

An Analysis of Current Issues in Secondary Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

The study attempted to analyze the current issues in secondary education in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan. All the teachers and students at secondary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa constituted the population of the study. A total sample of 167 secondary school teachers and 600 10th class students were selected through multistage sampling technique. It was a quantitative and descriptive study and a self-developed opinionnaire was used for data collection from teachers and students. The instrument was properly validated and pilot tested. For data analysis, descriptive statistics i.e., mean and standard deviation was employed. The findings reveal that there are a number of issues in secondary education which contribute to the poor and unsatisfactory performance of education. These were; poor accessibility to secondary education; ineffective curriculum, unsatisfactory administration and management system; inadequate financing; poor assessment and appraisal system; lack of competent staffing; lack of basic educational facilities etc. Based on findings it was recommended that education department with the collaboration of policymakers, educationists and all the stakeholders to devise effective measures to increase the efficiency and productively of secondary education.

Keywords: Access; Curriculum; Teaching; Assessment; Governance; Financing; Secondary Education.

Introduction

It is generally believed that there are problems and issues in female secondary education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, which are needed to be explored for remedial solution and improvement of the female secondary education to the satisfaction of the stakeholders. These issues include problem of access of girls to schools and deteriorating quality of secondary education evidently due to a number of causes. According to Education Management Information System Report

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of Government schools (2015-16) the contribution of private sector is now rising to 50%, which is valid argument in support of the poor quality of public education system since parents remained in search of quality educational institutions for their children. The deterioration of quality and problem of accessibility of girls to school are owing to many reasons such as evidently low financing of secondary education, gender disparity and poverty of parents as well as social barriers. This study was prompted by these considerations and, therefore, it was needed to explore them for viable recommendation to the department of education for the purpose of addressing them for remedial solution.

Mehmood (2011) is of the view that recognizing importance of secondary education there is a need to make it relevant to the needs of stakeholders and market. This level of education should also meet the emergent requirement of society. This will require planning for personnel management thereby enabling the learners to contribute to socio-economic development of the country.¹ The National Education Policy (2009) documented that preparation of students for life and education at the higher level takes place at this stage. Their skills are developed in such a way that they meet the requirements of the market and other stake holders. The role of secondary education is important in this respect that helps to accelerate the pace of the socio-economic development of the country; further most also endures rapid development of science and technology.² Khan (2009) reported that in view of the rapid change and economic challenges in the market education at the secondary level both for boys and girls will have to mold in such a way that responds to the needs of the market and industry. These challenges require the education system to bring the quality of secondary education to such level that suits the needs and requirements of the market.³

World Bank (2013) reported that there is a number of barriers of girls to access the secondary school which include; distance to school; early marriages; cultural values; schooling cost; opportunity costs; security concerns (school related gender based violence); early childbearing; negative experience of schooling; menstrual hygiene management; and labor market participation.⁴ Mustafa (2012) reported that low standard of education has adversely affected secondary education in the country. This has also causes students' low achievements in examinations and increase in drop outs of children. A number of initiatives were made to improve the situations but unfortunately there is still a dire need to make the education relevant to the needs of the society and market. These efforts included construction of additional classrooms, boundary walls and some other incentives for

teachers to acquire their whole-hearted support and commitment to education.⁵

Adams (2012) viewed that there is an urgent need for curriculum reforms in order to make it student-centered for increasing learning not examination oriented. Students should not be expected to remain passive learners to acquire knowledge for the sake of passing examination but they should rather be supported to learn through their involvement in the teaching learning process and be involved in classroom interaction and collaborative approaches to learning.⁶

Shafa (2003) highlighted the unfair practices in the current examination system, which made it unreliable and flawed. It posed serious threats to the government's efforts for school effectiveness.⁷ Hodgson (2002) advocated the need and significance of knowledge explosion for socio-economic and technological development of the country. The ICT is transforming the world and modernizing it for swift development. The new technologies not only make access of learners possible to education but also assist in quality improvement, socio-economic development, and technological changes in the workplace.⁸

Duncan (2003) believed that good governance and effective management of educational institutions has not been given serious thought till date. The impact of good governance in education has also on economic growth of the country. It is a pity that far indicator for good governance have not been developed for education in Pakistan due to which it is not possible to measure the impact of governance on education and other institutions.⁹ Saeed (2007) viewed that instructional management is the important responsibility of educational supervisors both at the local, district and provincial levels. However, in Pakistan, the focus of this responsibility is on the education officers and their deputies. Secondary schools in Pakistan are supervised and monitored by District Education Officers. It is unfortunate that this important role has been neglected due to which quality of education is deteriorating day by day.¹⁰

Akbar (2012) reported the importance of laboratory services in schools for practical work because these are the integral need and parts of actual practices of students about what they learnt in theory. Students can only be motivated to learn science and computers when they are exposed to practical work in laboratories. The acquisition of problem solving and analytical abilities depend on practices of what students learn in classrooms.¹¹

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the important issues in girls' secondary education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The

study analyzed the current issues at secondary level of education considering the situation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study might be helpful to the policy makers in each province to meet the challenges of problems and issues at secondary level of education. The study might be also helpful to the heads of each school to prepare themselves to cope with the challenges of the secondary level and acquire the higher standard of education. Similarly, teachers may also prepare themselves to equip themselves with skills as per the demands of the global world. It might be helpful for the teachers to raise their standards of skills and learn the knowledge of modern communication technologies.

Research Questions

What are the current underlying issues in girls' secondary education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province?

Methods and Materials

Population

All the teachers and students at secondary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa constituted the population of the study. According to the Annual Statistical Report of Government Schools, there were total 2108 public secondary schools in which 1386 were boys and 722 were girls' schools. In these schools, there were total 26471 secondary school teachers (18683 males & 7788 females) and 336622 secondary school students (216966 males & 119656 Females) (EMIS 2014-2015).¹²

Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to four districts i.e., Bannu, Kohat, Malakand and Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to financial constraints of the researchers with a view to generalize the results of the study to the entire province. Furthermore, the study was delimited to only female teachers and students due to culture barriers.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Multi-stage sampling technique was practiced for selecting sample of the study. At first stage, four out of 25 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were selected randomly. At second stage, 167 secondary school teachers and 600 10th class students were selected.

Table 1: Population and Sample of the Study

S. No	Districts	Secondary School Teachers		Secondary School Students	
		Total	Sample	Total	Sample
1	Bannu	63	29	653	150
2	Kohat	64	36	1000	150
3	Malakand	105	43	1177	150
4	Peshawar	168	49	1360	150
Total		400	167	4190	600

Research Design and Instrumentation

The study in hand was quantitative and descriptive in nature and survey research designed was used for this study. In this study, a self-developed opinionnaire for secondary school teachers and students of 10th class was used for obtaining their responses regarding issues in secondary education. This tool was developed on the basis of indicators which were drawn from literature review. These indicators were; access; quality & relevance; curriculum; assessment; teaching; technology; financing; and governance. The opinionnaire was designed on five-point likert's scale.

Pilot Study

The opinionnaire was pilot tested on a small number of respondents of each category, who were not included in the actual study. Opinionnaire was modified in light of the suggestions received from experts and made it precise and workable. The instrument was pilot tested in 5 different Government Girls High Schools in district Kohat and these schools were not included in the actual study.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

The validity was checked by the panel of five experts in the relevant area having extraordinary experience. Some items were found weak and were deleted. In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha was applied to find out the reliability of the instruments. The average Reliability Coefficients were found 0.830 which confirms that the instrument was reliable research instrument. Average Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) for each subscale of the opinionnaire is given in table in detail:

Table 2: Average Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of the Sub-Scales of the Opinionnaire

Subscales of Opinionnaire	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Access	03	0.839
Quality & Relevance	03	0.812

Curriculum	03	0.689
Assessment	03	0.783
Teaching	03	0.827
Technology	03	0.898
Financing	03	0.893
Governance	03	0.893
Mean	03	0.830

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to collect data from the respondents, the researchers personally visited the respective sample schools. In order to get maximum response rate, rapport with responded was needed. The researcher developed rapport with the subjects to elicit appropriate opinions. The opinionnaires were handed over personally to the respondents. The purpose and importance of the study was explained to them, which evidently helped in establishing familiarity with respondents. This relationship was further strengthened by an introductory letter of the supervisor. Then Opinionnaires were distributed among the respondents and data was collected. After collection of data, it was properly organized, tabulated and analyzed on the basis of descriptive statistics i.e., mean and standard deviation through SPSS version 21.

The whole process is explained as under:

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Access Subscale

S.No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	There are several reasons to bar access of girls to school which include; among others are poverty, social taboos and early marriages.	3.96	0.93
2.	Female education does not appear to be the priority of government.	2.58	1.26
3.	The absenteeism of teachers adversely affects the quality of teachings.	4.20	1.07
Mean		3.58	1.09

Table 3 indicates the descriptive statistics of respondents' Opinionnaires about the access to secondary education. The results revealed that respondents were agreed that there are several reasons to bar access of girls to school which include; among others are poverty, social taboos and early marriages (mean= 3.96, SD=0.93). Regarding female education, the respondents expressed that female education appears to be the priority of government (Mean=2.58, SD=1.26). With respect to teachers' absenteeism, the respondents strongly agreed that teachers' absenteeism adversely effects the quality of teaching (mean=4.20, SD=1.07).

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Quality and Relevance Subscale

S.No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	The current education system does not meet demands of quality and relevance.	3.76	1.23
2.	The current education system does not meet the requirements of further education and job market.	2.24	1.32
3.	Quality education is not mere the high position in examination.	3.12	1.30
Mean		3.04	1.28

Table 4 depicts the descriptive analysis of respondents' Opinionnaires about the quality and relevance of secondary education. The outcomes revealed that respondents agreed that the current education system does not meet demands of quality and relevance (mean=3.76, SD=1.23). The respondents showed disagreement with the statement that the current education system does not meet the requirements of further education and job market (mean=2.24, SD=1.32). Regarding quality education, the respondents agreed that quality education is not mere the high position in examination (mean=3.12, SD=1.30).

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Curriculum Subscale

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	There is a need to train teachers in curriculum planning & development.	3.86	1.07
2.	The present curriculum does not meet the requirements of the present age.	3.70	1.21
3.	The present curricula are required to be linked to co-curriculum activities.	4.03	1.22
Mean		3.86	1.17

Table 5 shows the descriptive analysis of respondents' Opinionnaires about the curriculum of secondary education. The results indicate that respondents were agreed that there is a need to train teachers in curriculum planning and development (mean=3.86, SD=1.07). The respondents replied that the present curriculum does not meet the requirements of the present age (mean=3.70, SD=1.21). majority of the respondents responded that the present curricula are required to be linked to co-curriculum activities (4.03, SD=1.22).

Table 6: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Assessment Subscale

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	The current assessment system promotes rote learning in students.	3.65	1.20
2.	The assessment of different class students should be based on different methods.	3.66	1.22
3.	The board examinations are based on old techniques, and requires to reappraisal.	4.03	1.13
Mean		3.78	1.18

Table 6 portrays the descriptive analysis of respondents' Opinionnaires about the assessment practices in secondary education. The results revealed that the respondents showed agreement with the statement that the current assessment system promotes rote learning in students (mean=3.66, SD=1.22). Responding on assessment, the respondents replied that the assessment of different class students should be based on different methods (mean= 3.66, SD=1.22). The respondents also showed strongly agreement that the board examinations are based on old techniques, and requires to reappraisal (mean=4.03, SD=1.13).

Table 7: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Teaching Subscale

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	There is no interaction between teacher and students in the classroom.	2.24	1.39
2.	The outcomes of a lesson plan are rarely kept in view during teaching.	3.24	1.43
3.	Teachers do not address the problems of different mental level students	3.92	1.12
Mean		3.13	1.31

Table 7 reflects the descriptive statistics of respondents' Opinionnaires about the teaching in secondary education. The outcomes of the table revealed that the respondents showed disagreement with the statement that there is no interaction between teacher and students in the classroom (mean=2.24, SD=1.39). The respondents agreed that the outcomes of a lesson plan are rarely kept in view during teaching (mean=3.24, SD=1.43). The respondents also showed agreement with the statement that teachers do not address the problems of different mental level students (mean=3.92, SD=1.12).

Table 8: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Technology Subscale

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	There is nominal use of school library by teachers and students.	3.25	1.27
2.	Science laboratories are not fully equipped with necessary equipments.	3.10	1.33
3.	Computer base teaching is necessary for effective teaching.	3.27	1.39
Mean		3.21	1.33

Table 8 depicts the descriptive analysis of respondents' Opinionnaires about the status of technology in secondary education. The findings revealed that respondents were agreed that there is nominal use of school library by teachers and students (mean=3.25, SD=1.27). With regards to science laboratories, the respondents agreed that science laboratories are not fully equipped with necessary equipments (mean=3.10, SD=1.33). The respondents expressed that computer based teaching is necessary for effective teaching (mean=3.27, SD=1.39).

Table 9: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Financing Subscale

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	Sufficient budget allocation is made for the school.	3.50	1.30
2.	The budget is mostly spent on student's co-curricular activities.	3.66	1.05
3.	Head of school does not utilize private fund for student's welfare.	3.62	1.11
Mean		3.59	1.13

Table 9 indicates the descriptive statistics of respondents' Opinionnaires about the financing in secondary education. The results showed that respondents were agreed that sufficient budget allocation is made for the school (mean=3.50, SD=1.30). They also showed agreement with the statement that the budget is mostly spent on students' co-curricular activities (mean=3.66, SD= 1.05). furthermore, they also head of school does not utilize private fund for student's welfare (3.62, SD=1.11).

Table 10: Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents' Opinionnaires Regarding Governance Subscale

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	Principal's attitude is mostly undemocratic in the schools.	3.85	1.09
2.	Principal's attitude has a definite impact on teachers and students.	4.02	0.85
3.	School principal supervises teaching learning process and provides feed back to the teachers and students for improvement.	4.01	1.09
Mean		3.96	1.01

Table 10 illustrates the descriptive analysis of respondents' Opinionnaires about the governance at secondary level. The outcomes of the table indicate that principals' attitude within the school, in general, remained undemocratic (mean=3.85, SD=1.09). The respondents showed strongly agreement with the statement that Principals' attitude had definite impact on teachers and students (mean=4.01, SD=SD=0.85). They were also strongly agreed that school's principal must supervise teaching learning process and provide feedback to the teachers and students for improvement (mean=4.01, SD=1.09).

Findings

The following findings highlights causes that are responsible for the current issues in female secondary education:

1. Social taboos and absenteeism of students preclude access of girls to secondary schools.
2. Students' academic gains are not the only criterion to judge the quality of education. There are other considerations such as relevancy, employability and character building of students to which the education system must also con tribute.
3. There was no uniformity in the curriculum taught in Government and Private Schools The practical aspects of the curriculum in science subjects do not coincide with the theoretical aspects of the course.
4. Current assessment system was flawed in that it promotes rote learning instead of creativity and comprehension. There were many ways in which unfair means were used in the examinations.
5. Science and computer laboratories as well as libraries were found rare in most of the schools.
6. Secondary education was never given priority in allocation of funds for development schemes as compared to primary education and, therefore, expansion at the secondary level was limited due to which

adequate access was not available to girls at the secondary education level.

7. Principals' attitudes have an impact on the role performance of teachers and students. Therefore it seems imperative to train them in managerial and leadership skills.
8. There are gaps in policy and practice at different levels of educational administration.

Conclusions

It was concluded that social taboos and absenteeism of students impede access of girls to secondary schools. Students' academic gains are not the only criterion to judge the quality of education. There are other considerations such as relevancy, employability and character building of students to which the education system must also con tribute. The curriculum is ineffective and there was no uniformity in the curriculum taught in public and private sector. There is need of training for teachers in curriculum planning and development. The assessment and examination system is unsatisfactory. Teachers have no competencies in teaching methodologies. In most of the schools, there were no science and computer laboratories as well as libraries. Administration at school level was found unsatisfactory. Secondary education was never given priority in allocation of funds for development schemes as compared to primary education and, therefore, expansion at the secondary level was limited due to which adequate access was not available to girls at the secondary education level.

Recommendations

1. In order to curb the tendency of absenteeism of teachers and students the department of education has to strengthen the monitoring and supervision of schools.
2. The focal point for consideration should, besides students' academic achievements, be the quality and relevance of secondary education.
3. Curriculum at the secondary level should be made relevant to the learning needs of students and updated after every five years.
4. The current evaluation system requires innovative approaches reason being that it promotes only rote learning.
5. There is need to develop the leadership and managerial capacities of the school heads in different areas such as finance, planning, policy, research, management and administration.
6. Overall budget allocation both developmental and recurring may be increased for secondary education as this subsector was ignored in

- the past. Simultaneously, the drawing disbursing officers must ensure full utilization of the budget allocation within the fiscal year.
7. Principal should encourage teachers' participation in school governance and encourage them to accept additional duties for enhancing school efficiency.
 8. Donors should be persuaded to provide technical and financial assistance to the secondary schools.
 9. Vocational education needed much attention as the government policy also requires vocationalising the secondary education.

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