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Public Policy and Democratic Values in Pakistan Case Study of Punjab (2008-2018)

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ABSTRACT

This study is an endeavor to trace the role of democratic values of equity and fairness in public policies with focus on inclusive development in Punjab the largest populated province of Pakistan. Equity is one of the core values of democracy which is used to testify the relationship between state and its citizens. Inclusion of issues of certain geographical areas in policies priorities determine their status held by the ruling political party in the government. This study seeks to examine certain policies of civilian democratic government in the time period (2008-2018) for Punjab in areas of education and employment. The article aims at analyzing the criteria of equity and fair division through policy process approach.

Keywords: *Democracy, Public Policy, Equity, Education, Employment*

Introduction

The value-laden choice of regime shapes its quality of democracy. These choices are based on religious, social, political and economic priorities which reflect the goals of a state. Responsiveness is one of the dimensions of quality of democracy which aims at analysis of public policies as a supply to demands and preferences of people. Responsiveness constitutes the ‘rules’ for when and how ‘who gets what’. The choice of policy issues, instruments and outputs expresses the performance of democratic governance. The purpose and goals of responsiveness are meant to be determined through equity not equality. The policymaking in the sphere of education and employment denotes the investment in human capital which is linked with equity. Furthermore, the imbalance in education policy augments differences in production capacity and earned income.

There has been an incessant trend in Punjab since the days of British Raj to give priority to those places and people that held importance for state. In British Punjab, Lahore being the seat of the government was home to the best of educational institutions in the whole province. Rawalpindi and Jhelum were given priority for educational resources due to the provision of men for war. Gujranwala and Faisalabad acquired importance being canal colonies. Muzaffargarh and D.G Khan were peripheral areas; hence they received less contribution from provincial revenue

for education. The provision of educational opportunities to these areas at par with developed districts was not the priority of the responsible tiers of government. The anomaly of the situation was that the most developed were also the least employed.

The successive ruling parties of Punjab could not succeed in eliminating vicious circle of education apartheid in province. Policies were formulated to improve access, equity and quality in education sector but there was always a huge gap in implementation of policies. There is a wide disparity among districts in terms of private and social returns of education. The study endeavours to examine the nature and dynamics of public policies, plans to attain the goals of these policies, and programs to attain objectives of policies for inclusive development in Punjab by the democratic government of PML (N) in Punjab from 2008-2018.

Research Objectives

1. To dig out the factors responsible for the lack of coordination between democratic conditions and public policy in Pakistan.
2. To understand the practicability of democratic value of equity in public policy concerning to Punjab.
3. To evaluate the implementation of public policies related to education and employment and their impact on development in Punjab.

Methodology

The research contains qualitative method. Secondary sources have been used. The research envisages the data through reading of policy-related documents. Policy documents like government publications and debates of provincial assembly have been used. The content-analysis has been made through the relevant public policy documents, constitutional provisions and reports of various concerned departments.

Literature Review

Dye (1972) explains that public policy is the prerogative of the government. David Easton defines public policy as authoritative allocation of values for the whole society. It is solely the right of the government to decide on public policy. It depends on characteristics of political system which shapes its contents.

Dunn (2011) discusses normative analysis of public policy which refers to value judgement of what ought to be in contrast to descriptive statement of what it is. The normative analysis evaluates policies for preferred selection between desired ends and preferred means. This choice is based on the compromise between values of equity and efficiency. Sen (1999) explains that democracy has a universal appeal. A system of governance becomes democratic through the practice of specific virtues. A democratic system hears what people express and provides the opportunity for political and social participation without any discrimination. Pennock (1944) discusses the essential qualities of democracy. He says that equality before law and guarantee of equal rights and liberties in determining major issues of public policy makes governance democratic. People support democracy for its equalitarian principle. But this is not enough. The guarantee of fair application of equal consideration of people as per their needs and ability is required. Schneider & Ingram (2008) discuss the relationship between policy and democracy. Public policies affect people. There is a link between democratic conditions and selection

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of policy issues. The selection divides people among groups with negative and positive connotations. This degenerative politics sustains division among people. Morlino (2004) describes the technique for analysis of qualities of a democratic system. Policy outputs are the decisional product of government. The characteristics, design, material and other features of this product measure the goodness of democracy. He says that the substantive dimension of democratic ideal “equality” is almost a utopian objective. A democracy is good if it provides fair and equitable opportunities of competition among people. Cnudde & Neubauer (1969) explain that the results of government activities are different in democracies from other types of regime. The public policy outcomes can be explained well by making democracy a variable. Schmitter & Karl (1991) argue that policy practices are affected by form of democracy. A state with democratic governance practices certain values of democracy in its competitive processes. A democratic government shapes public policy as per needs and demands of people. A standard level of fairness must be adopted while deciding upon substantive policy issues. Crane (1982) discusses the criteria to evaluate the policies of social sector of a democracy. Equity is one of the valuation categories. The analysts can assess policy formulation, policy implementation and policy outcomes based on equitableness. The point is illustrated in table 1.1.

Table 1

Evaluation Foci

Valuation Category	Policy Formulation	Policy Implementation	Policy Outcomes
Equitableness	Sources and mechanism of influence	Variance in service quality by social class or related factors	Variance of outcomes across social class or other groups

Source: The Evaluation of Social Policies. (Crane, 2015)

Simmons (1973) presents the viewpoint of various researchers on problems of formal education worldwide. They have found that formal education suffers from elite conception of education which is dedicated to a specific selective education based on elitist doctrine. Inequity is one of the problems of elitist education system which only rewards “the strong, the lucky and the conformists and deprives the slow, the ill-adapted and those who feel different”. Thirlwall (2014) discusses the link between education, development and economic growth. The provision of education, skills, training and employment is the social objective of development of a country. He adds the ‘entitlements’ and ‘capabilities’ concepts of Amartya Sen to elaborate the link. State is bound to provide entitlements like spatial distribution of opportunities, resources and employment through policies to an individual. These entitlements generate capabilities, the effective possibilities what people can do and achieve even if they are not actually chosen. Naveed & Khan (2018) explain the continuous inequitable division of resources and opportunities of education between rich and poor districts of Punjab. The provincial governments have given priority to Central and Northern regions and have neglected Southern regions. A

multidimensional poverty index shows the perpetual deprivation of Southern districts of Punjab.

Zafar (2015) discusses the statistics of unemployment of youth in the context of rural-urban divide and level of education. Punjab had 2.32 million unemployed youth in the year 2014-2015 with majority in rural areas. Abbasi, Shah, Khan, & Shah (2019) explain the gap between demand of labour market and supply of skilled manpower by technical and vocational institutions in Punjab. The sectors which suffer from deprivation of skilled labour force include manufacturing, construction energy and power sector. There is overall 24% less supply against the demand of market. The underlying assumption is democratic government opt for public policies that are inclusive. A democratic government tends to identify the problems of all sections of population and design its policies to provide services accordingly. It is argued that type of regime affects the content and design of public policies. Moreover, the political parties affect public policy with its own specific style of governance. The research attempts to seek the answers to the following questions.

Research Questions

1. Why was the link between democratic values and public policy not established in Pakistan?
2. Why is it important to ascertain the viability of democratic value of equity in the public policy with regard to the largest province of Punjab?
3. How public policies related to education and employment affected the general public in Punjab to achieve their goals?

Discussion

1. Why was the link between democratic values and public policy not established in Pakistan?

Pakistan had been ruled by non-democratic forces in most of its history since independence. The colonial style governance continued in the form of policy process. The military-bureaucratic oligarchy shaped the top-down approach of policy making, which was centralized, undemocratic and non-pluralistic. Public policies deviated from ideally democratic procedure. The objectives of policy making were set by the goals of planning commission. The fact that provinces had low capacity of planning and devising programs further perpetuated the trend of top-down approach of policy process. Moreover, the residual planning was further amassed at provincial headquarters and district governments had the least input in decision making. The stake holders, especially the citizens to whom the service delivery was concerned were rarely consulted.

Public policy deviated from ideal democratic procedure. There were many loopholes in the actual practice of policy making in Pakistan. The stakeholders were seldom consulted. Performance gap was the biggest risk to policy making. Since the days of British Raj, the top-down, centralized approach of policy making was being practised. Later on, a change appeared in outlook of state with devolution of powers to provincial level. But still there was a need for decentralized, bottom-up approach for effective policy making. The government at provincial level centralized the policy making which made the policy process undemocratic and non-pluralistic. The

design of policies seldom adopted equity from needs assessment to policy implementation stages.

In this perspective PML (N) formed a government in Punjab after general elections of 2008 under the garb of regime shift towards civilian democracy. Although the Local Government Ordinance 2001 had given a considerable decision-making power to districts but they suffered from lack of capacity and delay in elections of local bodies. In addition, the formula known as PFC Award had been practiced in Punjab since 2006 for the vertical and horizontal distribution of financial resources¹. The criteria of distribution of different types of grants to districts was based on population, fiscal gap, underdevelopment (indicated through MICS²) and subjects of Education and Health. The analysis of district development priorities since 2002 denote that districts governments used to give less priority to education mainly due to provincial intervention through tied grants for education which were distributed on basis of need and performance.

2. Why is it important to ascertain the viability of democratic value of equity in the public policy with regard to the largest province of Punjab?

Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan in terms of population. Despite its development the MICS 2008 highlighted inter-district disparities in quantitative numbers to inform the planners about present status of social indicators and to formulate data driven plans to distribute resources accordingly. The results ascertained that districts of Chakwal, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Gujranwala and Sialkot showed higher percentage in indicators related to education, but the ratio of unemployment was also high in these districts. On the contrary, the districts of Rahimyar Khan, Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur had the lowest ratio in educational indicators, but the people of these districts were least unemployed. The statistics highlighted the phenomenon of imbalance education economics in Punjab. The annual budget ought to reflect the policy priorities and programs of the government. The budget was supposed to deal with the rising inequalities in districts of Punjab, but the budgetary practice was static. The process of budget making was centralized and non-participatory at both provincial and district level. There was no pre-budget session as prescribed by budget manual issued by finance department of government of Punjab. The government allocated Rs.22.521 billion for education. Pasha & Pasha (2008) asserted, "The budget had 'urban biases with substantially larger allocation of Rs 29 billion for infrastructure projects in metropolitan city like Lahore.'" (pg.7).

The evaluation of ADP of district Jhang for 2008-09 presented the attitude of district government towards the provision of educational opportunities in the district. Jhang is situated in Central Punjab. It had 46% literacy ratio according to MICS Punjab 2007-08. District Jhang Annual Development Program and its Implementation

¹ Notification # SO(PFC) 1-31/2005: The Punjab Specification and Distribution of Provincial Resources Order 2006.

² Punjab government, with assistance of UNICEF, embarked upon periodic conduct of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). The first such survey was carried out in 2003-04 and proved to be the most important tool in determining government budgetary outlays for the next four years, particularly for the social sectors. MICS 2003-04 was based on 40 indicators.

2008-09 (2009) reported, "In terms of allocation, the share of education sector in ADP was minimal. Out of total annual allocation of Rs 315 million for ADP, only Rs 38 million was to be spent in education sector. The process of identifying new projects remained non-participatory and non-transparent." (pg.4). The Punjab government introduced reforms in fiscal management in 2009. The sectoral priorities of ADP 2009-10 aimed at 'equitable growth' and a preferential treatment for those districts which ranked low on socio-economic indicators in MICS. The idea of establishment of Daanish School System and PEEF were two major intended policy interventions by government under reforms to provide equal opportunities of education to marginalized segments of society. But the fiscal discipline resulted in cuts in the budget of education sector. The revised allocation was Rs 21,503 million.

Malik (2009) reported, "Despite tall claims about its focus on education, the Punjab government has slashed the education sector's development and non-development budget by 17.8%". The evaluation of district-level allocation for education of City District Faisalabad, District Jhelum and City District Multan for 2009-10 implied that allocations were insufficient to meet the needs of population and marred with non-participation of stake-holders. Education Budgets: A Study of Selected Districts of Pakistan (2013) reported, "Many flaws occur in the budget making process and the process is neither open nor participatory. Local Government Ordinance (LGO) of 2001 and the Budget Rules of 2003 provide for public consultations, presentation of the draft budget in the Council and effective input by stakeholders, but such provisions are not followed in the districts. The process is dominated almost exclusively by Deputy District Officers for Education and the views of teachers, parents, students and communities regarding needs and priorities are not taken into consideration at any stage of the process". (pg.1).

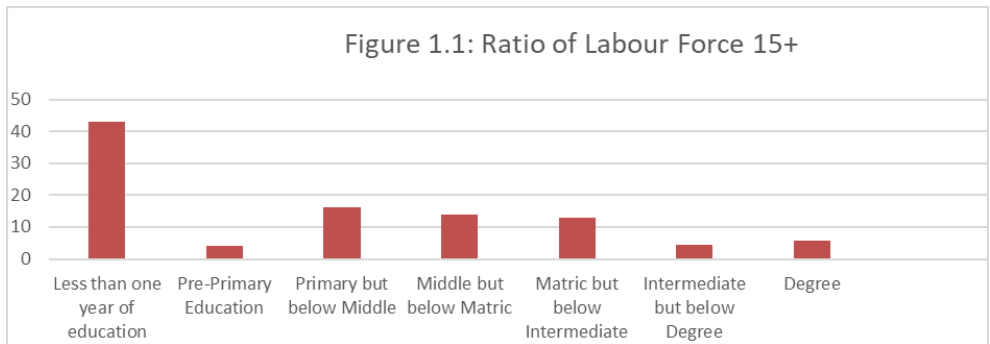
The sectoral priorities for year 2010-11 were set in the light of redefined framework of responsibilities under the 18th constitutional amendment. The allocated amount for education sector was Rs 28,885 million. The government raised the amount of scholarships for PEEF and initiated Punjab Economic Opportunities Program (PEOP) to speed up the process of educational and manpower development in backward districts of Southern Punjab. The objective of PEOP was to initiate inclusive growth in high-poverty districts of Punjab; Bahawalpur, Lodhran, Bahawalnagar and Muzaffargarh. The development specialists reported that literacy level of these districts was low to the extent that even the trainings which required at-least primary education would exclude 80% of poor families of the districts (Cheema, Khwaja, & Naseer, 2011, pg:1). The Punjab Bureau of Statistics conducted MICS in 2011. This survey included more indicators as compared to previous survey to grasp in-depth data related to different aspect of equitable education in the province. The findings revealed that Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Lahore and Gujranwala had literacy rate even higher than provincial average while DG Khan, Rajanpur and Muzaffargarh were the least literate districts.

Disparities persisted among districts on all indicators of education. In terms of employment opportunities, the overall rate of unemployment in the province was 2.9 with the highest percentage in age group of 15-24. The Rawalpindi division had 1.9% and Bahawalpur division had 5.3% unemployment rate. This data ought to inform the distribution of resources among districts by the provincial government. The 4th budget (2011-12) of democratically elected provincial government asserted that government was taking all necessary steps for making laws and provision of

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additional funds to devolved ministries. On the contrary, the policy actions of government were not data driven. The analysis of annual budgets of districts of Sargodha, Toba Tek Singh and Jhelum for 2011-12 unveiled that the district governments suffered from delays in the announcement of PFC shares and insufficient fund for education sector. The fifth provincial budget of democratic government of PML (N) for 2012-13 again aimed at equitable growth of all regions of Punjab. The budget set to spend Rs 31.307 million for education.

The government completed its tenure in 2013. PML (N) could not fulfil its promises mentioned in election manifesto of 2008 related to education and employment. Punjab government did not enact the requisite legislation for implementation of article 25 A. Punjab could not achieve 100% net primary enrolment ratio, 100% primary completion ratio and 80% literacy ratio target of Millennium Development Goal. Media and civil society remained vigilant and collected data to analyse the performance of the government. Media report asserted that “unemployment was given sparse importance during the five-year term of the elected assemblies. None of the employment programmes or policies spelled out in the party manifestos; PML-N’s ‘National Educational Corps’, ‘National Employment Fund’ or ‘National Manpower Plan’ - have seen the light of the day” (Elections 2013: Many promises from 2008 manifestos yet to be delivered, 2013). According to Labour Market Information and Resource Centre, the unemployment increased from 5.54% in 2010 to 6.38% in 2013 in Punjab. The education economy of the province presented a dismal picture as shown in the figure 1.1. (Punjab Employment Trends 2015, 2016)



PML (N) succeeded in forming a government in centre and Punjab. One of the hallmarks of governance in the year 2013 was the launching of Sub-National governance programme by the government of Punjab with financial support of DFID. The SNG program aimed at reforms in the system to engage stakeholders especially the citizens in the process of policy, planning and budgeting. The Budget transparency report by SNG observed that budget of Punjab involved problematic data collection, incomprehensible documents and inaccessibility to public. The pre-budget statement which provides information about linkage of policies with budget was either not produced at first place or if produced was not published for public. Citizen’s budget which provides non-technical information to public about plans of the government was also not produced by Punjab government. The report also highlighted the fact that one of the major drawbacks of budget narration was that the most indicators measure output rather than performance. Resultantly, the details

linking policies to the most impoverished populations in the province required improvement.

The first budget of PML (N) government for Punjab for 2013-14 set sectoral priorities to promote inclusive economic growth in Punjab. The budget allocated Rs 40,596 million for education sector. The sectoral policies of education for ADP 2013-14 involved eradication of regional disparity at every level of education and generation of opportunities of employment. The government articulated economic growth strategy 2014-18 with objective of development of human capital and skill for inclusive growth in the province. The education sector budget for 2014-15 was pitched at Rs. 46,712 million. Despite the claims and upward trend in the education budget, disparities in terms of educational opportunities among districts remained consistent. Public Financing of Education in Pakistan; Analysis of Federal, Provincial and District Budgets (2014) reported, "Eight districts including Khushab, Pakpattan, Lodhran and Rajanpur have the lowest annual expenditure that is between 1.5 to 2.5 billion. Large disparity in education budget expenditure between districts is evident from the fact that the combined expenditure of these eight districts is still less than sum of total annual expenditure of Lahore and Faisalabad" (pg.32).

According to Punjab MICS 2014, there was an improvement in cumulative literacy ratio at provincial level but inequalities among districts were evident. Gujrat, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Chakwal and Lahore scored high on all indicators while D G Khan, Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur scored the lowest. The highest ratio of unemployed in age group of 10 to 15 and above was reported in districts of Chakwal, Jhelum, Nankana Sahib, Mandi Bahuddin, Khushab and Bahawalpur. A clear anomaly was reported between level of education and ratio of private returns to education in districts of Jhelum and Chakwal. It also showed that supply side policy interventions were inadequate to meet the needs of education and employment of population. The annual budget estimate for education sector for the year 2015-16 was Rs 59.433 million. For employment, it was decided to invest money in vocational education for provision of industry-based skills. The 'inclusive growth motto' of provincial growth strategy required the district governments to be more responsible for provision of educational opportunities. But the centralization of policy making and planning debarred local governments from the whole process. Pakistan; Tracing the Flow of Public Money (2015) reported, "The government does not use the information data base of districts for analytical purpose The local/district authorities are not represented at the policy table, and have no effective role in the planning process, despite the fact that they are the closest to service delivery units and have best knowledge of local needs". (pg.5).

The provincial authorities estimated the budget of Rs.64, 566 million for the year 2016-17 for education sector. The government was increasing the amount for education sector with every passing year but neither the provincial nor the district governments followed the constitutional process of including stake holders in the budget making process. There was a severe problem of personnel capacity at district level. Dawn (2016) reported, "Around 38pc of sanctioned posts in the district budget branches in 34 districts of Punjab are lying vacant. This and non-participation of the public in budget-making are major reasons for poor budget planning at district level". The government allocated Rs 230 billion for District Education Authorities in budget for 2017-18. The investments and skills section stated that government

would spend Rs 11 billion collectively for projects related to training, entrepreneurship and self-employment. The centralized approach to public policies of the government of PML(N) in Punjab affected the criteria of equity in policy process related to provision of equitable opportunities of education and their impact on employment in districts of Punjab. The election manifesto of PML(N) for 2008 elections had pledged to make education the number one national priority.

3. How public policies related to education and employment affected the general public in Punjab to achieve their goals?

The provincial government vowed to provide free education up to higher secondary level in public sector institutions, to establish institutions of higher education and creation of economic opportunities to utilize the human capital. Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif became the chief minister of Punjab and Mian Mujtaba Shuja ur Rehman was given the portfolio of education ministry. The school education sector received the highest attention of chief minister of Punjab, Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif. He launched Punjab Schools Reforms Roadmap (PSRR) to deal with challenges of education in the province in the context of the article 25A that was inserted in the constitution in 2010. The Punjab Schools reforms were a whole system -reforms that focused on “reform of every school within a district and every district within a province”. Sir Michael Barber was an architect of PSRR and his innovative ‘Deliverology’ approach aimed at effective monitoring of all steps of implementation of reforms to get desired results.

Moreover, PSRR aimed at provision of access, quality, monitoring and evaluation for evidence-based service delivery of education in the province. Chudhary & Tajwar (2020) analyzed, “PSRR developed a portfolio of ambitious yet achievable activities, each targeting a series of outputs that would ultimately and collectively enable the achievement of the outcomes. The stable leadership and political will of the Chief Minister ensured that the accountability embedded within the reform was maintained and that regular stocktaking took place.” (pg.120). The issue with PSRR was that it relied heavily on authority of chief minister and team of experts by McKinsey which put question on its sustainability in the long run. Moreover, it depended on quantitative measures of performance and did not take qualitative analysis into account. The government also announced a new Labour policy in 2010 to combat the increased unemployment rate in the province in age group 15-24. The government initiated “Punjab Rozgar Scheme’ to provide yellow cabs, loans for Agriculture and Veterinary graduates and loans for small industrial business to ‘educated unemployed’ youth of the province in 2011. The government also established the Labour Market information and Resource Centre to collect and analyse labour market data and identification of future market trends the experts also urged to collect district-level data of labour market the phase of Punjab Education Sector Project which started in 2009 under government of PML (N) ended in 2012.

According to the evaluation report of implementation of program published by World Bank, the program achieved modest outcomes but missed some targets. Pakistan, Punjab Education Sector Project (2013) reported, “This program was expanded from 18 to 29 districts. The primary net enrolment slightly increased from 61.7% in 2007 to 63.6% in 2012, not meeting the downwardly revised target (65.0%). The middle-level net enrolment rate slightly increased from 20.1% in 2007

to 25.4% in 2012, meeting the upwardly revised target (24%). The primary completion rate slightly increased from 50.5% in 2007 to 53.5% in 2012, not meeting the target (55%). A Girls Stipend program was implemented, and in FY2011-2012 the program covered 385,000 girls in 16 districts. This program targeted the worst-off and underserved areas of the province. Collectively, 93% of eligible girls received the stipends each year. The delivery of the stipends took more than five months, while it was planned to take less than 3 months". The second Punjab Education Sector Project (PESP II) began in 2012 to finance the second phase of PESRP. The objective of PESP II was to increase child (aged 6-15) school participation and student achievement. The assigned implementation period of this project was 2012-2015. The projects related to provision of employment opportunities were merged under Punjab Rozgar Scheme. Some new programs like Green Tractor Scheme for Agricultural Youth and Innovation Development Fund were introduced in the financial year 2012-2013 budget.

The Bank of Punjab had given 20,000 cars to unemployed youth in districts of Punjab on the basis of population in 2011-12 but the record of Transport department showed that people were using cabs for purposes other than specified in the scheme. When PML (N0 came into power again in 2013, The Punjab School Education Sector Plan (PSESP) was also redesigned for time frame of five years (2013-2018) with focus on equity. The PSESP was a cumulative policy framework based on Punjab Education Sector Reform Project (PESRP II), PSRR (Punjab Reforms Roadmap plan) National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 and Article 25 A. The plan document mentioned its limitations regarding situational analysis of out-of-school children, population projection and overlooking of region -specific issues due to generalized data. The implementation section of sector plan adopted the indicator of NER at every level to monitor the equity in terms of educational opportunities at district level and Nielsen Survey to keep record of out-of-school children.

It is to be noted that within the two years of implementation of PSESP, it became a debatable issue that there was no comparability in the data of out-of-school children collected by influential organizations like ASER, Alif Ailaan and McKinsey. The research institute of Planning and Development Punjab also showed strong reservations on adoption of formula used by Alif Ailaan to report the number of out-of-school children (Imran, 2015, pg no:1). PESP II also completed in Punjab in 2016 after a delay of one year in original completion date due to completion of technical assistance activities. The World Bank's independent Evaluation Group report highlighted some important facts related to performance of government. It affirmed that child school participation at all levels in Punjab under PESP II remained 'modest'. The net enrolment rates at all levels of education slightly increased but missed the targets. The school participation rate decreased at primary level but increased a little at middle and high level. The report also highlighted the administrative data gathered by government on monthly basis which asserted that the enrolment increased from 8.9 million to 9.8 million students in public schools of Punjab. However, the students' achievement remained substantial with a slight increase in test results of students especially from poor districts.

Alif Ailaan also reported better ranking of districts of Punjab on enrolment, learning and retention score as compared to previous years. PEEF also played an instrumental role in providing opportunities to students of less developed districts through scholarships from secondary to Master level studies. PEEF Impact Assessment

Report (2016) reported, “A positive trend has been seen over the spread of these 5 years, thereby showing that more people are receiving this scholarship every progressive year. The receivers feel that their future financial prospects have been improved”.(pg :18) The students from the districts of Vehari, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Bhakkar ,Okara ,Muzaffargarh ,Lodhran, Layyah, Dera Ghazi Khan, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and Okara consistently received scholarships over the years. Being cognizant of key challenges, the government started another reforms program, Prho Punjab,Brho Punjab, also known as 2018 educational goals under PESP III. The government was opening universities, but the economy was not adding jobs, in the system. The difficulties in school-to-work transitions and labour market challenges can be partly explained by inadequate job preparedness because of the poor quality and lack of labour market relevance of education. Pakistan Development Update (2017) analyzed, “Only 18 percent of Punjab’s working age population is employed in regular wage jobs. Close to 45 percent of the working age population is inactive. Workers engaged in agriculture are largely unpaid family contributors, or self-employed in subsistence farming. Informality is common and more prevalent among women and youth” (pg: 41).

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The policies of the government decide the share of different segments of population that result in haves and have not in society. Equity-based policies propose to eradicate the gap in order to remove disparities. PML(N) remained in power in Punjab from 2008-2018. Education was not in the legislative domain of province in 2008 due to its listing in federal and concurrent legislative lists under the constitution of 1973. But the 18th amendment brought education back to Punjab’s jurisdiction. The government of PML (N) initiated its own Education Reforms Roadmap under second phase of PESP to implement article 25 A. These reforms were intended to be system level reforms to cover every district and every school within district in Punjab. The reforms targeted enrolment, quality education and teachers’ training to overhaul the education outlook in Punjab. The reforms were revolutionary and laid foundation for data collection related to educational indicators and data-driven policy interventions in districts of Punjab.

The government worked for provision of quality education to population. There were demand side incentives in the form of stipends, education vouchers and scholarships to students of backward districts to bring them to school and make them stay up to matriculation level. Punjab Education Foundation, PEEF and Daanish Schools were major development projects of PML (N) government to provide equitable opportunities of education to marginalized and income-poor sections of population from backward districts. But there was no clear vision to link education with demands of job market. The programs like Punjab Rozgar Scheme included the provision of yellow cabs and loan for small businesses. The people with secondary school qualification were eligible for yellow cabs and loans. The planning and budget making remained centralized and somewhat politicised. The first tenure of democratic government of PML (N) ended in Punjab in 2013. The government showed political will to provide education to all in the province. However, the PML (N) did not do any serious effort to decentralize the decision making to district level that could make the education reforms implement effectively.

The next tenure of PML(N)'s democratic government began in Punjab after the general elections of 2013. In the second term, the government tried to democratize the process of planning and budgeting by publishing citizen's budget and needs assessment criteria related documents under SNG program to inform citizens. The school sector education program and higher education commission's plans were also redesigned to make education more inclusive. The government focused on providing missing facilities to schools and colleges and selection of areas to open sub-campuses of universities where there was no institution of higher education before. The problem remained with top-down approach of policymaking. The PML (N) government could hardly manage to give authority to local governments which they commanded under article 140 A just once in 2017 during its ten years' tenure. Same was the apathy of PML (N) towards the revision of PFC award and shares of districts in it.

Moreover, the decision making related to education could not become inclusive and consultative at provincial and district level. The government also could not succeed in bringing educated work force in the market to cope up with problems of demand-skills mismatch. PML (N) showed political willingness to make education inclusive and provision of jobs to people. It did not devolve decision making to district level the way it should be devolved to make political supplies compatible with demands of population. The chief minister centralized the system-level reforms and did not bring district level authorities to table to add their demands in policy actions. The problems of education in Punjab can be solved by making public policy decentralized, consultative and inclusive at every stage of policy process.

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