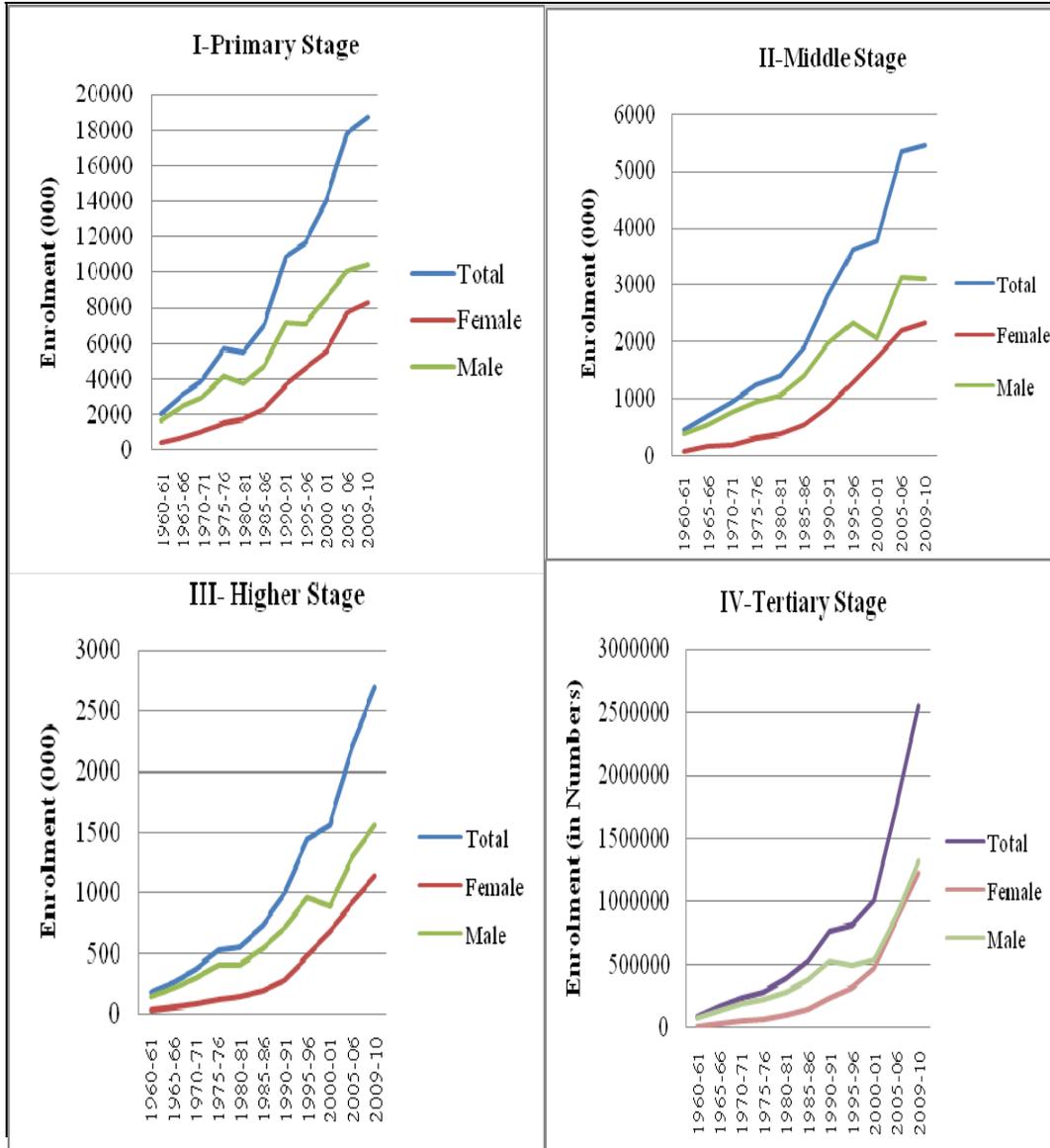
<b>Statistical Measures</b>	<b>Results</b>
R-Square	0.74
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.72
F-Statistics	42.361*
T-Statistics	6.509*
B-Coefficient	0.773

Data Source: Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2006), Economic Survey of Pakistan (2004-05), Economic Survey of Pakistan (2008-09) & Economic Survey of Pakistan (2016-17)

**Enrolment Trends**

Performance of education sector can also be measured by enrolment trends at various education stages in a country. Graphical presentation of enrolment trends in figure 1 show that during past decades enrolment at all education stages was increased in Pakistan (i.e. due to high growth in population and government positive initiatives for uplifting education scenario in Pakistan). Figure 1 (i.e. I to IV) shows that in year 1960-61 female representation at primary, middle, higher and tertiary stages were 20 percent, 15 percent, 19 percent and 17 percent respectively however, during last 50 years this ratio was gradually increased and reached up to 44 percent, 43 percent, 42 percent and 48 percent respectively. During mentioned decades (i.e. in figure 1) beside improvement in their relative positions in Pakistan there are many girls still deprived to get access at all levels of education and gender gap still persist that favors males.

**Figure-1: Male-Female Enrolment Trends at Primary, Middle, High and Tertiary Stage n=11 (Numbers)**



Data Source: State Bank of Pakistan (2010) & Economic Survey of Pakistan (2011-12)

### Separate Education Institutions for Females

The establishment of more education institutions reduces the transportation costs, commuting time and distance of the house from the school. As well as in conservative society of Pakistan, separate education institutions exclusively for girls at all education stages can play important role as to uplift female education status in the country. According to Qasmi (2009) due to traditional and religious believes there is large proportion of Pakistani society prefer to educate their daughters/sisters in female education institutions by female teachers. Table 4 indicates that over past three decades proportion of separate female education institutions at all education stages has been improved as to enhance the female enrolment in Pakistan at all education stages. Furthermore, in Pakistani society rural communities have more conservative believes than urban communities therefore, in Pakistan the proportion of separate schools and colleges for girls are higher in rural areas than urban areas. In country Pakistan out of total 85 percent female schools and colleges belongs to rural areas (Pakistan Education Statistics 2010-11). This indicates that Government of Pakistan makes serious efforts to increase the accessible particularly for those females who are not able to get education because of co-education system. Whereas, unsatisfactory education status of Pakistani women still demands more separate schools, colleges and universities exclusively for female at all education levels.

**Table-4: Education Institutions by Gender in Pakistan (%)**

Stages	Gender	1990-91	2000-01	2010-11
Primary	Male	73	63	61
	Female	27	37	39
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Middle	Male	61	53	53
	Female	39	47	47
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
High	Male	74	69	57
	Female	26	31	43
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Tertiary	Male	69	60	47
	Female	31	40	53
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

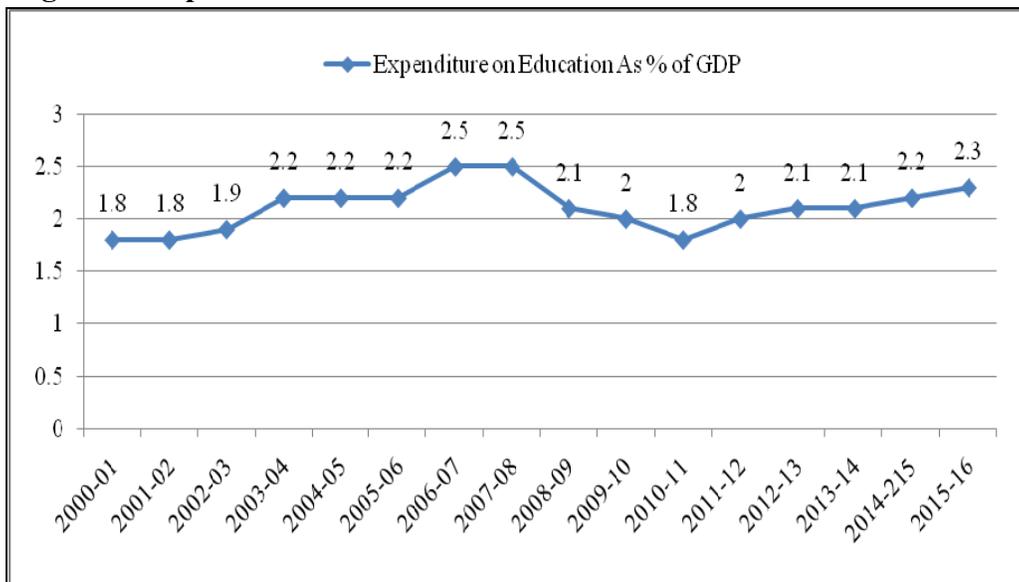
Source: (Economic Survey of Pakistan 2006-07, p.174 & 2011-12, p.150)

Tertiary stage includes arts-sciences colleges, professional colleges and universities

### Insufficient Education Expenditures

Education is a vital investment for human and economic development of the nations. The government commitments towards the progress of education can be measured through an important indicator that is the level of public spending into education sector. Government of Pakistan tries to adopt feasible policies and to spend desirable amount on education sector but in reality education sector has suffered from under investment since many years.

**Figure-2: Expenditure on Education Sector in Pakistan as % of GDP n=16**



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2006), Economic Survey of Pakistan (2004-05), Economic Survey of Pakistan (2008-09) & Economic Survey of Pakistan (2011-12) & Economic Survey of Pakistan (2016-17)

Figure 2 highlight that the budget allocation for education sector in term of percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has not been significant change during last decade. At the global ranking Pakistan continue to rank at the bottom end, with poor outcome on spending by the Public sector, without prominent improvement. Insufficient financial resources for education sector hampered the efforts to open more education institutions at all levels, provide missing facilities in educational institutions, and offer incentives to female child from poor families. Therefore lower investment is one of the major reasons of lower women education status in Pakistan.

**Conclusion & Recommendations**

The results of the study show that besides all the aforementioned initiatives, the situation of women's education has not shown satisfactory improvement. The government is still not able to achieve the required education standard (i.e. in terms of both quality and quantity both). Even basic or primary education is not yet made accessible to all its population. It is analyzed that policy formulation is not enough action to develop a strong and effective education system. In fact, successful education system depends on proper implementation of policy. The scarcity of financial resources and prevalence of political instability were the major causes of unsuccessful results of policy framework. Besides that, the study found that there are various structured and unstructured factors (i.e. traditionally conservative attitudes, lack of funding and improper utilization of funds, poverty, wrong religious perceptions etc) contribute to disparities in women's education within the state. It is suggested that education policy should be made more effective and its implementation be ensured for the improvement of the ratio of female enrolment. It is suggested that government should increase its budget allocation for education sector and separate educational institutions for women should be more and upgraded, with the provision of necessary infrastructure to improve the output and quality of education. This becomes necessary for higher accessibility of education particularly for girls, in low income households.

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