Pakistan Coalition for Education

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Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) was formed in 2005 in order to provide a platform to civil society through which they can address key issues on policy advocacy and bridge the gap between policy makers and the civil society. The organization was formed for the development and implementation of policy in context of free and quality education for all. PCE is legally registered as the Society for Access to Quality Education (SAQE) in 2010. PCE is a strong advocate of evidence-based policy advocacy, community awareness and mobilization.
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PCE is a strong proponent of mobilizing communities in order to identify the barriers in access to quality education. PCE piloted a two pronged initiative in two districts of Pakistan. After the successful launch of the intervention in Ghotki, PCE initiated its second intervention in Jamshoro. In the first phase of the initiative, around 37 schools were surveyed from 2 union councils, namely Shah Awais and Shalmani. Survey forms were put together to determine the enrolment and dropout rates at schools, the funds allocated and their utilization, information regarding SMCs and school facilities.

Based on the findings of the baseline report, capacity building training sessions were organized in both UCs. Training modules and handouts were devised to train key stakeholders including SMC members, head teachers and local administration. The training modules focused on School Development Plans, record maintenance and fund raising for the SMC members and head teachers. Representatives of the local government were briefed on the topics such as local government structures and their roles and responsibilities with reference to education governance.

PCE organized a total of 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to help identify the main issues being faced by the communities with regards to education. Fathers, mothers and head teachers shared their unique perspectives on the present state of educational institutions in the UCs. Out of school children, enrolment rates and drop-out rates were scrutinized and overviewed by all stakeholders present. Since the groups were segregated based on gender, they were able to provide impartial and uninfluenced views.

Some of the key challenges identified by the parents are the absence of elementary schools in the neighborhood and high transportation costs. Lack of female teachers was also pointed out as a cause for concern and high dropout rates for girls.
Glimpses from PCE’s first intervention in Jamshoro
The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), the National Campaign for Education Nepal, ActionAid International, the Education Support Program of the Open Society Foundations and the Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC) hosted a series of meetings between the 7th and 13th of September, 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal. These events convened diverse stakeholders working on issues around the Right to Education with the purpose of discussing concerns raised with regards to the growth of private actors in education provision. Ms. Nida Mushtaq, Research Coordinator PCE and Ms. Zehra Arshad, National coordinator attended the event on behalf of PCE and presented their unique perspectives on the growth of private sector in Pakistan.

As the issues related to the growth of private actors in education are increasing, the momentum of civil society mobilization and response is also growing. For this purpose, various civil society organizations collaborated to have meaningful dialogues and devise common strategy while setting out a way forward. Civil society organizations have been working on a common strategy that will be adopted to encourage their respective governments towards policy making which ensure free, quality and compulsory education for all its citizens. A list of such events is given below.

- A Global Meeting of civil society organizations, including education coalitions and human rights organizations, working together on privatization in education and human rights worldwide (Thursday, September 7th – Sunday September 10th);

- A visit to communities affected by privatization in education to reflect on concrete situations (Sunday, September 10th);

- An Asia Pacific Regional Meeting and workshop to reflect on the growth of private actors in education in the region and to produce a joint strategy to address some of the challenges identified. The participants also provided feedback on the global human rights Guiding Principles on the role of private actors in education that are currently being developed (Monday, September 11th- Wednesday September 13th).
Harvesting Hope Story

‘Harvesting Hope’ campaign is about raising awareness on the importance of girls’ education and generating public support for this cause. We believe that educating girls is the best investment we can make to alleviate poverty and create a safer world where they develop an identity of their own. It has an incredible multiplier effect, providing returns for generations. An educated woman has the skills, information, and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen. Educated young women are less likely to marry early and against their will; more likely to have healthy children; and are more likely to send their children to school, thus ensuring positive educational and social outcomes for future generations. On the platform of Harvesting Hope, we are looking for champions and portraits of courage, be it a child, a parent, a teacher, a citizen, government functionary, who has taken that plunge, that leap of faith that has made possible for one girl child, one family or the entire neighborhood to receive good quality education regardless of all sorts of cultural, social, physical, financial barriers. This edition features the story of Shoaib, a 14 year old boy who is struggling to make ends meet yet

he continues to prioritize education in the face of all odds. Read further to find out more!

Shoaib is fourteen years of age. He does not attend a school because his family never had the means to put him in a school. Instead, they put him to work as soon as he became old enough to earn some money. His father does masonry work on daily wages and it is not every day that he can find work to feed the family of 7. Shoaib is second in order amongst five siblings, she has an elder sister and three younger brothers. Her sister has left her studies after completing primary because there is no girls’ higher secondary school in the vicinity and their parents are wary of her security with rampant lawlessness. They obviously do not have enough money to spend on the transportation to and from school. Shoaib’s younger brothers attend a government boys’ school and whatever minimal fee and stationery expenses are incurred are borne by Shoaib.

The tough financial situation and forced discontinuation of his education has not extinguished Shoaib’s hope. He is exerting himself physically and mentally just to complete his education at least till intermediate level. At a young age of 14, Shoaib only sleeps for 3-4 hours every day. He works in the night shift at a garment factory, where he packs nearly 1000 shirts every night. He reaches home at six in the morning and leaves again for madrassah by seven thirty. After taking Quran lessons he heads to the non-formal education center at 9 where he is completing the course books of Grade 7. He reaches home around 1 in the afternoon, sleeps for 3-4 hours and then reports back on his duty at 6 in the evening. Working on a 12 hour night shift for 26 days, Shoaib earns PKR 6000 which are essential for his family’s survival and more importantly, his brothers’ education.

Every day, Shoaib burns the midnight lamp not because he has to prepare for an exam but because life has put him in testing circumstances. Despite all the odds, Shoaib continues his fight to receive education. Whether the non-formal education center is equipping Shoaib with any skills, knowledge or attitude to make his efforts count, is a different question altogether.
Why Punjab is outsourcing its public schools

The article was originally published in the Herald’s September 2017 issue under the title “The learning curve”.

Momina and Fatima sit on either side of their grandfather Muhammad Sattar at a small shop next to a mosque. They eagerly turn to their favorite lessons in their textbooks, comfortably spelling out basic words in English. Their 55-year-old grandfather beams at them with satisfaction.

The girls are students of grade one at a government primary school in their native village, Chandair, on the eastern outskirts of Lahore. Muhammad Shakil, who studied at the same school in the 1990s, was taught the English alphabet only after entering sixth grade at a middle school in a neighboring village. Back then, Urdu was the only medium of instruction at the school in his own village, located 2.5 kilometers from Pakistan’s border with India at Wagah.

Spread over seven canals of land, the school in Chandair was built in 2007 next to the village graveyard. Its classrooms are to one side of an unkempt, weed-riddled ground that lies behind an 11-feet tall red-brick boundary wall. It is believed that the building was built through the efforts of an elderly school teacher Abdul Waheed. Nearly 40 years ago, he started teaching children of Chandair under the shade of a tree. People did not understand the importance of education, Waheed says as he talks of the school’s early days.

The government, too, did not bother with providing physical infrastructure for the school even though some of its outgoing students were entering institutions of higher learning and landing decent jobs. Ten years ago, a retired officer of the National Logistics Cell (NLC), a military-run construction and transport firm, came to the area on a preaching trip. He helped Waheed find money and land to build the school. The villagers showed tremendous support for the project. This is how the building came into existence.

In 2012, Chandair’s first private primary school opened its doors to students. It started providing education in English from the most basic grade. By 2015, enrolment at the government school dropped by 50 per cent. Parents wanted their children to learn English first and foremost.

It was then that the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) sent its officials to take over the government school. “I was teaching a class when the assistant education officer arrived with a PEF team,” says Waheed. They told him that the school was missing its enrolment targets and was being handed over to private management.
A former student of the school is now a teacher there. She recalls its condition before the takeover. Children did not have shoes, let alone uniforms, she says. “Students would come and go as they pleased. There was no discipline.”

All that has changed. Students arrive in school neatly dressed. They bring their books, provided free by the government, in tidy school bags. In an effort to discourage parents from taking children out of school to put them to work, the Punjab Rural Support Programme offers parents 500 rupees each month for every child who attends school.

Sattar was so impressed that he shifted his grandchildren to the outsourced school from the private one. There, teachers give extra attention to students and regularly meet parents to inform them about their children’s progress, he says. “Children are actually learning.”

Sir Michael Barber is a renowned educationist and a special representative for Pakistan working with the Department for International Development, a British government donor agency. He is the proponent of ‘deliverology’, a policy paradigm that helps governments improve service delivery to citizens without having to privatize state-provided amenities such as education and healthcare and by setting measurable targets.

He met Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif in 2010 to discuss how to get a school system to work in the province. The meeting led to his appointment as co-chairperson of the Punjab Education Task Force. He set up targets for the provincial government on “teacher presence, student attendance, fixing buildings, getting textbooks and teacher guides into the school system,” Barber says in a short film he made about what he calls the Punjab School Reforms Roadmap, a series of initiatives to bring teachers back into classrooms and increase enrolment. “The question the roadmap asks is not how we improve the government sector but rather how we can get every child in Punjab a good education, regardless of whether they are in the public or private sector,” he says.

Parts of the roadmap consist of collecting data on specific indicators every month, appointing educators and education administrators at the district level on merit, and creating simple and easy lesson plans for English, mathematics and science to improve the quality of education. All this is to be achieved through public-private partnerships — the state providing the infrastructure and monitoring mechanisms; the private sector providing teachers and management staff.

Continue reading here.
PCE has been working tirelessly to draw attention to the unprecedented growth of private schools in Pakistan as a violation of Human Rights. As a continuation of PCE’s ongoing efforts aimed at regulating privatization in education, PCE’s research coordinator, Ms. Nida Mushtaq presented PCE’s report ‘Neglected Financing and Privatization of Education in Pakistan: Right to Education out of reach?’ to the diplomatic missions in Pakistan. Pakistan will be reviewed in the 28th session for Universal Periodic Review in November 2017. The first secretaries of the following embassies were briefed in detail:

⇒ Martin Herzer, First Secretary, Economic Section, Embassy of Germany
⇒ Jørn Wichne Pedersen, First Secretary, Royal Norwegian Embassy
⇒ Ulrich Sørensen, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Denmark
⇒ Saadat Ali, Embassy of the Netherlands

The consultations were used as a means to highlight the various issues in provision of private education, such as:

⇒ Segregation based on the power of affordability
⇒ Increased divide between haves and have nots
⇒ Poor state of low cost private schools
⇒ Elite schools and the unregulated fee structure
⇒ Public private partnership
⇒ New brand of low cost religious private schools with an unmonitored curriculum

The diplomatic missions were urged to present the unsubstantiated growth of private sector in education as a major cause for concern in the UPR session and highlight the need for this issue to be rectified at the earliest.

Building upon its advocacy efforts at the provincial level, PCE filed public interest litigations on behalf of the citizens of Pakistan to advocate for the effective implementation of Article 25-A. On 19th April 2010 the Parliament enacted the 18th amendment in the constitution whereby it was stated that the “State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such a manner as may be determined by law.”

Till now, the provincial governments have not been able to develop “Rules of Business” for the implementation of Right to Education Act in their respective jurisdictions. In this regards, PCE filed petition in Lahore High Court, Islamabad High Court and Peshawar High Court so that the provincial governments may comply with the Act. PCE has made significant progress in the case currently being heard in Peshawar High Court.

Details of the ruling can be read here.
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