Educational Challenges for Pakistan

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Abstract

The education sector in Pakistan has been in a deep and profound crisis ever since Pakistan's independence more than 60 years ago. Pakistan ranks today among the bottom fifteen countries worldwide in terms of educational performance. Although literacy rates have risen from only 13% in 1947 to a current rate of 54%, the absolute number of illiterate people in Pakistan has at the same time steadily increased and today accounts for more than 50 million people. Even among the young generation (15-24 years), every third person is still illiterate. Pakistan is characterized by tremendous gender, regional, class-specific and rural-urban disparities in education levels. Government sector schools, which account for about two thirds of enrolments in Pakistan, are criticized for their low performance and poor education quality. The deficient government sector that serves the broad population has long since been bypassed by the civil and military elites with a separate, parallel sector of elitist English-medium schools that offer a top-quality education with high tuition fees. This state of 'educational apartheid' in a highly segregated educational system may explain the consistent ignorance and lack of political will of the country's leadership to improve the public education provision for the broader population. Since the mid-1990s, a new type of private sector education institution has mushroomed throughout the country in response to the growing demand for quality education and has started to fill the large gap left by the state. The private education sector has turned from an exclusive urban upper-middle-class phenomenon into an education provider for broader sections of the population. It increasingly reaches out even to poorer strata of society and to rural areas. The rapidity of expansion and the changed characteristics of the new non-elitist private sector schools have fuelled an ongoing controver-

sial debate in Pakistan about a reassessment of the private sector's role in the country's education system.

1. Introduction

Education and Pakistan – this over 60-year-old relationship has often been described as at least ambiguous, reserved, and problematic, if not chaotic, disastrous, or even as completely failed. At the onset of the newly established state of Pakistan, hopes and spirits were high, and ambitious plans were elaborated to educate Pakistan and to boost its social and economic development. In his message to the first "All Pakistan Education Conference" in November 1947 in Karachi, held just months after the foundation of Pakistan on 14th August of the same year, the founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, emphasized the importance of education for the country's development and set out ambitious goals for the coming years: "You know that the importance of education, and of the right type of education, cannot be overemphasized. Under the foreign rule for over a century, sufficient attention has not been paid to the education of our people, and if we are to make real, speedy and substantial progress, we must earnestly tackle this question and bring our education policy programme on the lines suited to the genius of the people, consonant with our history and culture and having regard to the modern conditions and vast developments that have taken place all over the world" (M. A. Jinnah, cited in: Sheikh 1987:16). The conference outlined the major objectives of the education policy for the coming years. It aimed at overcoming the colonial structures inherited from the British, who left Pakistan with an education system whose objective was not to provide mass education, but to breed an elitist class of civil servants loyal to the British. Muhammad Ali Jinnah sought to reorient the education system from colonial administrative objectives to the social, economic and technical needs and aspirations of the new-born country. Free and compulsory primary education should promote mass education and aimed at a rapid increase of the low literacy rate of about 16% at the

time of independence (SPDC 2003:92). A reorganization of scientific and technical education suited to the economic needs of the country was intended to help to facilitate the country's future economic development (Shami 2005:19; Sheikh 1987:16). Education should also help to form a common national identity in the new multi-ethnic state, formed around Islamic concepts and the newly established national language Urdu, which was made a compulsory language in all schools (Rahman 2004a:8).

These high ambitions and objectives formulated at the first Education Conference found their expression in numerous education policy documents and in the five year plans of the Pakistani government, constantly repeating the goal of achieving universal primary education since the first plan for the period of 1955-60, which envisioned its achievement in 1975 (Haq & Haq 1998:52). The targets laid out in each plan were generally not achieved as envisaged, and till today universal primary education has remained an unfulfilled dream, and not even the 1949 target of 80% literacy could be achieved. The expected educational awakening in the country has not happened, at least not as hoped for, and contemporary observers agree on their disastrous assessment of the Pakistani education policy and the current state of education in the country. A glance at the bookshelves of overabundant publications on education in Pakistan reveals a considerable number of book titles pointing to the desperate and wretched state of education[1]. For example, Razi Abedi (1991) titles his book "Educational Chaos", Naseem Jaffer Quddus' (1990) title phrase invokes the "Problems of Education in Pakistan", and Musa Khan Jalalzai (2005) writes on "The Crises of Education in Pakistan". Rubina Saigol (1993a) develops "Critical Perspectives" on education, and Tariq Rahman (2004b) perceives "Denizens of Alien Worlds" in the students of different sections of the education system, which he describes as segmented along class and power divisions. As in his other books and articles, he warns of the societally disintegrative and

[1] The same has been observed for the Pakistani social sector in general by economist Akbar Zaidi in his 2009 Report Issues in Pakistan's Economy, where he states: "Almost without exception, every publication, whether by the government or by scholars and social scientists, laments the state of the social sectors in Pakistan." (Zaidi 2009:382)

fragmenting effects of the current Pakistani education system, which deepens social disparities, polarizes society and reproduces the power of the ruling elites. Khurshid Kamal Aziz (2004) laments "The Murder of History" in Pakistan's warped and distorted text books, while Shahid Siddiqui (2007) claims the necessity for "Rethinking Education in Pakistan" and explores the possibilities for that venture. With every additional article, book or report read on education in Pakistan, the same negative impression solidifies more and more. It is the impression of a desolate, lamentable, abysmally poor status of education in the country, characterized by regional inequalities and huge disparities between the rich and the poor, between urban and rural areas, and between men and women. The public education system has often been described as providing the lowest quality of education and being stricken by inefficiency, mismanagement, political manipulation and corruption.

In a recent report prepared by Rebecca Winthrop and Corinne Graff from the Centre for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution in Washington D.C. (Winthrop & Graff 2010), the dismal state of the national education system in Pakistan is held responsible for the growing militancy in Pakistan and is considered a risk factor for violence. The inability of the government to meet the high demand for education with its institutions, highly inequitable access to education, and a problematic curriculum with historical and factual inaccuracies along with the stirring up of hatred towards archrival India and Hindus in syllabi and textbooks contributes more to stoking militancy in the county than the often blamed madrasas (Winthrop & Graff 2010:42). The curriculum and "authoritarian" teaching methods (Winthrop & Graff 2010:43) in public schools help to create "narrow and intolerant worldviews" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:41) and do little to prepare students for the labour market. According to this point of view, which is supported by intellectuals like Tariq Rahman (2000, 2004b) and Rubina Saigol (1993b), as well as international think-tanks such as the International Crisis Group (2004), the current desolate state of the Pakistani education system poses a severe threat to the peace and stability of the country and the whole South Asian region.

2. The State of education in Pakistan

The unanimously negative image of a desolate public education system in Pakistan, running like a threat through virtually all publications on education in Pakistan, is reflected in low educational outcomes and a low education status in the population, as measured by standard international indicators. For example, according to the *Education Index*, a composite indicator of adult literacy and enrolment rate[2], developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and used in the annual calculation of the Human Development Index (HDI) values, Pakistan shows one of the lowest education values worldwide and ranks 171st out of the 185 countries listed (UNDP 2009:173). That means that Pakistan is ranked among the bottom 15 countries of the world. All those countries (except Afghanistan whose education status has suffered from decades of war and insecurity) whose education status is even worse than Pakistan's are located in Sub-Saharan Africa, the world's poorest and least developed region in terms of economic and human development (see Figure 1). It is a puzzling fact that in education terms Pakistan is ranked among this group of the very poor, since Pakistan's per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) rank of 132 (out of 184 countries listed) is 39 places higher than its education index rank, and hence considerably above those Sub-Saharan countries. In terms of economic power, Pakistan competes with countries such as Uzbekistan, Moldavia, Vietnam or Mongolia, which all show education index values higher than 0.8 or even up to 0.91 in the case of Mongolia. Pakistan's meagre education index value of 0.49 is far from being able to compete with them (see Figure 1). On the other hand, countries which are much poorer than Pakistan could achieve a similar or even higher level of educational performance. Nepal, for example, realized an education index value of 0.58 with less than half of Pakistan's per capita GDP value (UNDP 2009:173). Obvi-

[2] For details on its composition and calculation, please see the description in the Human Development Report (HDR) 2009 (UNDP 2009:209). In its 2010 HDR, UNDP modified the indicator by replacing adult literacy by average years of schooling in the adult population, and combined gross enrolment ratio by expected years of schooling. For details on the definition of the new *Education Index*, please see HDR 2010 (UNDP 2010:15, 216).

ously, Pakistan plays in another league economically than educationally, and its low educational performance cannot be explained by the state of its economic development. In light of the stark imbalance between the country's economic power and its low educational performance, Mahbub ul-Haq and Khadija ul-Haq argue in their 1998 report on human development in South Asia: "Pakistan's poverty is not the reason for its low literacy rate. Other countries have done much better at similar per capita income levels.[...] Lack of political commitment rather than lack of resources, explains Pakistan's current educational dilemma" (Haq & Haq 1998:54). The strong imbalance between economic and human development levels in Pakistan has also been recognized by the Pakistani government, which states in a document on the *Social Action Programme* that "[...] Pakistan exhibits, perhaps, the greatest discrepancy in the two-way relationship between human development and economic growth" (GoP 1992:7, cited in Jalil 1993:70).

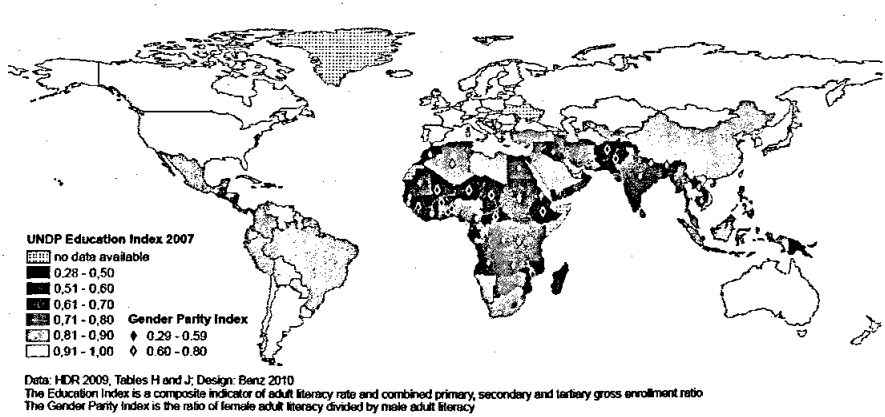
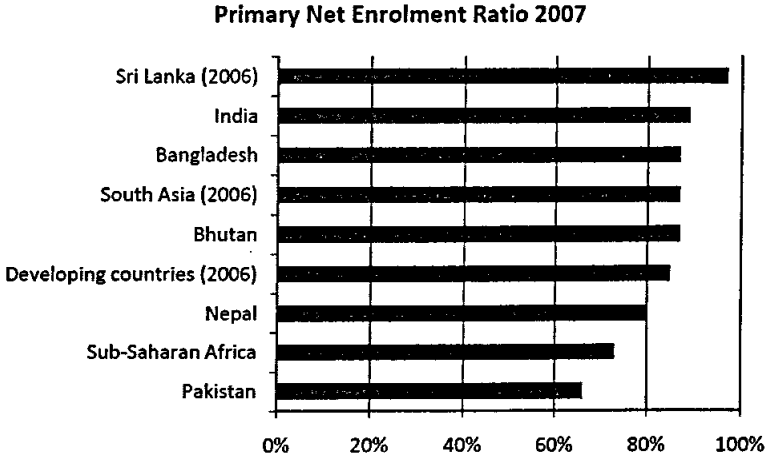


Figure 1: Pakistan's state of education in international comparison

Although its adult literacy rate has seen remarkable improvement over the last decades and rose from only 35% in 1990 (UNESCO 2005:284) to a current level of 54% (UNDP 2010:194), Pakistan is one of the very few countries worldwide in which the absolute numbers of illiterate people are still growing. Since its inception, the number of illiterates steadily rose from initially 19 mil-

lion to a current number of over 50 million (UNESCO 2010b), with no reversal of trend in sight. Gender disparities in literacy levels are among the highest in the world, with even greater gender gaps only in Afghanistan and some countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (see Figure 1). The current male adult literacy rate stands at 66.8%, while the female literacy rate is only 40.0% (UNESCO 2010b). For every 100 literate men in Pakistan there are only 60 literate women (which equals a gender parity index of 0.6). Although the youth literacy rates indicate a trend towards a narrowing of the gender gap, the discrepancy between a 78.5% male and a 58.8% female rate puts Pakistan again amongst the bottom countries of the worldwide ranking (UNESCO 2010b). At present, nearly every third person in the young generation (15-24 years) cannot read and write, accounting for over 10 million illiterates in this age group, who are deprived of any formal job opportunities and whose economic prospects are rather gloomy, apparently doomed to share the fate of the numerous poor. Even for those children who are just about to start their education career, the Pakistani education system has less to offer than all other South Asian countries, including Afghanistan. Afghani children may expect 8 years of schooling in average, while Pakistani children have to be content with 6.8 years only, which is one of the very lowest values worldwide (UNESCO 2010b). Primary school enrolment ratios in Pakistan are the lowest in whole South Asia (see Figure 2) – and even well below the average of Sub-Saharan Africa – while at the same the gender disparities are highest.



Data Source: UNESCO: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010; Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre (2008): Human Development in South Asia 2008, p.142

2: Pakistan's primary Net Enrolment Ratio in International comparison

One reason why Pakistan performs well below its possibilities in terms of education can be found in the political prioritizing of public spending, namely in extraordinarily high military budgets at the expense of marginal education budgets. During the last decade, Pakistan has on average spent 3.6% of its GDP on the military, but only 2.0% of its GDP on education (see Figure 3). The share of military spending is the highest in the whole South Asian region, and even India and Iran, known for their high military budgets, stay behind. On the other hand, no other South Asian country spends such a low share of its GDP on education as Pakistan does. Furthermore, Pakistan is the only country in the region where military spending exceeds education spending. In an international comparative study of public spending on education and the military, William Easterly comes to the conclusion that Pakistan's "overspending on the military" is roughly statistically equal to its "underspending on education" (Easterly 2001, cited in: Winthrop & Graff 2010:11). In other words, the resources so urgently needed in the education sector are consumed by the military. The UNESCO considers a public spending on education of 4% of GDP as the minimum requirement to achieve universal primary education, which means that

Pakistan would have to double its public education expenditure to meet the UNESCO minimum standard.

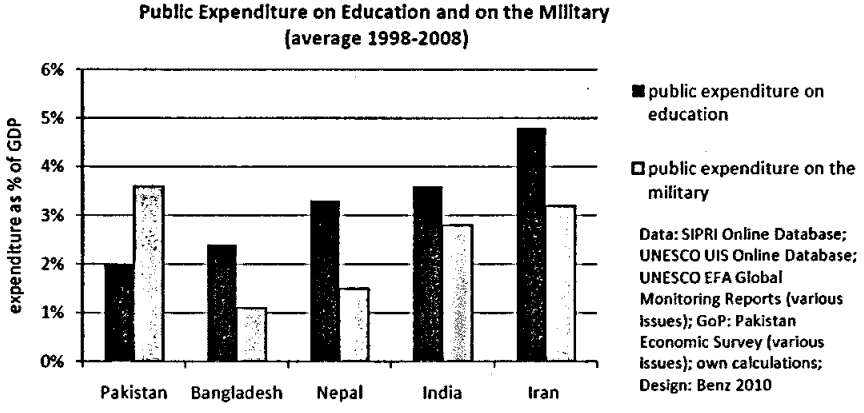


Figure 3: Public spending on education and on the military in regional comparison

This again makes it clear that the crisis of education in Pakistan is a home-made crisis that cannot be explained by Pakistan's level of economic development and poverty. Rather, the education crisis is the outcome of a political crisis, expressed by the prioritizing of other sectors (like the military) and the neglect of the education sector, combined with the lack of political will to bring about any positive change in the public education system.

Education in Pakistan has always been politicized and charged with political objectives. In colonial times, the British used education as a strategic tool to install a system of indirect rule and to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in morals and in intellect", as Lord Macaulay[3] expressed it in 1835 (Shami 2005:9). This new class served the British as a loyal, westernized, English-speaking local bureaucratic and technocratic elite in order to expand and maintain imperial power in British India. For this purpose a system of English-medium education was created for a small section of the local society, while the mass-education sector was never in the interest of

[3] Thomas Babington Macaulay, First Baron Macaulay (1800-1859) served as an advisor to the Governor-General in British India and is considered the key figure in establishing a British English-medium education system in the subcontinent.

the British. These two features, English-medium elite education and neglected vernacular-language mass education, constitute the heavy colonial heritage with which the newly established Pakistani state had to deal from 1947 onwards, and whose impact on the structures of the education system continues to be felt till the present day. The same system that served the British to maintain their colonial rule turned out to be equally useful for the post-independence Pakistani elites (themselves a product of the colonial elite schools) to maintain their power, and little was done to bring about any fundamental change. On the contrary, the elite education sector has even been reinforced by subsequent Pakistani regimes over the years, and a system of "internal colonialism of local ruling elites" (Saigol 2007:295) has replaced the direct colonial domination during the British *raj*. The list of education policies, political strategy papers, commission reports and reform programmes which have been disseminated over the last six decades is long and comprises at least 30 different papers, but despite their multitude they all repeat more or less the same noble objectives: the achievement of universal high-quality education for all citizens, overcoming the huge inequalities in terms of regions, rural-urban divide, gender bias and class-based inequalities. Unfortunately it emerged that the higher and nobler the formulated ambitions were, the smaller and less effective were the actual measures taken. In its report on the state of education in Pakistan, the Karachi-based Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) comes to the following conclusion: „A review of the history of education policy-making repeats the same pattern: the importance of education is iterated, the failure of past efforts is lamented, the main issues in education reform are highlighted, and new plans are proposed to meet new targets. Yet, the targets have remained elusive to date" (SPDC 2003:92). And Pakistan's well-known economist Kaiser Bengali seconds: „Setting targets, bemoaning the failure to achieve the same, and setting new targets with unqualified optimism has been a continuing game policy makers have played ad nauseam and at great public expense over the last 50 years" (Bengali 1999, cited in: Rahman 2004:308). For example, the target to achieve universal primary enrolment, which is even

a constitutional law imperative[4], was first formulated at the All Pakistan Educational Conference in 1947, with the envisioned target year 1967. In 1955 (First Five Year Plan 1955-60) the target year was shifted to 1975; in 1970 (New Education Policy 1970) it was further shifted to 1980; in 1978 (Fifth Five Year Plan 1978-83) it was again postponed to 1986; in 1979 (National Education Policy 1979) to 1992, in later policy papers to 2002, 2005, 2010, and now – with the National Education Policy 2009 – it stands at 2015. None of these many deadlines has been met, and with a current net primary enrolment rate of only 66.4% (UNESCO 2010b) it is highly doubtful if the 2015 target (which is set in line with the Millennium Development Goals and the Education For All targets) will be achieved. The UNESCO recently diagnosed that "Pakistan is off track for achieving universal primary education by 2015" (UNESCO 2010a:68), and these doubts are even shared by the Government of Pakistan, as it states in the National Education Policy 2009 that "Pakistan's commitment to universal primary education by 2015 [...] appears elusive on current performance" (GoP 2009a:9). Similarly, every education policy paper expresses the Government's commitment to increase public educational spending. For example, the new National Education Policy 2009 sets the target to increase public education spending to 7% of GDP by 2015. In light of the fact that the average spending over the last three decades has been only 2.1% of GDP[5], and that there was no single year in which it exceeded 2.5%, the target of 7% seems to be nothing but wishful thinking.

Of course, over the years this spending of about 2% of GDP on education had *some* effect on the education system in the country, and led to a remarkable

[4] Article 37 of the 1973 constitution of Pakistan stipulates that „the state shall (a) promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of backward classes or areas [and] (b) remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period" (SPDC 2003:2). This constitutional obligation has been reinforced by the 18th amendment of the constitution in April 2010, which guarantees every citizen a „right to education", providing that "the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:10).

[5] Author's calculations based on data from various issues of Government of Pakistan's "Pakistan Economic Survey" (e.g.: Go P 2010)

educational expansion since Pakistan's establishment in 1947. This success has been achieved against several great odds, ranging from the grave colonial heritage of an only rudimentary and highly polarized education system to the huge influx of refugees after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, recurrent and often sudden changes of regime in combination with several military coups and years of military dictatorship and martial law imposition, three etiolating wars fought against India, the separation of East Pakistan, and the huge challenge of building a nation out of a multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic population. It must be admitted that central education indicators such as literacy rates and enrolment rates at different levels all showed steady upward trends since Pakistan's foundation, and the number of educational institutions in the country has strongly increased over the decades. For example, the number of primary schools in Pakistan has increased nearly ninefold over the last half century from about 17,900 in 1959/60 to over 156,000 in 2009/10 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Development of the number of educational institutions in Pakistan (public and private sector)

Year	Primary	Middle	High	Secondary Vocational Institutions	Inter-colleges	Degree Colleges	Universities
1947/48	10 000			408		..	..
1959/60	17 901	1 974	1 069	100	126	40	4
1971/72	45 854	4 110	2 247	284	339	73	8
1980/81	59 169	5 295	3 479	231	433	99	19
1990/91	114 580	8 539	8 011	725	612	99	22
2000/01	147 700	25 500	14 800	630	1 710	366	59
2009/10*	156 400	41 500	24 800	3 193	3 399	1 275	132

* estimated; .. no data available

Source: Zaidi, A. (2009): Issues in Pakistan's Economy, p.396; GoP (2010): Pakistan Economic Survey 2009-10, p.160; International Crisis Group (2004): Pakistan: Reforming the Education Sector. Islamabad, Brussels, p. 3

Unfortunately, this impressive increase of educational institutions has been outnumbered by an even higher population growth. Since 1947, Pakistan's population has steadily increased with annual growth rates of about 3%, which means a doubling of the population every 24 years. This led to a multiplication

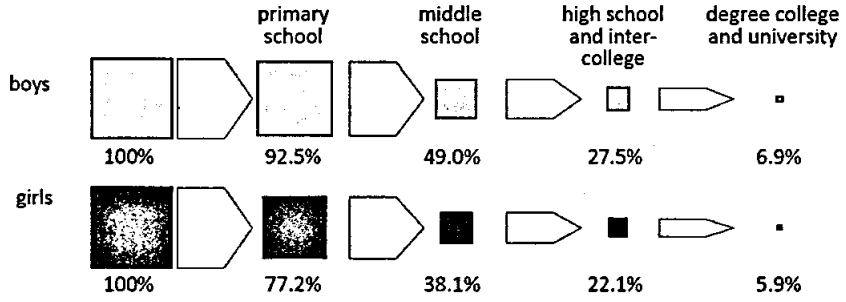
of the estimated initial 31 million (in West Pakistan, 1947) to the presently estimated 185 million people (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung 2010). Despite the recent decrease in annual growth rates to a current level of 2.3%, population growth will continue in the future, leading to an expected population of 335 million by 2050 (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung 2010). Every success that has been realized in the education sector by increasing the number of institutions, teachers, and resources has immediately been eaten up by the even faster population growth, and the even initially severe level of under-supply has constantly worsened. For example, between 1990 and 2010, the number of primary schools increased by 36.5%, the number of primary school teachers even by 41%, but the population increased in the same period by 60% . Every year, Pakistan's primary schools have to cater for an additional 100,000 first-graders as the birth cohorts increase in numbers.

From the above said, it becomes quite clear that the expansion of the education system in Pakistan could not keep pace with the population growth. Questions related to the quality of the newly established schools have not even been asked at this point. A comparative study by Bruce Fuller (1991) came to the conclusion that in many post-colonial states the impressive expansion of schools was often characterized by a very low education quality, which reduced the proclaimed development success to a mere symbolic act of the political leadership to signal modernity, progress and development to their populations. Rubina Saigol, a well-known critical Pakistani educational scientist, applied Fuller's thesis and found Pakistan to be a case in point, where "signs and symbols of modernity are substituted for actual opportunities in life" (Saigol 2007:305). Saigol admits that "enrolment at all levels of education increased considerably" since Pakistan's inception, but states that "there is a widespread disaffection with education and a lack of belief in its efficacy to engender economic development at the national level and well-being at the personal level" (Saigol 2007:319). We will come back to these questions of quality and relevance later.

Before that, we shall focus on the immediate consequences of the growing

supply gap in education, which manifests itself in extremely high numbers of out-of-school children of school age, low enrolment rates and exorbitant dropout rates in Pakistan. About 6.8 million out of a total number of 22 million children of primary school age (five to nine years) are not enrolled, with four out of ten girls and nearly three out of ten boys not attending school (UNESCO 2010b). At the middle and high school level, the proportion of un-enrolled children increases to 64% of the boys and 71% of the girls (UNESCO 2010b). In the respective age group (ten to 15 years), the number of out-of-school children is 13.9 million, compared to only 6.8 million children enrolled (UNESCO 2010b). Pakistan has the third highest absolute number of out-of-school children worldwide, only surpassed by India and Nigeria (Winthrop & Graff 2010:10), and it is expected that Pakistan will take the sorry global 'lead' in this respect by the year 2015 (SPARC 2009:46). The proportion of enrolled children decreases rapidly from the primary level onwards, and even at the middle school level only a minority of an age cohort has managed to remain enrolled (see Figure 4). The so-called school-life expectancy in Pakistan, i.e. the average years of schooling a child of school-entrance age can expect to receive, is only 6.2 years for girls and 7.5 years for boys (UNESCO 2010b), which is not even enough to complete the eight years of schooling necessary to acquire a middle school certificate. Of those children who are lucky enough to get enrolled in grade one (i.e. 77% of the girls and 93% of the boys), about 40% will drop out before completing their primary education (UNESCO 2010b). The gender gap in enrolments is obvious, showing a clear pro-male bias at all levels of education (see Figure 4).

The Pakistani "Education Funnel" 2009



Gross Enrolment Rates 2009 for respective education level
Data Source: UNESCO - UIS online database
(http://stats.uis.unesco.org, accessed: 17.11.2010)
Design: Benz 2010

Figure 4: Gross enrolment ratios at different education levels in Pakistan

While in urban areas gender parity has nearly been achieved at least at the primary level, the gender disparities in the rural areas of Pakistan are all the higher. In FATA, for example, there are less than half as many girls in schools as boys (SPARC 2009:52). In the rural areas of Pakistan, only 22% of the girls can complete their primary education, compared to 47% of the boys (World Bank 2010). Poor rural women aged 17 to 22 received on average only one year of schooling, while wealthy urban women show an average of nine years of education (UNESCO 2011:8). In addition to the dimensions of gender inequality and urban-rural disparities, socio-economic and class differences show a huge impact on enrolment and dropout rates. Tariq Rahman, referring to data from the governmental Pakistan Integrated Household Survey 2001-02 (GoP 2002), argues that "[j]ust as the poorest children have the lowest enrolment in schools, they also tend to drop out more than others. Thus, 53% of the poorest quintile dropped out before completing class 6 compared with only 23% of the richest quintile" (Rahman 2004b:310). Only 5% of the children aged 7 to 16 from the richest households are out of school, compared to almost half of the children from the poorest households (UNESCO 2011:6). Suffering from a triple discrimination in terms of gender, economic status and rural-urban divide, only 22% of the young women (aged 15 to 19; data refer to the

fiscal year 2001-02) of poor families in rural areas of Pakistan have ever attended school, while 82% of their rich female fellows in rural areas (and even 90% in urban areas) have attended school (Lloyd et al. 2007:105). Generally, the gender gap widens from rich to poor and from urban to rural. With respect to the proportion of those young men and women (aged 15 to 19) who have ever attended school, the gender parity index in the richest quartile in urban areas is 0.93 , while in the poorest quartile in rural areas it is only 0.34, which means that males outnumber females by factor three (Lloyd et al. 2007:105; author's calculations). Interestingly, the by far biggest divide is between the rich and the poor, and is much more pronounced than rural-urban disparities (UNESCO 2010a:68).

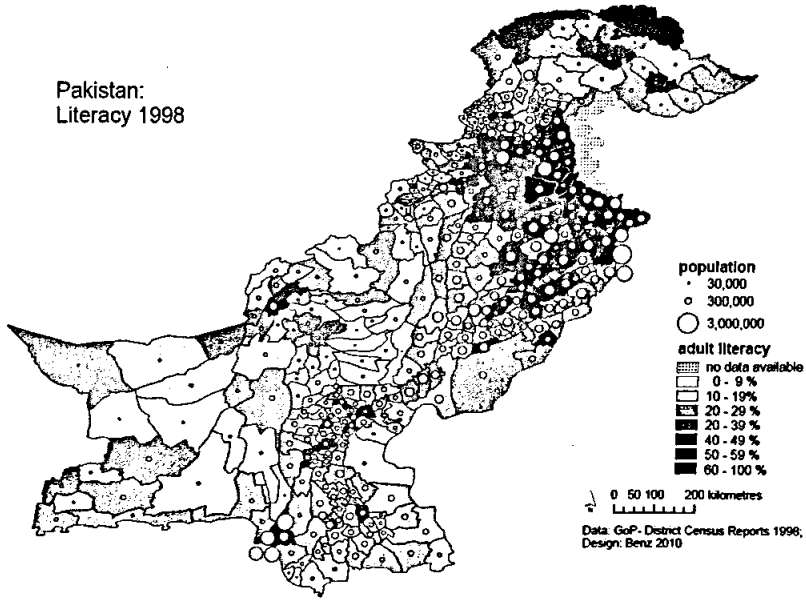


Figure 5: Pakistan – Literacy 1998

The range of multiple inequalities further diversifies when regional disparities within Pakistan (beyond the rural-urban divide) are taken into consideration. Altogether they reveal such an extremely heterogeneous education landscape within the country that it is – in the words of Akbar Zaidi – "futile to talk about a

single literacy rate for the country" (Zaidi 2009:382). In Figure 5, where the adult literacy rates for Pakistan are shown on the sub district level, the regional disparities in Pakistan's education landscapes become apparent. The highest literacy rates[6] are found in urban centres such as Karachi, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Multan, Hyderabad and Quetta. The relatively wealthy and densely populated Punjab region, which together with Karachi forms the economic and population centre of Pakistan, generally shows high literacy rates, especially in the northern parts. In the other parts of Pakistan, outside the irrigated plains of the Punjab and the densely populated Indus valley, especially in the rural periphery of Sindh, the mountainous regions of Balochistan, and in the western sections of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, where scarcely populated desert-steppe dominates, literacy rates are extremely low. About 85% of women in rural Balochistan and rural Sindh are illiterate (GoP 2007b:29), and in FATA a female literacy rate of about 3% has been estimated for the year 1998 (Winthrop & Graff 2010:46). As a rule, literacy rates decrease from urban to rural conditions, from better-off to poor regions, from the centres to the periphery, and from densely populated agricultural core regions to sparsely populated desert-steppe and mountain regions. The only apparent exception to this pattern is found in the high mountain areas in the very north of Pakistan. In upper Chitral and parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, literacy rates are as high as in the leading Punjab region, irrespective of their rural characteristics, their periphery location, their comparatively low economic power and their low population density. An attempt to explain this seeming irregularity will be given in the last section of this paper.

3. Factors contributing to low overall education status and multiple educational inequalities in Pakistan

As we have seen, the current state of education in Pakistan is characterized by an overall very low education status and huge disparities along a whole

[6] The data presented in Figure 5 and in this section are based on various issues of the governmental District Census Reports of 1998 and on figures provided by the Center for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution (CRPRID), Islamabad, as well as the author's own calculations and GIS-based data analysis.

range of factors. The symptoms of the disease are evident and impressively clear, so we can turn in a next step to the question of the root causes and underlying contributing factors. Two major groups of factors can be identified that led to the current lamentable state of education in Pakistan: demand-side factors and supply-side factors.

Widespread and pressing poverty, child labour, the persisting practices of bonded labour, a large number of refugees and internally displaced people (IDP), (quasi-) feudal structures in some areas, rapid population growth, threats and attacks against teachers and students by militant groups, as well as culture or religion based reservations towards female education are only some of the many demand-side factors which are said to constrain education in Pakistan. At present, about 23% of the people in Pakistan live on less than 1.25$ per day, and more than every second Pakistani (51%) lives in a household classified as poor according to the multi-dimensional poverty index used in the Human Development Report 2010 (Alkire & Santos 2010; UNDP 2010:162). One out of ten children dies before reaching the age of five, and about 38% of the Pakistani children under five years are underweight (UNESCO 2010a:320). Experts agree that poverty is among the most severe constraints on school enrolments (see e.g.: Zaidi 2009:394), given the lack of resources in poor households to meet the cost of schooling and the comparatively higher opportunity costs due to the requirement of the child's labour contribution to the household or for subsistence production. Child labour in the informal sector of the economy is widespread, and about 8.3% of the Pakistani children are economically active in the labour market (GoP 2003:101). Although officially banned and criticized, bonded labour as a modern form of slavery, e.g. in brick kilns, construction sites, quarries and other privately owned industries, still exists in Pakistan (Malik 1997:120) and prevents the affected children from receiving any type of formal education. Other groups at risk of being left without access to any schooling are the large numbers of so-called street children, which are estimated at about 1.2 million (Asian Human Rights Commission 2005) , children in detention centres, and the many children of the IDP living in refugee

camps in Pakistan. The number of IDP, which was about 1.6 million (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2010) before the devastating floods in the summer of 2010, has multiplied since then due to inundation and destruction of countless houses and huge areas of agricultural land.

Notwithstanding the certainly severe constraints to school enrolments caused by the listed factors, experts agree on the one point that it is not the demand-side factors which are decisive in the case of Pakistan, but rather the supply side-factors. Low education participation in Pakistan is primarily due not to low demand for education, but to the limited government supply of schooling (Winthrop & Graff 2010:11). Studies suggest that the demand for quality education is high even among poor groups, and that the reasons for not enrolling children are often based on the perception that the available schools have poor teachers and poor quality. As Winthrop and Graff state, "[t]he reasons that children are not enrolled have less to do with factors like household poverty, the opportunity cost to sending children to school rather than to work, or negative attitudes about sending kids to school. [...]Though certainly demand-side barriers continue, in general the main obstacle to better education in Pakistan appears to be the supply of schools and in particular, the complex challenges facing the public education sector" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:11). Therefore, a closer look at the supply-side factors, especially in the government education sector, is necessary.

The shortcomings and problems in the governmental education supply have to be considered as the major cause for Pakistan's low education status, since the government schools cater for the overwhelming majority of enrolled children and should serve the constitutional obligation of providing universal primary and secondary education for all. The list of shortcomings and grievances in the governmental education sector is long, and only a limited selection of central items can be outlined here.

i. Under-budgeting

The education sector has been politically neglected ever since Pakistan's in-

ception and was fobbed off with marginal budgets and strained with ideological burdens. Public spending on education in Pakistan has for decades been the lowest in the South Asian region, and despite a considerable rise of foreign donor assistance after the terror attacks of 11th September 2001, the problem of under-budgeting in the education sector continues to exist. The public spending of only about 2% of GDP falls short of the UNESCO recommendation of 4% and the government's target of 7% as formulated in the National Education Policy 2009. Regularly, the already very slim educational budgets are not even fully used, and especially the money designated for non-recurring expenditure, i.e. development expenditure, remains largely unutilized. The so-called White Paper, an intermediate discussion paper on the way to the National Education Policy 2009, states in the section on education financing: "[...] the most serious flaw is the under-utilization of funds. According to an estimate less than 50% of the funds allocated for the non-recurrent expenditure are expended" (Aly 2007:9). Under-utilization of budgets is a problem not only at the federal level, from which about one quarter of the total education budgets derive, but also at the lower administrative levels (Bano 2007:6). Some experts claim that even the small proportion of actually withdrawn money gets lost somewhere in the administrative system without reaching its designated purpose: "Funds for education become entangled in the long ladders of bureaucracy all the way from the federal level to the sub-divisions and very little filters down to the grassroots" (Malik 1997:123). In combination, these factors lead to a severe lack of funding in the education sector, giving rise to many of the shortcomings outlined below.

ii. Lack of infrastructure

As a consequence of the under-budgeting of the education sector in Pakistan, the school infrastructure is often highly inadequate with respect to both quantity and quality. There is a severe shortage of institutions, especially of girls' schools in rural areas. Many village children have to cover long

distances to reach the nearest school, which poses severe constraints on female education owing to culturally based mobility restrictions for girls and young women: „While distance to a school may not be critical for boys, for girls, and especially girls in rural areas, it makes the difference whether they attend school or not" (Zaidi 2009:397). The available government schools are often of very poor quality. In many cases the school building is of sub-standard quality due to embezzlement of parts of the construction budgets by private contractors, and in the Pakistani media reports about collapsed school buildings are frequent (SPARC 2009:55). About 11% of government schools do not even have any buildings and operate as so-called 'tree-schools' in the open air (GoP 2010:148). About 37% of government schools have no toilets, 60% have no electricity (GoP 2010:148), and 23% are without textbooks (Bano 2007:2). Government schools are often sparsely furnished, lack teaching materials and books, have no heating in winter and no fans in summer, have no boundary wall, no separate toilets for boys and girls (which impedes school attendance of girls when they reach puberty), no sports grounds, libraries, science labs or computer centres . In rural areas, „fewer than half of all classrooms that are open for business have desks for children" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:15).

iii. Lack of political will

Budget allocations are always subject to political prioritization and decision-making. The economic status of Pakistan cannot serve as the explanation for the lamentably low education budgets, since in many economically weaker countries the education budget allocations as a percentage of GDP and even as real per-capita expenses are higher. Instead, the ignorance of the education sector and the lack of political will and commitment of those elites in power to decide on public budget allocations to improve the public education system in Pakistan are the principal reasons for decade-long under-budgeting and neglect of education (Zaidi 2009:382). Although successive governments have verbally declared education as their top priority, it has

remained mere lip service, and "[...] rhetoric has seldom been followed by effective policy and implementation" (International Crisis Group 2004:2). The improvement of the public education system is contrary to the class interests of the ruling elites in Pakistan and would pose a threat to their own power position. A policy of neglecting public education for the masses while at the same time maintaining a separate and restricted elite education system accessible exclusively for the ruling classes perfectly serves their class interests, secures their power position and is one of the central tools for social reproduction.

iv. Poor governance

The public education administration in Pakistan has repeatedly been blamed for "mismanagement, political manipulation and corruption" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:34), for being "over-centralized" (International Crisis Group 2010:22) and for suffering from "bureaucratic infighting and inefficiency" (International Crisis Group 2010:22). Pervez Hoodbhoy, a well-known intellectual and critical observer of Pakistani education policy, characterizes the education administration of the country as "moronic, incompetent, self-obsessed, corrupt, and ideologically charged" (Hoodbhoy 2000). According to the analysis by Winthrop and Graff, one of the main reasons why Pakistan's education sector is lagging behind is „the patronage and corruption that mark all public spending" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:11). Especially at the local level, "monitoring and evaluation activities have not been carried out" (Zaidi 2009:397), and the provincial education departments lack the necessary resources and personnel to monitor effectively and clamp down on "rampant bribery and manipulation at the local level" (International Crisis Group 2004:i). The Pakistani Government is well aware of the malaise of the poor governance in the education administration and identifies in the National Education Policy 2009 the "corruption that perverts the entire spectrum of the system" (GoP 2009a:8) as a central constraint to education policy implementation. The Ministry of Education's analysis continues: "Anecdotes

abound of education allocations systematically diverted to personal use at most levels of the allocation chain. Political influence and favouritism are believed to interfere in the allocation of resources to the Districts and schools, in recruitment, training and posting of teachers and school administrators that are not based on merit, in awarding of textbook contracts, and in the conduct of examinations and assessments" (GoP 2009a:8).

v. Political appointments and lack of qualified teachers

As an outcome of poor education governance, patronage structures and political clientelism, teachers' appointments are not only extremely delayed (resulting in many vacant teaching posts) (Zaidi 2009:396), but often are based on personal relations, favouritism or bribery instead of merit, achievement and personal commitment as an educationist (Bano 2007:25). Thus, often unqualified, unsuited and uncommitted candidates enter the teaching profession, resulting in poor teaching quality and low teachers' motivation. Winthrop and Graff draw a gloomy picture of the situation: "Teachers are often not hired on the basis of merit. Rather a strong culture of nepotism and favouritism on the part of political power brokers determines who receives a teaching job, in addition to outright bribery. [...] The teacher posts have often been used as rewards in Pakistan's system of patronage politics, with teaching jobs handed out as a reward for political support" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:36). Moreover, since teachers serve as polling agents during elections, they have often played "a critical role in manipulating the ballot to produce favourable electoral results" (International Crisis Group 2004:23). In this context, a "growing involvement of members of national and provincial assemblies in the selection and assignments of teachers" (Lloyd et al. 2005:690) in order to secure election outcomes could be observed. This situation of political appointments and clientelism has not remained unnoticed by the political leadership, and every new National Education Policy repeats the same target declaration to restore a system of teacher appointments exclusively based on merit. For example, in the National Education

Policy 2009 it reads: "The Government shall take steps to ensure that teacher recruitments, professional development, promotions and postings are based on merit alone" (GoP 2009a:34).

vi. Lack of teachers' accountability

Political appointments and patronage together with very limited supervision and monitoring capacities of lower level education administrative units due to under-budgeting and lack of staff, created a control vacuum which allows public sector teachers to violate their duties without facing any serious sanctions (Winthrop & Graff 2010:37). Given that the system of non-merit-based appointments outlined above often selects candidates with no interest in becoming educators and who rather consider their tenured posts to be a reward for political loyalty, such teachers often show low motivation and lack of commitment to their profession, which can actualize unchecked in poor teaching and frequent teacher absenteeism during classes. „Many educators, once ensconced as full time civil servants, rise through the system despite having little if any interest and experience in teaching" (International Crisis Group 2004:i). Transfers of politically appointed teachers who fail to fulfil their duty are practically impossible "[...] because they are backed by someone in power. They have no interest in education but you can't punish them for their performance", as Mahtab Rashti, a former Sindh education secretary says (cited in: International Crisis Group 2004:21). Experts agree on the view that frequent teacher absenteeism is "the norm in public schools across the country" (SPARC 2009:55), implying that students are left on their own or that classes don't take place at all. It has been reported that some teachers collect their regular government salary while spending their time at other jobs or residing elsewhere, even abroad (Winthrop & Graff 2010:37). Anecdotally, the bribes paid for getting a teaching post in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are much higher for positions in rural villages than for posts in its capital Peshawar, presumably because in remote areas with lower levels of government monitoring, it is that much easier to go „on visa" (i.e. to be

permanently absent as a teacher) (Winthrop & Graff 2010:37). The combination of a regular income, high job security, regular promotions and the provision of retirement pensions on the one hand and the virtual inexistence of any performance supervision and monitoring on the other explain the attractiveness of teaching posts as a reward in relations of political patronage and clientelism. Other than in private sector schools, where students have to pay tuition fees, the parents in public schools have very limited power to control and exercise influence on the teachers' performance.

vii. Cheating in exams

Cheating in exams and manipulation of results in combination with bribery and corruption are widespread phenomena in Pakistan (GoP 2009a:58; International Crisis Group 2004; Saigol 1993a; Shami 2005:34; Siddiqui 2007). Grades and certificates are often buyable, and sometimes even faked. "In a public education sector with little if any oversight, the positions of examiner, grader and degree-granting officer can be highly lucrative" (International Crisis Group 2004:21). In the so-called fake degree issue of summer 2010, it became public that at least 10% of the current parliamentarians in the National and Provincial Assemblies used faked and bogus Bachelor degrees to fulfil the necessary requirements for nomination as a candidate for the parliamentary elections (The Dawn, 24th Oct 2010). Household surveys in Pakistan revealed that in about 50% of cases bribery was necessary to get admission to a higher level public school (Winthrop & Graff 2010:37). Some teachers withhold any meaningful teaching from their students during regular school time and polish up their salary through private afternoon tuition sessions in which the real teaching takes place, and it is an open secret that enrolment in these private lessons is a precondition for 'passing' exams. In other cases, examination papers have been made available in advance for money (Malik 1997:127). When degrees and certificates are distributed on the basis of payments and bribery instead of personal

achievements, this undermines not only any sense of justice and equality of opportunities in a fair competition is undermined, but also the student's motivation to work hard and achieve merits on honest grounds.

viii. Ghost schools

An estimated 30,000 government schools in Pakistan, i.e. 20% of all government schools, exist only on paper (SPARC 2009:55). These so-called ghost schools exist in the education budget plans, teachers are appointed and posts are filled, salaries are regularly taken by the staff and school budgets are withdrawn, but actually no teaching activity is taking place. Some of these schools do not even have a building in place. In 1998 the Punjab government identified thousands of ghost schools in the province and "estimated that 40 per cent of the province's teachers only went to school to collect their salaries" (International Crisis Group 2004:22). The International Crisis Group states the trend of an „alarming mushrooming of ‚ghost' schools that either do not exist or are dysfunctional, but that are allocated precious resources by the education ministry" (International Crisis Group 2010:22). Another related issue is the widespread phenomenon of "proxy teaching" especially in primary schools in remote rural areas. Because local teachers are unavailable, the vacant teaching posts in these areas are filled with candidates from urban centres who often resfrain from actually moving to the rural area and either only take the salary without service or install a 'proxy person' who fulfils their duty for them or they give part of their salary to bribe the education administrators and monitors who in turn falsify reports about school functioning".

ix. Improper teaching methods and poor learning outcomes

Although officially banned by the Provincial Education Ministries, corporal punishment is still widely practised in government schools throughout Pakistan (SPARC 2009:61). A national school assessment conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2005 revealed that 40% of the students in govern-

ment schools reported receiving corporal punishment from their teachers 'frequently' or at least 'occasionally' (DoE 2005:13; GoP 2005:23). In the same national assessment it could be shown that corporal punishment had a significant negative impact on students' achievement levels (DoE 2005:14). Rote learning, i.e. the parrot-like repetition of whole phrases and paragraphs from the textbook and testing their literal memorization in exams, is the predominant teaching practice in government schools. „Students sit on hard benches and memorize lessons by singing them in a chorus" (Rahman 2004b:309). Most educationists condemn rote teaching practices as preventing any deeper understanding and discouraging critical, independent thinking and analysis. In Pakistani government schools „analysis is not encouraged at any level" (Rahman 2004b:309) since they are characterized by „physical punishment and an emphasis on cramming rather than learning" (Malik 1997:122). Additional to the lack of teachers' knowledge about understanding-oriented teaching methods, teachers often show deficiencies in their subject knowledge. Some teachers reportedly do not even know the contents of the National Curriculum, and especially English teachers often lack the very basic proficiency to carry on a simple conversation in their subject language. The system of teacher training and professional development for government teachers remains inefficient, fragmentary and obsolete (Bano 2007:25-6). The outcomes of poor teaching methods and poor subject knowledge are low students' achievement levels, high dropout and repetition rates, low pass-rates in exams and poor learning success. A study on the learning progress of primary school students in Punjab found that „over two thirds of grade 3 students could not write a sentence in Urdu and a similar proportion could not solve a simple subtraction problem" (SPARC 2009:53). In 2007, 55% of the candidates who appeared for their Matriculation (Secondary School Certificate) examination failed (GoP 2009b:131).

x. A problematic National Curriculum

Education in Pakistan has always been politicized and ideologically charged. Successive governments formed and moulded the education sector according to their political interests and ideology. Kaiser Bengali, the managing director of the Karachi-based Social Policy and Development Centre, even goes as far as to say "the purpose of Pakistan's education system is not pedagogy but indoctrination" (International Crisis Group 2004:17). The central tools for directing the contents of teaching in the desired way are the curriculum and the textbooks. Both tools are firmly under the control of the central government, despite the otherwise provincial responsibilities for education (Zaidi 2009:396). This monopolistic control and "highly centralized process of determining public school educational content" (International Crisis Group 2004:11) is no coincidence, since the central government wants to keep in its own hands this powerful tool of ideological, political and economic socialization of its citizens and the key to create and maintain national integration and unity of the state. The so-called *Pakistan Ideology* deeply penetrated the National Curriculum, which is compulsory in all government schools and in most non-elitist private sector schools. The *Pakistan Ideology* is the central tool of nation building in this multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state by using Islam as the unifying bond of the newly constructed Pakistani nation, while at the same time downplaying the role of linguistic, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. Urdu was introduced in 1947 as the compulsory medium of instruction, although only a minority of about 8% of the Pakistanis are native Urdu speakers (Mansoor 2004:55). As a consequence, all other languages – including the Punjabi language natively spoken by nearly every second Pakistani – have been discriminated against in the education system. According to Tariq Rahman, the nation building strategies along with the *Pakistan Ideology* were "encouraged by suppressing ethnicity, and this is to be achieved by ignoring the multi-lingual and multi-cultural aspects of Pakistani society" (Rahman 2004b:309). Islam as the unifying bond of the nation was misused under the military dictatorship of

Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88) to thoroughly Islamize the National Curriculum and textbooks, an Islamist move which pervades the syllabi and textbooks in Pakistan till the present day (Rosser 2003). The political and ideological manipulation of curricula and textbooks has led to a situation where "the state distorts the educational content of the public school curriculum, encouraging intolerance along regional, ethnic and sectarian lines" (International Crisis Group 2004:ii). The curriculum and textbooks contain distorted history, factual inaccuracies, intolerant views, sectarian and ethnic bias (Aziz 2004; Nayyar & Salim 2004) and are "encouraging religious hatred" (International Crisis Group 2004:ii-iii). They suppress the development of tolerance, stoke fears by invoking a feeling of a permanent outside threat to the country by various enemies, especially India, stir „xenophobia and hatred" and train „passivity" and „blind obedience" rather than independent critical thinking (Hoodbhoy 2000). India is depicted as the permanent 'other', "there is much glorification of war and the military, and many anti-Hindu and anti-India remarks" (Rahman 2004b:310) are to be found. „The curriculum and teaching in government schools help create intolerant worldviews among students" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:2), and favour "binary thinking over critical engagement with complex issues" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:42). "Children [are] being educated into ways of thinking that makes them susceptible to a violent and exclusionary worldview open to sectarianism and religious intolerance" (Nayyar & Salim 2004:v), which poses – in the view of some experts, e.g. Winthrop and Graff (2010) – a more severe threat to stability and peace in the country and the South Asian region than the often blamed madrasas.

xi. The question of relevance

Closely related to the issues of a problematic curriculum is the question of the practical utility of the acquired skills and knowledge. Many education experts argue that what is learned in Pakistani government schools is barely of any practical use or relevance and does not correspond to the labour market's demands (Aly 2007:49; Shami 2005:89; Winthrop & Graff 2010:43-4;

Zaidi 2009:396). This leads to frustration among young graduates and to large numbers of educated unemployed in the country (Ghayur & Hashmi 1990). In the light of this development, parents may consider schooling their children to be a mere waste of time and therefore opt for non-enrolment. The educated youth is deprived of adequate career opportunities due to their irrelevant and useless education and therefore – according to some analysts – pushed "towards crime and militancy" (International Crisis Group 2010:22).

The list of grievances and shortcomings in government schools in Pakistan could be prolonged much further, but the central message should already be clear: the public education sector suffers from multiple problems and deficiencies, basically due to the absence of the political will of the ruling classes to bring a fundamental change to the situation. This political lethargy can be explained by the fact that the ruling elites are not affected by the shortcomings of the government education system since their siblings attend schools in a separate system of private elitist schools which provide high quality English-medium education for high tuition fees unaffordable for the masses. Moreover, the lamentably poor status of the government education system is perfectly in line with the class-interest of the ruling elites, since it prevents competition by ambitious, upcoming aspirants from the lower classes, and the socially highly segregated education system, termed by some as "educational caste system" (SPDC 2003:158) or even as "educational apartheid" (International Crisis Group 2004:4; Najam 1998), perfectly serves the social reproduction of the elite.

4. Pakistan's Segregated Education System

So far, we have only been concerned with the government education sector. There are good reasons to primarily focus on this sector, since it accounts for two thirds of the total enrolments, and for the government it is a constitutional obligation to "provide free and compulsory education to all children" and to "guarantee its citizens a right to education" (Winthrop & Graff 2010:10). But the

Pakistani education landscape is more complex and comprises at least four major types of schools, which coexist in parallel. Questions of access and equity are raised in the light of this segregation since each school type caters for a specific section of society, imparts a specific form of knowledge and education, and forms different worldviews, norms and values among its students (Rahman 2004a). They partly follow different curricula, use different textbooks and differ in their medium of instruction, their examination systems, their accessibility, and their tuition fee structures. A brief overview of their central characteristics is provided in . The share of enrolments of the different types of schools in Pakistan vary from source to source, and therefore the presented figures represent only the range of rough estimates given in the literature. Madrasa education, although important especially for the poorest sections of society, is in most estimates said to account for less than 1% of total enrolments in Pakistan. Although much attention has been given in the media and public discourse to the religious education sector in Pakistan since the terror attacks of 9/11 in 2001, along with frequent claims of a 'madrasa boom' in Pakistan and its connection with allegedly rising radicalization, militancy and Islamism in the country, experts agree on the view that no such mushrooming of religious seminaries has occurred and that madrasas are not the main problem. Instead, the "single biggest shift in the structure of education delivery in Pakistan" (Andrabi et al. 2008:337) occurred in the sector of secular non-elitist private schools, and the primary source of militancy in Pakistan is considered to be not the madrasas, but the abysmally low enrolment rates and the poor overall education status in Pakistan due to the government's failure in public education supply (Winthrop & Graff 2010). While the madrasas cater predominantly for the poorer sections of society, the elitist private schools serve the opposite side of the social spectrum: the small stratum of the civil and military elites of the country. This kind of elitist English-medium schools, often originally established as Christian convents, missionary schools, "English schools" or so-called "chiefs' colleges" (Rahman 2005:25), date back to British colonial times and fulfilled an important function in the system of indirect rule, since

most Anglicized senior members of the elite got their education in these schools in order to "encourage loyalty to the crown" (Rahman 2005:25). After independence, these schools continued to exist and since then have served the elites of the newly established state. In the 1960s, privately run elitist English-medium schools were complemented by state-supported elite schools for the military (so-called Cadet Colleges) and the civil bureaucracy (so-called Public Schools) (Rahman 2004b:313-4). All these schools charge exorbitant tuition fees and therefore are only accessible to members of the very upper strata of society, which is reflected in a less than one percent share in total enrolments in Pakistan. The quality standards of education in these schools are very high and "far superior to those of the public schools" (International Crisis Group 2004:1). Especially the feature of having English as the medium of instruction provides their students with the best opportunities for high-ranking positions, since "English has always been the language of power and a virtual class marker in Pakistani society" (International Crisis Group 2004:13). Entry to prized government and non-government jobs is "restricted to those lucky enough to have access to the limited seats in English-medium schools" (Ahmed & Amjad 1984:34, cited in Zaidi 2009:397).

Table 2: Major school types in Pakistan's segmented education system

	Government Schools	Deeni Madaris	Elitist Private Schools, Cadet Colleges, "Public Schools"	Non-Elitist Private Schools
Enrolment	63-65%	1%	< 1%	33-35%
Medium of Instruction	Urdu (or Sindhi, Pashto)	Urdu, vernacular languages	English	English, often mixed with Urdu
Curriculum	National Curriculum	Different religious curricula	often Western/ International curriculum	National Curriculum
Examination System	Provincial Boards	5 Madrasa Boards	British O/A-Level Exams	Provincial Boards
Source of Budget	Government	Waqaf (religious foundations), donations, foreign funding	Tuition fees (>1500 Rs. /month), government subsidies; military foundations	Tuition fees (<1500 Rs./month)
Social Class	Poor to lower middle and middle class	Poor or very religious people	Civil and military elites and upper class	Lower middle and middle class

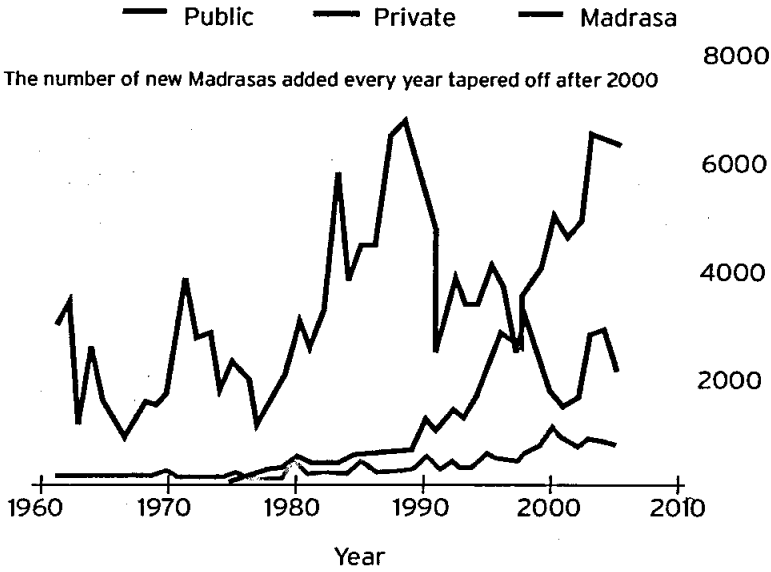
In this situation, the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis have been trapped between the inaccessibility – due to exorbitant tuition fees – of high-quality English-medium education and the Urdu-medium, low-quality and highly inadequate governmental education system. Experts have long been wondering why before the late 1980s no major attempt was made by the civil society or the private sector to close the education supply gap. Nasir Jalil, for example, stated that „under similar circumstances, communities in other developing countries have mobilized their own resources to build schools and provide for teachers, but this has not been the case in Pakistan" (Jalil 1993:78). It was just about the time of his writing, in the early 1990s, that this long-awaited private sector initiative started to set in and evolved over the following two decades into a profound restructuring of the Pakistani education landscape: a new type of non-elitist private sector schools started to play a central role in the education sector and created for the first time a real alternative between insufficient and poor-standard government schools on the one hand and unaffordable elitist schools on the other. For the first time, formerly elitist English-medium education became accessible for the lower and middle classes, and eventually even for the rural poor.

5. The rise of non-elitist private schools

Since the early 1990s, a tremendous and rapid increase in the numbers of private English-medium schools in Pakistan has been observed. They charge only moderate tuition fees, are increasingly located also in rural areas and are accessible even for students from the poorer households. In the light of a nearly tenfold increase within less than two decades – from about 3,300 private schools in 1983 in the four major provinces of the country to more than 32,000 in the year 2000 (Andrabi et al. 2008:335) – many observers talk of a real 'mushrooming' of private schools in Pakistan. The annual number of newly established schools has increased considerably since the early 1990s (see

Figure 6)[7], and has outnumbered the annual growth in the public sector since the late 1990s. The growth in the education sector in the last decade has predominantly been facilitated by the private sector, and current annual new foundations in the private sector are about three times as high as those in the government sector (see Figure 6). The share of private sector enrolments (from primary to the inter-college level) increased from 14% in 1991 to 23% in 1999 (Bano 2008:473), and is currently estimated at about 33-35% (Andrabi et al. 2008:335; Winthrop & Graff 2010:14). The private sector's education expenditure accounts for about 0.7- 0.89% of Pakistan's GDP, compared to public sector education expenditure of about 2% of GDP (GoP 2004:6,13,82).

: Growth rate of different types of schools



Source: Winthrop & Graff (2010): Beyond Madrasas, p.18; modified

Figure 6: Currently existing schools by type and year of formation

[7] shows the numbers of currently existing schools by the year of their formation. These figures do not take into account the school survival rate, which means the omission of all those schools that have been closed down already. But evidence provided by Andrabi et al. (2002:9) estimates a very high annual school survival rate of 96.4%, so that the given data can serve as a good proxy for actual numbers of annual school formations.

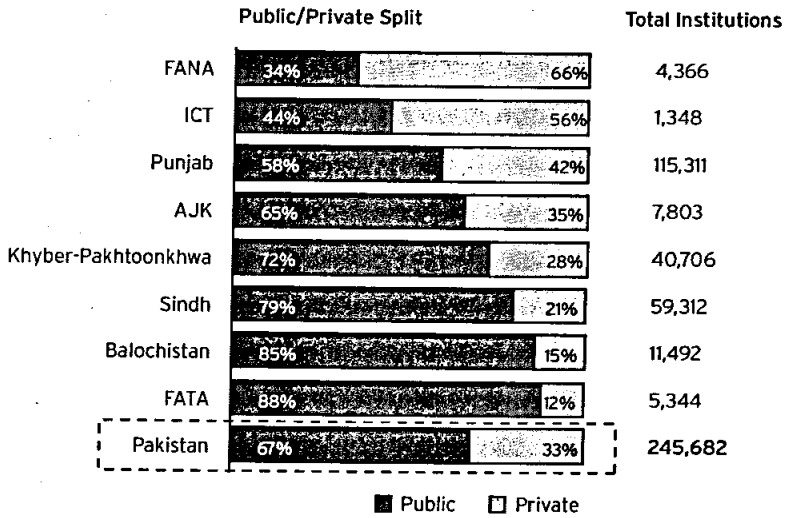
The characteristics of these newly established private schools differ considerably from those of the private schools established before the 1990s. Early private institutions were predominantly at the high school level or above, were located in urban areas, demanded extremely high tuition fees and served nearly exclusively the upper strata of urban society. The newly established private institutions are predominantly primary and middle schools (currently 78% of all private sector enrolments are at the primary level), they are (with a share of 95%) overwhelmingly co-educational institutions, they are also established in rural areas (in the late 1990s the rural-urban ratio of new foundations was nearly equal), and they charge only low tuition fees which allow for the use of such institutions by lower income groups (Andrabi et al. 2002:5-12; Andrabi et al. 2008:337; GoP 2001a). The bulk of private schools (89% in rural areas and 84% in urban areas) consist of self-owned (so-called "for-profit") schools, while the so-called "not for profit schools" (i.e. run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trusts, and foundations) make up only a small minority (Andrabi et al. 2008:337). In popular debates, often a rather sceptical stance on private schools – and especially on the 'for-profit' type – is taken and a specific picture of the private sector is drawn: private schools are said to take high fees, to serve only the urban elites and to exclude the rural poor. It is often argued that they are incapable of expanding education to the rural areas and to the poor. It is stated that the private sector cannot contribute to an increase in female enrolments, since people were only ready to pay tuition fees for their sons. It is said that that they attract only those students who would have been enrolled anyway, and therefore they cannot be part of a strategy to achieve universal primary education and gender equity.

According to a comprehensive study by Andrabi et al. (2002, 2008), no single one of these popular assumptions can be maintained in the light of new empirical findings. They argue that these assumptions provide an adequate description of the situation in Pakistan more than two decades ago, but that the picture has completely changed with the expansion of a new type of non-elitist private school, whose role and impact need to be reconsidered (Andrabi et al.

2008:334). They found that "[c]ontrary to expectation, private schools are not an urban elite phenomenon. Not only are they prevalent in rural areas but also are affordable to middle and even low income groups" (Andrabi et al. 2002:1). According to their findings, the new private schools' enrolment share "increased in both urban and rural areas and for both rich and poor households" (Andrabi et al. 2008:336), and the rate of enrolment increase is "higher in rural compared to urban areas and high among the poorest segments of the population" (Andrabi et al. 2008:330). In 2000, about 39% of all private schools were already located in rural areas (GoP 2001a), and this share is further increasing. By the end of the 1990s, "close to 10 percent of children in the poorest deciles nationally were studying in private schools" (Andrabi et al. 2008:337). Within only one decade, from 1991 to 2001, the share of households from the poorest decile with at least one child in a private school increased from 9% to 18% in urban areas and from close to 0% to 6% in rural areas (Andrabi et al. 2008:337). Akbar Zaidi observed that "even low income areas and *katchi abadis* in urban areas have their fair share of private schools" (Zaidi 2009:396). At "less than a dime a day," the average tuition fees even at "for-profit" schools are affordable to the poor (Andrabi et al. 2008:343). Half of these schools take less than 960 Rs. annually in urban areas, and less than 751 Rs. annually in rural areas (Andrabi et al. 2008:343). Andrabi et al. found that private schools have a "dramatic impact [...] in reducing the gender gap" in education since "female enrolment in private schools is consistently 3-5 percentage points higher than it is in government schools" and "private schools increase enrolments more for girls than for boys" (Andrabi et al. 2008:340, 342). In rural areas of Pakistan, the female enrolment rate is about 50% in villages with a local private school, compared to 29% in villages with only government schools (Andrabi et al. 2008:339). In the same way, the gender gap decreases: "compared to a boy in the same household, a girl in a settlement without a private school is 18 percentage points less likely to be enrolled, but this gap decreases to 9 percentage points in a settlement with such schooling options" (Andrabi et al. 2008:342). In the year 2006-7, already a share of

45.1% of private school students (primary to inter-college level) was female, compared to 42.2% in government schools (GoP 2008: Table 0.2, author's calculations). Andrabi et al. could show that it was exactly the often criticized private schools that were responsible for increasing enrolment rates of girls, among the poor, and in rural areas, and that the private students are not those children who would have been enrolled anyway, but instead "private schools are bringing new students into the educational net; they are not just taking them away from government schools" (Andrabi et al. 2008:351). Therefore, as Andrabi et al. conclude, contrary to popular assumptions private schools can help to achieve universal primary education, to close the gender gap and to soften the urban-rural divide, as the successful example of rural Punjab shows (Andrabi et al. 2002:33). Moreover, non-elitist private schools provide important new employment opportunities for educated women, especially in rural areas where the teaching profession is often the only available option for formal female employment. Other than the male-dominated government school sector, the bulk (76%) of teachers in the new private schools is made up by women (Andrabi et al. 2008:344).

The mushrooming of private schools has been witnessed throughout Pakistan, in all four provinces and also in the areas with a non-provincial status, such as FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). In rural and urban areas throughout the country the number of private schools increased, but the dynamics and amplitude of the private school boom varied and created articulated regional disparities. Some areas, such as rural Sindh and rural Balochistan, have barely witnessed any increase in private institutions, while the Punjab and urban regions such as Islamabad have seen the greatest change and currently show some of the highest private sector proportions among their educational institutions (see Figure 7).



Note: "FANA" (Federally Administered Northern Areas) is the formerly used term for the Gilgit-Baltistan region; "ICT" refers to the Islamabad Capital Territory, "AJK" refers to Azad Jammu and Kashmir; "FATA" refers to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas;

Source: Winthrop & Graff (2010): Beyond Madrasas, p.14; modified

Figure 7: Proportion of public and private education institutions by region

In educational terms, the Gilgit-Baltistan region in the very north of Pakistan constitutes an exception in many ways, as we have already seen with respect to its unexpectedly high education levels (see Figure 5). With about 66% of all educational institutions, Gilgit-Baltistan shows the country-wide highest share of private schools and even outnumbers the national capital Islamabad, which is known as a hub for private sector education. Because of this outstanding characteristic, a closer look at the educational dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan may provide valuable insights into the potential of the private sector's contributions to fostering education in peripheral, rural and comparatively poor regions.

6. Educational expansion and the private sector in Gilgit-Baltistan

In Gilgit-Baltistan formal education provision is dominated by the private sector. It is the only region in Pakistan (except for the Islamabad Capital Territory) in which the government sector as an educational provider has been relegated

to a mere minority position. The number of 2861 private schools in the region (in 2005) by far outnumbers the 1505 government schools (GoP 2007a:169). In terms of enrolments, the government sector's share is about 56.1% for boys and 46.4% for girls[8]. Within Gilgit-Baltistan, the importance of the private sector varies to a great extent, as can be seen in Figure 8. For example, in the Diamir and Astore districts, private school enrolment plays only a marginal role with a private sector's enrolment share under 12% for boys and under 7% for girls. In the Ghizer district, on the other hand, 72% of girls' and 52% of boys' enrolments are in the private sector. Interestingly, the gross enrolment rates are highest and the gender gap between male and female gross enrolment rations is lowest – or even non-existent – in those districts with the highest private sector share, as can be seen in Figure 8. Similarly, the overall education level – e.g. measured by the adult or youth literacy rate – is highest in these districts. For example, the youth literacy rate (15 to 24 years) in Diamir in 1998 was 35.4% for men and 4.3% for women, compared to 71.8% for men and 38.8% for women in the Ghizer district, respectively (GoP 2001b: Table 11; author's calculations; GoP 2001c: Table 11). Therefore a strong relation between the availability of private sector schools, on the one hand, and higher enrolment rates, higher overall education levels and lower or even non-existent gender gaps, on the other, can be stated for the Gilgit-Baltistan region.

[8] These figures are based on data provided in the National Education Census Report 2006 for Gilgit-Baltistan (Government of Pakistan – Ministry of Education 2006:30, 36; author's calculations). The respective figures based on the author's own calculations using data from the unpublished Annual School Census Database 2005-06 of the Directorate of Education in Gilgit-Baltistan deviate, since they show a government sector's share in total enrolments (primary to inter-college level) of 63.9% for boys and 61.2% for girls. The enrolment shares provided in Figure 8 and in this paragraph are based on the latter data source. Generally, data inaccuracy and inconsistency between different sources is a widespread problem in official Pakistani statistics.

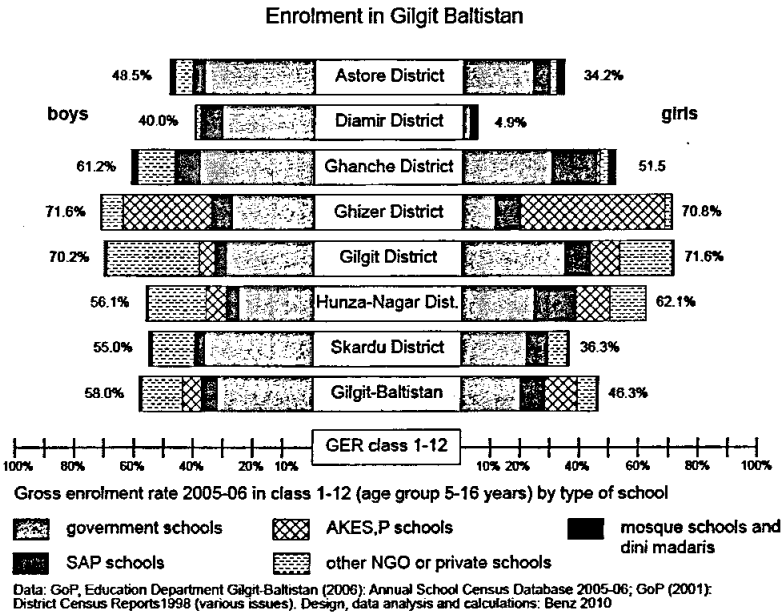
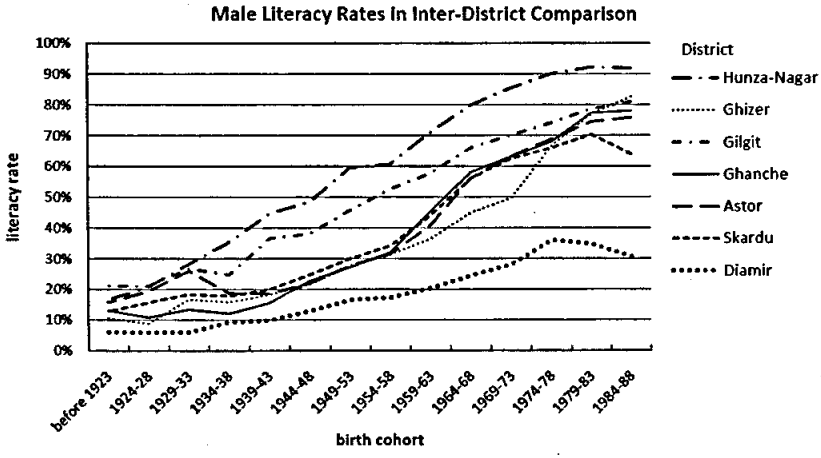


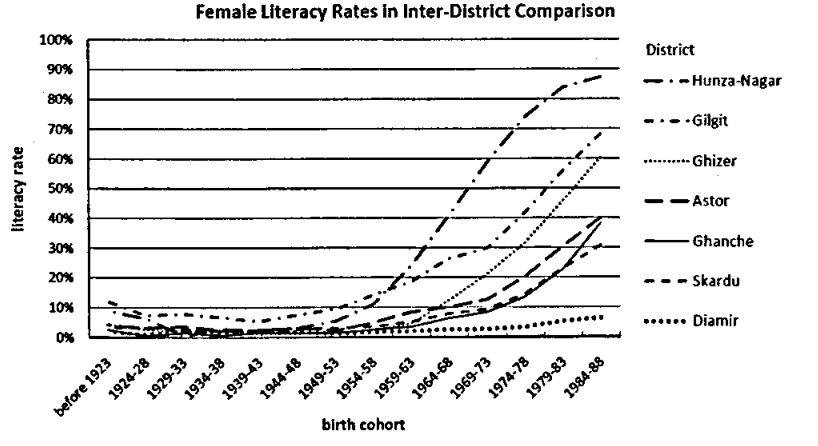
Figure 8: Gross enrolment rates in Gilgit-Baltistan by district and school type

A look into the educational history of the region reveals that the current education levels achieved and enrolment rates realized are very young accomplishments, since the region started from adult literacy rates of below 20% for men and 10% for women only about two to three generations ago. Since then most parts of Gilgit-Baltistan have witnessed an unprecedented and extremely rapid educational expansion, which first affected male education and later, with a time-lag of one to two generations, also became effective with respect to female education (see Figure 9 and Figure 10).



Data: GoP, Population Census Organization, Statistics Divison (2001): 1998 District Census Report. Islamabad (various issues), Table 11
Calculations and design: Benz 2010

Figure 9: Male literacy rates in Gilgit-Baltistan by district and birth cohort



Data: GoP, Population Census Organization, Statistics Divison (2001): 1998 District Census Report. Islamabad (various issues), Table 11
Calculations and design: Benz 2010

Figure 10: Female literacy rates in Gilgit-Baltistan by district and birth cohort

Especially the strong rise of female literacy rates in the Gilgit, Ghizer and Hunza-Nagar districts must be attributed to a large extent to the private sector schools, since the first girls' schools in these areas were private ones. Espe-

cially the so-called Diamond Jubilee (DJ) School Programme, which was initiated in these districts in 1946/47 by the religious and spiritual leader of the Ismaili community, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III, was a real pioneering venture in this respect. Initially it started with only about 46 boys' schools in Ghizer, Hunza and Gojal, predominantly at the primary level (Iqbal 2009), but in the subsequent years the school network expanded, and in the early 1960s it started to focus especially on girls' education. Currently the Aga Khan Education Service runs more than 120 DJ schools, including four high-quality so-called 'primary institutions' at the higher secondary level. Additionally, more than 128 community-based schools are affiliated with the network (AKES,P internal presentation, 2005). Other private schools from a variety of types (community, private entrepreneurs, national and international school chains, NGOs, benefactors from within Pakistan and abroad) followed the pioneering Aga Khan institutions, and the private education expansion reached out well beyond the Ismaili settlement areas of the region. All in all, the private sector expansion in Gilgit-Baltistan can be considered a formidable success story and may serve as a case in point to illustrate the potential of the private sector to close the huge education provision gap left by the state and its insufficient and poor quality education system. Of course, one has to be aware of the particularity of the Gilgit-Baltistan experience, be it the high international donor support which sustained the private sector expansion, be it the particular 'cultural factor' and 'communal spirit' within the minority population group of the Ismaili sect, guided by a spiritual leader who for decades has pursued an agenda of modernization for his community of followers and strongly advocates female education, or be it the fact that – in contrast to all other areas in Pakistan – the bulk of private sector institutions (95% in rural and 85% in urban areas in Gilgit-Baltistan) is of the "not for-profit" type (Andrabi et al. 2002). Nevertheless, the private sector certainly has a potential to help to overcome the shortcomings of the governmental education provision, although serious concerns and objections circulating in the discourse on private education in Pakistan cannot be ignored or easily thrust aside. In the following concluding

remarks, some of these objections will be raised and weighed against the more optimistic arguments presented in the last two sections.

7. Conclusions

As we have seen, the governmental education sector in Pakistan makes rather a gloomy impression, since under-budgeting, political neglect, mismanagement, corruption, political interference, lack of monitoring and supervision and highly disputable curricula, syllabuses and teaching methods characterize the public education sector and lead to a very low quality and relevance of the education provided. In international comparison, the state of education of Pakistan's population – as measured by standard education indicators such as literacy and school participation rates – is among the lowest worldwide and falls short of the economic power and potential of the country. The education sector is highly segmented along class and status group divisions, and Pakistan's education landscape shows an extremely high gender gap and huge disparities between urban and rural areas, between different provinces and regions, and between rich and poor. While the elites of the country maintain their own exclusive elite-education systems with separate high-quality English-medium schools, separate curricula, separate examination systems and highly selective access protected by high tuition fees, the non-elite majority population is left behind with the politically neglected, poor-quality governmental education system. The boom of the new non-elitist private sector schools can be seen as a reaction of the civil society against their educational deprivation by the state and its elites, and constitutes an emancipating movement which for the first time provides the opportunity for the middle classes, lower middle classes, and even the poor to gain access to a quality education of the type that formerly was exclusively reserved for the elites and served to reproduce their status. Even more, the new private schools also provide access to education to those groups who were formerly deprived of any educational opportunities, especially in rural areas, among the poorer sections of society and with respect to female education. The new private schools are start-

ing to fill the huge gap which has been left by the state's scorning its constitutional obligation to provide compulsory education at least up to the middle level. In the triangle of the state, the economy and the civil society, which constitute the potential actors in an education system, the state has revealed its inability and/or unwillingness to provide adequate education, and therefore the remaining actors have started to take over greater responsibility in this respect and have become important contributors to the achievement of universal primary education. The private school movement is driven by the people's high and growing demand for a minimum standard of quality education, which most government schools are unable to provide. This is also expressed in the growing willingness, even in the poorer sections of society, to pay moderate tuition fees in exchange for a decent quality of education. Advocates of the privatization of education point to the mechanisms of the market, which lead to a higher correspondence between the parents' expectations and the type of education actually provided, to competition between different schools and to higher teacher accountability, which are both said to secure and improve the quality of education. Indeed, recent school achievement studies showed that in Pakistan private school students score significantly higher in English, Urdu and mathematics, even within the same socio-economic class and with controlled effects of parental education, student age and gender (Andrabi et al. 2008:353; Khan et al. 2003:12; SAFED 2011; Winthrop & Graff 2010:13). The achievement gap between public and private school students was so extraordinarily high that Andrabi et al. even term it "perhaps one of the largest public-private gaps found in the research literature" (Andrabi et al. 2008:352-3).

The governmental sector comes under increased pressure from the private sector when students start to vote with their feet, which already led not only to declining enrolment figures in secondary level government schools (GoP 2003:67), but also to the initiation of several reforms and attempted reforms in the government sector (e.g. expressed in the Education Sector Reforms Programme 2001-04 or in the new National Education Policy 2009).

The very positive assessment of the rapid increase of non-elitist private sector schools in Pakistan and the tendency towards increased privatization of education in the country is shared by only some of the experts in the field. Certain objections and concerns are to be found and many warning voices can be heard even among the advocates of privatization. Currently, there is an ongoing debate within Pakistan about the benefits and shortcomings of the new private schools. The education sector has turned into a lucrative market where a high demand for non-governmental education and the parents' readiness to pay tuition fees have created a huge potential for making profits. Education has increasingly been commodified, commercialized and subjected to the rules of the market economy, where profit-oriented enterprises seek favourable business opportunities. The government has to date failed to effectively regulate the new education market, where unplanned growth and the absence of any defined quality standards created a situation in which some for-profit schools are more interested in making money than in providing quality education, promising much but providing little. There is no mechanism to control the syllabi, education standards, teaching methods, examination procedures, and school fees imposed by private sector schools (SPARC 2009:61). About every third private school is not even registered with the government (GoP 2001a). On the other hand, the State's education policy at least since the Education Sector Reforms Programme proclaimed under General Musharraf in January 2002, strongly encourages and even subsidizes the private education sector. Serious concerns regarding the questions of access and equality have been raised. Several observers fear deepening disparities within society by creating a state of "'educational apartheid' between an English-speaking elite and the rest" (Andrabi et al. 2008:22). Unlike the advocates of privatization, who talk of a "decent quality" (Andrabi et al. 2002:21) available in private sector schools for appropriate and moderate prices which were affordable even for the rural poor, critics see a "lucid deterioration of educational quality" and an "unprecedented rise in costs" (Mukhtar 2009:126), which would make the private sector selective due to unaffordability of high fees for the poorer sections of society.

Even low fees, as e.g. Masooda Bano argues, may exclude the poor and pose "limitations of the private sector to reach the real poor" (Bano 2008:473). The critics of educational privatization point to the comparatively low teacher qualifications in private sector schools, frequent employment of inexperienced newcomers to the profession, lack of professional development and teacher training, substandard teachers' salaries, short-term contracts and high staff fluctuation, which altogether result in lower educational standards and quality. Private schools, they say, can neither provide sufficient quality of education nor make a "real contribution to expanding access to basic education for those that need it the most, namely the rural poor" (Mukhtar 2009:132). Therefore, as critics remark, the private sector cannot be part of solving the educational crisis in the country, but on the contrary further contributes to it, since the government – pressured by international agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – readily welcomes and supports the rise of the private sector and privatization of education, while at the same time using it as a good excuse to withdraw from its own constitutional responsibility to provide universal education for all Pakistani citizens. "The government is implicitly putting the onus of primary education on the private sector and thus absolving itself from one of its core social responsibilities" (Mukhtar 2009:132). Moreover, the political and military elites are themselves actively involved in the rising education economy, since they personally have heavily invested in the sector, benefit directly from its prosperity, and therefore follow their own interests when they legally and politically support and subsidize the private sector (Mukhtar 2009:136).

The debate on the role and potential of private schools in Pakistan is still ongoing, and well-founded arguments have been put forward by both sides, the sceptics and the advocates of an increased role of the private sector. Recent empirical studies show a certain potential of the private sector to work in favour of a pro-poor, pro-female and pro-rural educational expansion, which may contribute to narrowing the huge disparities and to overcoming the gap in the education provision left by the failing governmental education system, and

which could support joint efforts to achieve universal education in Pakistan. But there is an urgent need for a sound legal regulatory regime for the private education sector, by which the positive potential of private schooling can fully unfold and undesired developments and outcomes can be constricted and prevented. The new National Education Policy 2009 with its integrated approach is a first step in this direction.

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