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Inequality in Education: A Critical Study of Public and Private Schooling in Pakistan **Benazeer Chandio**

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ABSTRACT

Educational inequalities between private and public schooling system have been a significant and consistent problem in Pakistan. They have greatly affected the academic performance of the learners, their access to quality education, and socio-economic mobility in the country. This research will discuss the disparities between both the systems by comparing them regarding infrastructural facilities, quality teachers, effective implementation of curriculum, learning environment and academic performance of students. The study applies qualitative research methodology which is based upon comprehensive literature and report reviews. It will discuss how socio-economic stratification influences access to quality schooling in the country. As a result of such inequalities, students of low economic background are deprived of opportunities to acquire quality education in life. Moreover, private institutions perform far better than public ones owing to various reasons like resource availability, strong institutional structures, enhanced motivation of teachers, efficient management systems, etc. On the other hand, public schools lack sufficient funds, suffer from excessive congestion, face poor governance, ineffective management systems, lack proper curricular framework, etc. Such educational disparities adversely impact the academic performance and career prospects of the economically disadvantaged population.

Keywords: Educational Inequality, Public Schools, Private Schools, Pakistan Education System, Academic Achievement, Socio-Economic Disparity.

Introduction

Education has been identified as one of the most basic building blocks of human resource development, economic growth, and change within society in both developed and developing nations. Education helps humans develop critical cognitive, analytical, and vocational skills which can help in personal and collective development. Furthermore, education is also important because it helps humans come out of the shackles of poverty and provides better opportunities, helping humans improve their living standards. In developing nations like Pakistan, education is seen as one of the priorities to achieve SDGs and solve socio-economic disparities. However, despite its importance, Pakistan's education sector has faced challenges in the form of fragmentation, especially due to a structural divide in public and private education institutions in the country, leading to significant socio-economic inequalities in educational opportunities and attainment (UNESCO, 2021).

The Pakistani public education system has experienced serious challenges that have affected its efficiency for many years in the past. Such challenges include funding shortages, poor governance structures, poor physical infrastructure, and unavailability of well-trained and professionally equipped teachers. Lack of proper learning conditions in public schools is another problem in that many public schools, especially those located in rural and marginalized areas, do not have basic learning conditions such as electric supply, potable water, boundary walls, proper sanitation facilities, and well-maintained class rooms (Government of Pakistan, 2022). Other concerns that are associated with public schooling are

those of poor attendance of teachers, ineffective supervision mechanisms, as well as traditional teaching methods, thus reducing the quality of teaching offered in public schools. Poor availability of professional development programs for teachers worsens the situation, making learning ineffective and leading to poor student performance and high dropout rates (Aziz et al., 2014).

Furthermore, one aspect that contributes to low quality of education in Pakistan is that of curriculum and assessment. Criticisms abound that the curriculums and assessments carried out within public school system are out-of-date, too rigid, and overly focused on examinations rather than analysis, innovation, or skill development. This leads to public school children not being well equipped for higher studies as well as job market in future, restricting their socio-economic mobility in the long run (UNESCO, 2021). This system makes it difficult for poor families to educate their children due to its inherent weaknesses, which in turn perpetuates cycles of poverty and social injustice from generation to generation (Khan, 2019). In addition, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has caused further disparities between the educational systems of private and public institutions in Pakistan. Private institutions quickly shifted towards virtual classes utilizing modern tools during the pandemic while the public institutions could do little because of insufficient technology, limited internet connectivity, and absence of infrastructure (Ahmed & Batool, 2021). These students from poor families who did not have any access to smartphones, computers, and internet connection suffered huge educational losses and had to drop out of school (UNESCO, 2021). In short, the pandemic widened the gap between the education levels of private and public institutions as well as social disparity based on class distinctions.

On the other hand, the Pakistani private education sector has been booming since last couple of decades owing to disappointment in public education systems of country. There are numerous private schools in Pakistan, which are known to be well-established institutions providing better facilities, disciplined environment, small class sizes, as well as English-language instruction. Moreover, there are stricter management structures in such schools ensuring that teachers attend classes regularly and perform their duties efficiently (Andrabi et al., 2008).

According to empirical research, private school educators are also better supervised and motivated; thus, improving the effectiveness of their work, resulting in better performance in terms of learning gains by students (Aslam, 2009). As a result, students studying in private schools always outperform their public school peers in standardized tests, indicating a considerable gap between educational outcomes in the two types of schools (Andrabi et al., 2008).

However, this increased difference between public and private education systems results in even greater socio-economic disparities. As access to quality education is determined by family income level, it has led to stratification in the system: whereas wealthy households tend to have their children educated in well-resourced private institutions, low-income parents can only afford education in inadequately equipped public schools. Thus, the possibility of upward socio-economic mobility is hindered as academic success is dictated not only by individual capabilities but also by socio-economic factors (Khan, 2019). Moreover, the establishment of the dual education system has resulted in the creation of parallel tracks within it: private schools educate children of elites to become international students and professionals, whereas public schools leave them without such opportunities (UNESCO, 2021).

From the perspective of the whole nation, this disparity in education leads to national inequality by maintaining inequalities in knowledge, skill levels, and economic opportunities. Such disparities raise a lot of questions about equality, equity, and fairness within the education system, especially since it is not available uniformly across society. In fact, education has become highly stratified based on socio-economic criteria, which violates the fundamental right to equal opportunity. As long as this continues, these inequalities can only get worse over time, further isolating disadvantaged communities and hampering national efforts toward sustainable development (Government of Pakistan, 2022).

Against this backdrop, this research study seeks to analyze the differences between the public and private education systems in Pakistan and examine how these differences have resulted in educational disparities. Based on extensive reviews of academic literature, official policy papers, and research findings from empirical studies, this study seeks to present a holistic view of how disparities have come into existence. More specifically, it will highlight the need for reform measures based on empirical evidence to improve governance, resource management, teacher performance, and curriculum requirements (Aslam, 2009; Khan, 2019).

Background of Study

In Pakistan, the dual nature of the education system is very common. There is an existence of two parallel education systems, one being the elite private sector schools, which serve mainly the rich and the middle-class families, and secondly, the weak public school sector, which serves most of the poor population. In this context, the dualism in the educational system of Pakistan has produced a very stratified environment whereby educational opportunities are provided on the basis of socio-economic standing rather than merit or potentiality of individuals. Consequently, this dualistic nature of the educational system creates disparity in educational opportunities among various socio-economic classes. According to Pakistan Education Statistics, while majority of students belong to the public-sector schools, these schools still face serious financial shortages and lack of institutional strength to provide quality education to their students (Government of Pakistan, 2022).

In the past, the public education sector in Pakistan had been initiated on the premise that all the citizens should be ensured equal opportunities for education irrespective of their socio-economic status, geographical location, or gender. Public education was supposed to play a significant role in addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting equality and development. Nevertheless, these principles have gradually become blurred as a result of the lack of consistent investment and education policy, political intervention, and poor governance within the public education system in Pakistan. At the same time, the growing popularity of private education in Pakistan has transformed the nature of education in the country, introducing a parallel system in which the quality of education has become closely associated with financial capabilities. The process of commoditization of education in this case means that education has turned into a market commodity that is not viewed purely as a public good anymore (Andrabi et al., 2008).

The growth of private schools in Pakistan can mainly be attributed to the dissatisfaction of people from the poor academic results in the public schools due to their ineffective teaching methods, poor student performance, and lack of accountability in the public institutions. Studies have revealed that despite the development of private schools in the urban areas, they have also grown in rural and poorer areas, where parents believe that private institutions are more competent than government schools in ensuring quality education (Andrabi et al., 2008). Private schools are seen to provide a better discipline among students, teach in English

medium, and have higher teacher attendance levels than in public schools. Although the growth of private schools has increased the number of children enrolled in schools, it has also exacerbated the education gap between rich and poor, because many individuals lack the financial capability to afford such schools.

The structural differences between public and private education systems go beyond economic issues and have profound effects on cognitive development, skills development, and job opportunities for the future. Students who attend private educational institutions tend to benefit from a richer learning environment that fosters the development of English language skills, technological knowledge, analysis, and critical thinking skills. Such skills give these individuals an edge when it comes to enrolling in universities or finding employment both in their country and abroad. However, public school students lack exposure to rich learning environments because of large class sizes, insufficient educational resources, and inadequate teaching methods, which inhibit academic and cognitive growth (Khan, 2019). Such skill inequality prevents underprivileged communities from rising up the ladder and perpetuates intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Further, the impact of the dual educational system in Pakistan is beyond the scope of socio-economic developments and social unity of the country as well. Education in the country has become contingent on the earning ability of the family as a consequence of which socio-economic inequality has come to be embedded in successive generations. On the one hand, children from affluent backgrounds enroll themselves in well-endowed private institutions that enable them to enter into high-ranking universities and join respectable professions in life, and, on the other hand, children from impoverished backgrounds have to enroll themselves in poorly performing public educational institutions that offer no prospects of upward social mobility in the future (Government of Pakistan, 2022).

On a larger scale, this phenomenon is quite troubling in terms of equity, equality, and social justice. The problem of access to quality education being contingent upon one's ability to pay and not being an equal citizen undermines the basic principle of education that should be geared towards inclusive growth. This issue goes beyond mere inequality and can exacerbate the existing social divisions, creating a lack of faith in governmental institutions and hindering national cohesion. If left unattended, it will only continue to grow worse, eventually resulting in increased polarization and limited social mobility (Khan, 2019).

Thus, a thorough analysis of the history, structure, and institutions behind the dual educational system of Pakistan is required in order to understand its underlying causes of educational discrimination. This paper attempts to extend knowledge gained from prior studies by analyzing the evolution of disparities between two types of schooling systems and how they contribute to social inequalities in the field of education within Pakistan. Through such an examination, it hopes to shed light on the issue of education reforms in relation to social equality, emphasizing the necessity for policy measures to provide equitable education opportunities for everyone (Aslam, 2009; Andrabi et al., 2008).

Literature Reviews

A significant number of studies at the international and domestic level have been conducted on the differences that exist between the public and private school systems within countries, especially those developing nations where educational facilities are not evenly spread. Pakistan emerges as an important country in which to conduct a study because of the rapid growth experienced by its dual education system, whereby both private and public systems of education are operating in completely dissimilar circumstances. It is argued that the

educational disparity found in Pakistan does not just stem from economic inequality but rather is entrenched in institutional and governmental weakness and differences in school administration (UNESCO, 2021).

Numerous empirical studies prove that pupils attending private schools perform better than those who attend public schools in various academic measures. According to Aslam (2009), private school pupils attain much higher marks on standardized tests even after adjusting for family economic status and parental educational level. This result implies that the quality of schools has a crucial influence on student performance. The study reveals some important factors that contribute to academic success in private schools, such as better teacher attendance, efficient classroom management, and extra instruction hours. As a result, it becomes clear that the efficiency of institutions affects pupils' learning progress and academic achievements (Aslam, 2009)..

Moreover, Andrabi et al. (2008) give convincing proof of the fact that the fast-growing proliferation of low-fee private schools in Pakistan is a direct response to the apparent failure of the state educational institution. The authors demonstrate that private schools are more efficient because of greater teacher accountability, increased parental supervision, and tighter administrative control. In particular, even low-fee private institutions demonstrate superior educational results compared to public schools. At the same time, the authors stress that private schooling cannot resolve systemic problems because not all disadvantaged families can afford even low fees (Andrabi et al., 2008).

Current trends in educational research have shifted from simplistic evaluations comparing averages of public versus private schools to considering heterogeneous effects regarding school quality. One such seminal paper, Andrabi et al. (2025), using longitudinal data for rural Pakistan, has shown that significant variation exists in School Value Added (SVA) even within villages and in both public and private school categories; an average difference of 0.43 standard deviations was reported between the best and worst school in one particular village, implying significant disparities in school quality even at a smaller geographical level. On average, while private schools perform better than public schools by 0.15 standard deviations, shifting a child from a public school to a private school in the village (the best one) boosts their score by 0.25 standard deviations, while doing the same in the case of a poorer quality private school in the same village results in an increase of 0.08 standard deviations. Significantly, Andrabi et al. (2025) show that good private schools grow their market shares, whereas underperforming private schools shut down, especially in richer villages, where parents make informed choices, whereas poorly performing public schools called "zombie schools" continue operating despite consistently adding little value to education, thereby exacerbating educational disparities among disadvantaged pupils who lack other options. In further support of this assertion, Carneiro, Das, and Reis (2016) discovered that school distance is more influential in determining school enrollment than cost, with parents prepared to spend one year's worth of private school tuition fees for a half-kilometer reduction in distance, especially for females.

Educational inequalities also arise in connection with gender differences in Pakistan. Several studies reveal that girls' enrollment and completion in rural public schools are much lower than those of boys in this type of educational institutions because of the following factors: cultural traditions, lack of sanitary conditions, and concerns about commuting to the school safely (Shah & Khan, 2020). In turn, there is a smaller difference between boys and girls regarding enrollment in private institutions since they provide better sanitary conditions, have

female teachers, and parents consider them safe places for their children (Rahman, 2021). Nevertheless, poor girls do not attend private institutions because families prioritize boys' education in this case, making educational inequalities even more pronounced (Malik & Naveed, 2019).

By contrast, public schools in Pakistan suffer from numerous structural and operational shortcomings that negatively affect their educational efficiency. According to Aziz et al. (2014), teachers' poor attendance rate, lack of professional experience, ineffective regulation, and deficient financial resources make it extremely difficult to provide an effective instructional process. Thus, students lack opportunities to receive high-quality education, develop positive study habits, and achieve good grades. In addition, lack of regular training programs makes it impossible for teachers to introduce innovations into their practice (Aziz et al., 2014).

Apart from institutional inefficiencies, language policy has proven to be another determinant of educational disparity in Pakistan. According to Khan (2019), learning in English in private schools gives children an edge over other learners during college education and future work opportunities in the global market. In public institutions, on the other hand, the medium of instruction is either Urdu or local languages. Children, therefore, lack competence in English and cannot compete in academic and career settings with those who have attended private institutions. Language becomes a means of perpetuating social inequalities in a country where the ability to communicate in English equates to socio-economic success (Khan, 2019).

Designing curricula and pedagogical techniques also play an important role in widening the educational divide between both systems. According to UNESCO (2021), the public-school curricula in Pakistan are outmoded, examination-based, and centered around the principles of memorizing information instead of fostering students' abilities to think critically, analyze situations, and solve problems. As a result, students' academic and cognitive development is hampered, and they are less well-prepared to enter college and cope with the current job market requirements. Unlike public schools, private institutions are more inclined to use innovative teaching methods such as active learning strategies, project-based learning, and the incorporation of new technologies into instruction, which positively impact students' cognitive and practical skills (UNESCO, 2021).

The differences in educational achievements between students in public and private schools in Pakistan emerge even before primary school education commences. According to Bhutta and Rizvi (2021), only 42% of students who attended public schools in poor households had been educated in early childhood education (ECE), whereas 78% of those from wealthier households in private school feeder programs were exposed to such learning opportunities. This discrepancy in early education plays an important role in future academic achievement, as children not exposed to ECE lack basic reading and arithmetic skills at the start of their schooling journey (Save the Children, 2020).

Inequalities in education in Pakistan are not confined to the public versus private debate alone, but there exist regional disparities within the country as well. According to Baloch and Ahmed (2023), who analyzed district-level data on education in Pakistan, public schools in Southern Punjab and rural Sindh have a student-to-teacher ratio greater than 60:1, along with more than 25 percent of teachers being absent from work. However, public schools in Northern Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa maintain a ratio around 35:1, along with high levels of attendance among teachers.

The decision of the parents in Pakistan for public or private education for their children is mostly based on the perception of the quality of schooling rather than the actual results of the students' performance. In an experiment by Cheema, Khwaja, and Naseer (2022), the researchers informed poor families of their children's actual performance in tests relative to their peers in local schools, and they found that there was no higher rate of changing schools for families whose children had poorer grades, suggesting that physical and time restrictions on movement, as well as social ties, prevent parents from making school changes.

One aspect of educational disparity in Pakistan that continues to increase rapidly without drawing much attention is the practice of "shadow education," which refers to private additional instruction that closely mimics the mainstream curricula, according to Kamran (2025), where 62 percent of secondary students in Lahore today receive additional tuition to help them pass their exams, essentially turning additional tutoring into a shadow education system due to institutional failures that require parents to pay twice for their children's learning since the mainstream education system fails to provide satisfactory results. According to ASER's findings in the report of 2023, fewer than half of Pakistani fifth-graders could do two-digit division calculations, a problem-solving skill that students should be able to do by grade three. UNESCO has warned that such practices of uncontrolled tuition can increase existing educational disparities, with Sadiq (2023) estimating that 34 percent of pupils at private schools and 17 percent of pupils at public schools in Punjab are receiving extra instruction outside school hours. There is unequal distribution when it comes to accessing private after-school classes with urban students and those with higher socio-economic standings having more access, especially girls living in rural areas. Teacher incentive schemes also affect how the teachers behave; while public schoolteachers earn average monthly wages ranging between Rs 25,000 and Rs35, 000, tutors earn more, which has motivated many tutors to teach tuition-paying students better than those in their regular schools, making Punjab's efforts to stop government teachers from teaching privately futile since the root cause is economic and accountability problems (Kamran, 2025).

One additional area discussed in literature is the impact of socio-economic stratification on education. Literature states that educational inequality is highly related to socio-economic strata in Pakistan, whereby apart from being affected by household income, educational inequality can also be exacerbated when children from richer households have continuous access to extra tuition and tutoring services (Government of Pakistan, 2022). In other words, students coming from richer socio-economic backgrounds can enhance their academic performance through continuous reinforcement of learning beyond schooling, thereby developing a cycle of educational success. The effect is bound to widen educational differences between different socio-economic strata of society.

Psychological and emotional aspects of learning environments vary greatly in public versus private schools and influence student performance. Hasan and Javed (2023) conducted a survey involving 1,200 secondary students in Lahore and concluded that the psychological stress of studying is significantly lower in private school learners. At the same time, class participation is higher in those attending private schools because overcrowding and strict discipline in public schools result in greater anxiety levels and decreased motivation. Thus, psychosocial aspects serve as mediators in the connection between the nature of school institutions and their educational outcomes.

Additionally, several studies have indicated the impact of educational inequality on the job market as well as intergenerational transmission of inequality. According to Khan (2019),

students educated in private institutions have greater chances to land well-paying jobs because of their ability to communicate efficiently and in English. On the other hand, students educated in government-owned schools will find employment challenging to acquire since they lack the necessary academic qualification as well as interpersonal skills. The intergenerational transmission of inequality will only continue growing because of the existing gap in education among poorer socio-economic classes (UNESCO, 2021).

There has been a rise in the disparity of access to educational technology between public and private institutions in Pakistan. According to a study by Khalid and Rehman (2024), 84% of private schools in cities had computer laboratories and internet access, while just 22% of public schools nationwide did, and public schools in rural areas had almost no connection to the internet. Recently published findings indicate that ed-tech initiatives aimed at underprivileged public schools, such as tablet-based teaching programs and SMS-based parent engagement systems, can help enhance learning achievements with sufficient teacher education and technical assistance (Khalid & Rehman, 2024; Zia & Ahmed, 2023).

The role of poor governance and policy failures in causing educational inequality is also stressed in recent literature on education. Governance weaknesses such as inadequate monitoring practices, poor implementation of policies, and political intervention in education administration have affected the performance of public education in Pakistan negatively. Such governance issues affect the accountability of the process and hinder effective resource utilization, which, in turn, compromises the quality of education being offered in public institutions (Government of Pakistan, 2022). Private schools, on the other hand, function under more market-based governance frameworks, which tend to increase their efficiency (Andrabi et al., 2008).

In general, it can be said that existing research on the subject matter shows that educational inequality in Pakistan is a multifaceted issue caused by economic differences, inefficient institutions, language issues, shortcomings in curricula, and weak governance. The parallel operation of public and private school systems in the country means that educational inequality is continuously reproduced because of the nature of the system, where private schools provide better learning opportunities, but are not accessible to everyone (Aslam, 2009; Andrabi et al., 2008; UNESCO, 2021).

Research Questions

- 1: What are the important differences between public and private schools in Pakistan?
- 2: How do school types affect students' academic success?
- 3: What social and economic inequalities cause educational disparity?
- 4: What policies could help minimize the differences between public and private education?

Research Methodology

The proposed research will use a qualitative research design, which is ideal for conducting research on complex social issues like educational inequity. The researcher's use of qualitative research design enables him/her to explore and understand the role of structure, institutions, and socioeconomics that cause gaps between the two education systems. Qualitative research design entails analyzing pre-existing literature because the research does not require collecting data through observations and experiments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Sources

In this case, the research design is both descriptive and analytical in nature, whereby the interpretation of the extant literature becomes crucial in establishing patterns and associations that may be associated with educational disparity. The study does not measure any variable

statistically but rather analyzes different elements that may be attributed to disparities between the two types of educational institutions. This kind of design is appropriate in the synthesis of research results from many studies.

Research Design

The research employs descriptive and interpretive qualitative designs whereby analyzing available literature in order to make sense of patterns and connections that exist within educational inequalities is the main focus of analysis. The research does not aim at quantitatively measuring any variable but instead aims at analyzing the role played by various institutions in causing the disparity between public and private education.

Data Collection Method

Data were gathered using systematic review strategies, whereby sources that were pertinent to the topic at hand were retrieved from scholarly databases, institutional repositories, and government reports. The use of specific key words such as education disparity, private vs public schooling in Pakistan, school quality, and academic achievement enabled identification of pertinent sources. Only sources dealing specifically with educational disparity in Pakistan or other developing countries were considered.

Data Analysis Technique

Thematic analysis was used in the current study as the method that involved identifying, classifying, and interpreting the patterns that arose from the analyzed body of literature. This is a commonly used technique in qualitative research for grouping a lot of textual information into categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the present study, themes such as school quality, teacher efficacy, differences in curriculum, language barriers, and socioeconomic inequality were among those that emerged from the research studies.

Validity and Reliability

The credibility and reliability of the research was guaranteed by applying triangulation of several sources of information, such as government papers, peer-reviewed journals, and international literature. The cross-checking of information from different sources contributed to minimizing biases and increased interpretation accuracy. Furthermore, the use of only reliable and highly cited sources of information adds to the credibility of the findings presented (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2020).

Limitations of Methodology

While the secondary source analysis method gives an all-rounded and cheaply obtained perspective about the problem, there are certain weaknesses associated with this approach. The success of the research depends heavily on the reliability and comprehensiveness of the existing literature, which may be inconsistent in terms of quality and methodology used. Furthermore, since no primary data will be collected, it would not be possible to obtain firsthand experience from the participants such as students, teachers, and school administration.

Findings

From the examination of the literature review and policy documents, it becomes clear that there are certain interlinking conclusions drawn from the study of the issue. In fact, it should be noted that the problem of inequality in education does not revolve around a single factor but is based on a number of factors at once.

1: Resource Disparity

The most important observation made in this regard has been that of the wide gap that exists in the physical and instructional infrastructure between the two kinds of schools. This has

been observed that in general, private schools have superior physical infrastructure with regard to the maintenance of the classrooms, provision of electricity, clean drinking water, laboratories and computers, all of which enable better teaching-learning practices. On the other hand, public schools, especially those located in remote and underdeveloped regions, tend to be lacking with regard to physical and instructional infrastructure (Government of Pakistan, 2022). Moreover, smaller class size and individualized attention for students is more prevalent in private schools than in public schools.

An interesting aspect of the dichotomy between public and private schools is the development of low-cost private schools (LCPSs) in Pakistan, which target poorer households through reduced fees. Although these schools may be considered as more desirable than public schools, there is substantial research showing that the quality among LCPSs varies widely (Aslam et al., 2020). Several LCPSs use undertrained teachers, poor-quality facilities, and large pupil-teacher ratios that may even be comparable to or worse than those of top-performing public schools (Bari & Sattar, 2018). The decision of parents to send their children to LCPSs is motivated by the availability of English-language instruction and stricter discipline rather than the actual quality of education provided (Andrabi et al., 2008; Aslam et al., 2020). This outcome undermines the claim that private schooling is inherently better than public schooling since parental preferences do not guarantee higher educational outcomes.

2: Teacher Quality and Accountability

Another important finding concerns disparities in the quality of teachers as well as teacher accountability processes. Private schools tend to maintain stricter recruitment practices, teacher evaluation procedures, and attendance monitoring measures, leading to enhanced motivation among teachers and their punctual appearance in class. On the other hand, public schools are plagued by problems like teacher absenteeism, poor supervision, and lack of accountability of teachers (Aziz et al., 2014). Moreover, teacher professional development is easier to obtain in private schools and allows them to employ better instructional approaches.

3; Academic Performance Gap

Consistently, studies indicate that pupils in private schools outperform their counterparts in public schools in terms of academics. According to Aslam (2009), pupils in private schools score higher marks in standardized tests despite holding other variables like socioeconomic status constant. This means that the disparity is primarily determined by elements within the schooling process, such as the approach used to teach the learners and the level of accountability at the institution. The performance difference between private and public school pupils is more pronounced in disciplines that involve complex analysis and language skills.

4: Language of Instruction Barrier

Language of instruction becomes one of the crucial factors that lead to inequality in education. Most of the private institutions follow an English curriculum that is extremely beneficial for learners in terms of future prospects for higher education and employment opportunities around the globe. However, most of the public institutions follow either Urdu language or any other regional language. According to Khan (2019), proficiency in English language has now become a key factor determining one's success in the realm of education as well as socio-economic class in Pakistan.

5: Socio-economic Stratification

Moreover, the results also show that there is a very strong correlation between the socio-economic status of individuals and the quality of education they receive. Education quality

in Pakistan is strongly affected by the income level of households, as rich families tend to enroll their children in private institutions and employ tutors, whereas poor families send their children to poorly equipped government schools (Government of Pakistan, 2022). This is a vicious cycle of educational disparity, which ensures that children of affluent parents will always have more access to educational opportunities than poor children.

6: Long-term Inequality and Social Mobility

It should also be noted that one of the key broad conclusions is the fact that the differences in public and private educational institutions have far-reaching effects on social mobility. It can be assumed that graduates of private educational institutions will seek further education, obtain better-paid positions, and enjoy opportunities for professional careers because of a stronger educational background, better mastery of languages, and greater self-confidence. In turn, students graduating from public institutions suffer from poor career choices owing to insufficient knowledge and skills (Khan, 2019).

7: Systemic and Structural Inequality

Lastly, it is clear from the above analysis that educational inequity in Pakistan does not arise out of individual schools alone but exists in broader conditions and structures as well. The very existence of a dual system, one that is affluent and driven by the market while the other is underresourced and dependent on the state, generates an inherently unequal environment that tends to perpetuate inequality instead of alleviating it. According to UNESCO (2021), dual systems of education often widen achievement gaps, especially in developing nations.

Recommendations

From the results that have been derived from this study, it is recommended that various measures be taken at the policy and practice level to minimize educational disparity between the two systems of education in Pakistan and enhance educational quality through equity.

1: Increased and Equitable Education Funding

In this regard, it is recommended that the government invest in public education by focusing on the lack of resources within the education sector. Special attention should be paid to developing infrastructure facilities like class rooms, toilet facilities, electricity, library, and other resources in both urban and rural areas. Moreover, there should be a fair allocation of money to make sure that underprivileged areas receive their fair share of resources (Government of Pakistan, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

2: Strengthening Teacher Training and Professional Development

There must be the implementation of a comprehensive teacher training program for teachers from public schools. Professional development courses and certification should be compulsory to make sure that teachers are well aware of the latest teaching strategies. Student-centered learning and critical thinking should be given utmost importance.

Teachers must be provided with the required skills to integrate technology into their teaching practices. Teacher empowerment is vital to reducing the difference in quality education between private and public schools.

3: Effective Monitoring and Accountability Systems

In solving challenges like teacher absenteeism and inadequate teaching, it is important to establish an effective monitoring system. Such a system includes tracking teacher attendance, performance assessment, inspection of schools, and community monitoring mechanisms among others. Using digital monitoring mechanisms will also increase efficiency within the system. Effective monitoring and accountability will ensure teachers become more committed to their duties (UNESCO, 2021).

4: Curriculum Reform and Standardization

One of the primary methods by which educational inequity can be addressed is through the creation of a standard national curriculum for implementation at both government and private institutions. The curriculum needs to move away from rote learning towards encouraging students to think critically and creatively, solve problems, and develop useful skills. By having common standards set up at all schools, it will become easier to ensure equitable education for students of all socio-economic classes (Khan, 2019).

5: Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

There should be collaboration between the two institutions through the PPP approach to help in promoting the efficiency and innovation of the public institution without increasing cost barriers. Private institutions can help in improving public institutions through providing teaching tools, mentoring teachers, and developing curriculums together with them. Public-Private Partnerships can bring about efficiency in public institutions and introduce innovative ways into their operation without compromising on cost barriers and affordability (Andrabi et al., 2008).

7: Reducing Socio-Economic Barriers to Education Access

Certain specific policies need to be implemented to provide help to students belonging to poor backgrounds, such as scholarships, stipends, free textbooks, and school meal programs. Such policies will decrease the burden of expenses on the poor families and raise the number of students attending public schools. It is vital to ensure that poor students have access to educational facilities and resources (Government of Pakistan, 2022).

Another crucial yet often overlooked factor contributing to educational disparities in Pakistan relates to the political economy of education governance in Pakistan. According to empirical evidence, high turnover rates in the position of education minister, inconsistency in the development of policies, and inadequate institutional capacity have hampered efforts at long-term reform within the public education sector (Haque & Nayyar, 2021). Moreover, strong teacher unions in Pakistan have consistently opposed any moves toward accountability through methods such as meritocratic hiring practices, performance assessments, and transfers of teachers between schools (Khan & Mahmood, 2018). Solutions to these systemic barriers must therefore include both the allocation of resources and the willingness to pursue difficult reforms like depoliticizing the process of recruiting teachers, empowering local authorities responsible for education, and creating autonomous regulators for public schools (World Bank, 2020).

8: Improving Language Instruction Policies

Considering that English fluency plays a vital role in educational opportunities and job opportunities, it is imperative to implement bilingual education programs in public sector schools. The gradual inclusion of English as an instructional language along with Urdu can serve as a solution to the language disparity between students from public and private sectors.

9: Use of Technology in Public Education

The use of technology in the education sector within public schools needs to be taken seriously to increase effectiveness. The use of digital classroom technologies and online platforms can assist in bridging the gap of shortages and increasing students' levels of engagement. Technology infrastructure and digital training of teachers will be key to modernizing the education sector (UNESCO, 2021).

Conclusion

The education system of Pakistan shows deep-seated and entrenched structural inequality between the public and private schooling sectors, which holds important repercussions for academic attainment, skill formation, and socio-economic mobility of students in the country. The concurrent existence of both these systems in the context of education in Pakistan has created a dichotomy where the provision of quality education has been made contingent on social and economic factors rather than being accessible equally to all citizens of the state. The outcome of such discrimination can be seen in the relatively greater achievements of students who attend private schools owing to better infrastructure, teaching personnel, and enhanced learning environment at such institutions.

In conclusion, the above discussion illustrates the importance of addressing not just the problem of the gap between public and private schools but the entire societal gap. Private institutions can be seen to be better in terms of providing education due to financial and operational freedom. At the same time, their access to those who need it most becomes restricted by their costs of operation. On the other hand, public schools should theoretically promote equality in education through affordable fees; however, such factors as low funding, teacher absenteeism, obsolete curriculums, and lack of accountability mechanisms hamper their operations.

It is also worth mentioning that educational inequality is a multi-faceted phenomenon that depends on such aspects as institutional efficiency, language, curriculum development, and socio-economic status. Educational inequalities lead to a situation where people experience social immobility because they are unable to enter higher education and become economically active individuals who are capable of finding skilled jobs in various industries. As a result, people who are privileged educationally are even able to enhance this advantage generation after generation.

Overall, the issue of educational inequality can be resolved through systemic intervention in the public education system of Pakistan by enhancing governance, investing in adequate funds, developing teacher education programs, and establishing accountability measures. Moreover, modernizing the curriculum and distributing resources equally are necessary steps to promote fairness and balance in the education system. The absence of such policies and practices will lead to a widening disparity between public and private schools, thus perpetuating the existing socioeconomic divide and constraining national growth (Andrabi et al., 2008; UNESCO, 2021).

Essentially, providing equal access to education is crucial for the country from both an educational and a socio-economic perspective.

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