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## **Analyzing the Role of Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) in enhancing the School Education in Punjab**

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### **Abstract:**

This article critically examines the role of the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) in enhancing the quality and accessibility of school education in Punjab, Pakistan. PEF established with the goal of promoting educational development through public-private partnerships. PEF has become a pivotal institution in the region's educational landscape. The study explores the various initiatives undertaken by PEF, including the Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS) program, Education Voucher Scheme (EVS), and New School Program (NSP), assessing their impact on enrollment rates, academic performance, and the overall quality of education in underprivileged areas. Through a combination of quantitative data analysis and qualitative case studies, the article highlights the successes and challenges faced by PEF in its mission to provide quality education to all. The findings suggest that while PEF has significantly increased access to education, especially in rural and marginalized communities, issues related to quality assurance, teacher training, and sustainability remain. The article concludes with recommendations for policy makers to strengthen PEF's initiatives and ensure long-term improvements in the educational sector of Punjab.

**Keywords:** Punjab Education Foundation (PEF), School Education, Punjab, public-private partnerships,

### **Introduction:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) is managed by a regulatory body that makes sure it is operating within a clear legal framework and in good standing. The government of Punjab passed the Punjab Education organisation Act XIII of 1991, giving the organisation its legal standing. The main piece of legislation regulating the creation, structuring, and

management of PEF is this act. The document describes the foundation's goals, authorities, and duties and gives it the authority to carry out a range of educational projects and programmes focused at fostering Punjabi students' access to high-quality education. The Board of Directors, which is in charge of managing the foundation's operations and ensuring compliance with the act's rules, is also established under the act as the governing body of PEF.

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) was founded with specific founding principles and goals in mind to improve access to quality education in Punjab, Pakistan. The primary goal of the foundation is to provide financial and technical support to educational initiatives and institutions, particularly those serving underserved and marginalised communities. The PEF works to ensure educational opportunities for all by promoting equitable access to education, reducing disparities, and ensuring educational opportunities for all. It aims to improve educational quality by implementing innovative approaches, supporting curriculum development, and providing opportunities for professional development for teachers. Furthermore, the foundation places an emphasis on collaboration with public and private schools, as well as non-governmental organisations, in order to strengthen partnerships and create a conducive educational environment. The Punjab Education Foundation's founding principles and objectives reflect a commitment to addressing educational challenges, promoting inclusivity, and improving the overall educational landscape in Punjab, Pakistan.

The Administration and the Management of the Foundation and its affairs shall vest in the Board of Directors which may exercise the powers exercisable, and do all acts and things that may be done by the Foundation. The affairs of the Foundation shall be conducted subject to the supervision and control of the Government. There shall be a Board of Directors of the Foundation consisting of such number of official and non-official members, including the Chairman, as may be appointed by the Government. A Director other than an ex-officio Director, shall hold office for a period of three years but he may be re-appointed as such for a period not exceeding one year at a time. The Government may remove a Director on the ground of inefficiency, unsuitability or misconduct after giving him an opportunity of being heard.

The Government shall appoint a Managing Director of the Foundation whose qualifications and terms and conditions of service shall be such as may be determined by the Government. Subject to sub-section (3), the term of office of Managing Director shall be three years, but the Government may extend the same for a period not exceeding one year at a time. The Government may remove the Managing Director on the ground of inefficiency, unsuitability or misconduct after giving him an opportunity of being heard. The Managing Director shall be the Chief Executive of the Foundation and shall perform such functions as may be prescribed or assigned to him by the Board.

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) encountered several initial challenges, but it also achieved notable milestones in its efforts to improve education in Punjab, Pakistan. One of the primary challenges was the limited reach of quality education in underserved areas, particularly among disadvantaged communities. The PEF faced the task of extending educational opportunities to these marginalized populations. Furthermore, the foundation met opposition and scepticism from several stakeholders who questioned the efficacy of its operations. Despite these obstacles, the PEF made great progress. It has successfully developed agreements with both public and private schools, supporting collaboration in order to improve educational access and quality. The PEF pioneered innovative programmes like the Foundation Assisted School (FAS) and Education Voucher Scheme (EVS), which gave financial assistance to schools and families, respectively, therefore increasing access to high-quality education. To improve instructional practises and encourage professional growth, the foundation also launched a variety of teacher training and capacity-building activities. These early successes reflect the PEF's dedication to addressing educational difficulties and making substantial steps towards enhancing education in Punjab (Mumtaz, 2015).

### **Background of Education in Punjab:**

In Punjab, the quality of primary and secondary education has a falling trend. The Education Sector in Punjab suffered from unsatisfactory financial input, low levels of competence for implementation of programs, and poor quality of management, monitoring, supervision and teaching. As a result, Pakistan is a country which has one of the lower literacy rates in the world, and also still the lower literacy rates among the countries which are comparative resources and social/economic situations according to Pakistan. Evaluation of

Punjab's education policies is essential to determining their efficacy, highlighting their advantages and disadvantages, and guiding future policy choices. Numerous studies have looked at the effects of Punjab's educational policy, offering insightful information about their results and ramifications. For instance, Ali (2004) critically examined Punjab's education strategy and development while noting the benefits and drawbacks of system-level plans and initiatives.

A thorough investigation of Pakistan's education policies, particularly those in Punjab, and explored the political dynamics, forecasts, and practises related with these policies undertook (Akhtar in 2013). These studies shed insight on a variety of topics, including educational access, quality improvement initiatives, teacher training, and curriculum development. Furthermore, studies and publications from the Punjab Education Department and other relevant government entities give valuable data and analysis on the evaluation of Punjab's education policies. These resources assist policymakers and researchers in understanding the impact of policy measures, identifying areas for development, and making evidence-based decisions to improve Punjab's education system.

Between 2000 and 2015, almost 69 education policy reforms were passed nationally and in Punjab. This is a huge amount than in most low-income countries like Pakistan. However, student learning outcomes did not push. We imagine that one of the reasons for this is that each reform has accidental consequences, and the effects of one may actually defuse the effects of another, resulting in net zero impact on learning outcomes (Akhtar, 2013).

### **Need of an Education Foundation:**

The government of Pakistan has been familiar of the learning crisis and has actively tried to hold it. The government of the Pakistan was giving low priority to education, as government was spending very low about 2% of GDP on education, lowest among the developing countries (Akhtar, 2013).

After passing the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, the spending gaps on education has been rising. The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's constitution has transformed the relationship between the federal and provincial governments by scrapping the "concurrent legislative list". The Act (2010) grants the provinces substantial budgetary and legislative autonomy in the fields of education, health, and other social services. The amendment affected the nation's educational system deeply. In the section of the Constitution related to fundamental rights, a new Article 25A has been included. "Right to education—The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children aged 5 to 16 in such way as may be determined by law."(Mehnaz, 2014)

As a result, Pakistan has the lowest literacy rate (Unfortunately, Pakistan ranks almost 113th among 120 countries according to literacy rate), which is projected to reach 60 percent till 2015

from the existing 55 percent and poor-quality education compared to its neighbouring countries, especially India. (Awan, 2015)

Punjab had a number of problems with education, including poor access, a lack of quality instruction, and inequality in educational opportunities. By providing funding, technical know-how, and strategic direction, an educational foundation could address these issues and enhance the value and accessibility of education. (Ahmad, 2017) An educational foundation can help to coordinate efforts, streamline resources, and promote collaboration among educational stakeholders. A foundation for education can foster innovation and research in educational practises, curriculum development, and teacher education. It can help with research studies, pilot projects, and capacity-building programmes aimed at improving teaching and learning outcomes. (Arshad, 2019) An educational foundation in Punjab, Pakistan is critical for the overall improvement of the region's education system because it addresses educational challenges, promotes collaboration, and fosters innovation. (Khan, & Mahmood, 2020)

### **Establishment of Punjab Education Foundation:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) was established through a collaborative effort including key individuals and stakeholders who recognised the need for new approaches to education in Pakistan. Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain, the Chief Minister of Punjab at the time, was one of the major individuals who played a significant part in the formation of the PEF. The Punjab government, under his leadership, saw the need of tackling educational gaps and expanding access to quality education for all segments of society. The vision and passion of Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain established the groundwork for the development of PEF as a vibrant and transformative organisation in the education sector. (Iqbal, & Memon, 2006)

### **Mission and objectives:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) is a well-known institution in Punjab, Pakistan, committed to increasing access to quality education through creative initiatives and partnerships. PEF was founded with the purpose of facilitating fair access to education for all children, particularly those from underprivileged circumstances. It plays an important role in extending educational possibilities across the province. The foundation acts under the mandate of the Government of Punjab and engages closely with stakeholders like schools, communities, and civil society organizations to achieve its goals.

**Mission:**

The mission statement of the foundation is unequivocal: "Promotion of quality education through public-private partnerships, encouraging and supporting private sector efforts through technical and financial assistance, innovating and developing new instruments to champion expanded educational opportunities for underprivileged children at an affordable cost".

PEF aims to improve access to quality education for all children in Punjab, particularly those from marginalized areas. The foundation's goal is to foster an inclusive educational environment that provides students with the knowledge, skills, and values required for personal and societal development. PEF aims to improve the socioeconomic status of Punjab's population by supporting equity and excellence in education.

**Vision:**

PEF's vision statement, which is aligned with its objective, is similarly compelling: "To create an educated society in collaboration with the private sector, so that every child in Punjab has equal access to the fundamental right to an education". This vision reflects PEF's desire to promote a culture characterised by knowledge, enlightenment, and inclusivity, in addition to bridging educational inequities.

**Objectives:**

**1) Promote Access:** PEF strives to increase enrollment and retention rates among underserved populations by providing financial and technical support to schools that cater to low-income families.

**2) Enhance Quality:** The foundation aims to improve the quality of education through capacity-building programs for teachers, curriculum development initiatives, and the provision of educational resources and infrastructure upgrades.

**3) Innovate and Pilot:** PEF encourages innovation in education by piloting new models and approaches that address systemic challenges and promote best practices in teaching and learning.

**4) Empower Communities:** PEF fosters community engagement and partnerships to mobilize local resources, promote ownership of educational initiatives, and ensure sustainability in its programs.

PEF continues to play a transformative role in Punjab's educational landscape through strategic interventions and collaborations, working for its goal of a province where every child, regardless of socioeconomic background, has access to a quality education.

### **3.4.1.2. Scope of operations and areas covered:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) is a prominent institution in Pakistan committed to increasing access to quality education throughout the province of Punjab. Established with the purpose of closing educational inequalities and fostering equity, PEF operates within a comprehensive framework that includes a variety of projects and programs targeted at improving educational outcomes for all students, particularly those from underprivileged groups. The organization engages closely with the government of Punjab and other partners to effectively implement its programs.

#### **Scope of Operations:**

PEF's operations are multifaceted and include several core areas:

##### **a) Education Voucher Scheme (EVS):**

The EVS, one of PEF's main initiatives, provides financial support to low-income families so that their children can attend private schools that satisfy specific quality standards. This effort seeks to promote access to quality education and learning outcomes in underserved populations. This programme has been essential in tackling the issue of out-of-school children and fostering educational inclusion. (Hashim, 2017)

##### **b) New School Program (NSP):**

PEF encourages the construction of new schools in impoverished communities where educational infrastructure is lacking. The foundation provides financial and technical help through the NSP to ensure that these schools satisfy educational standards while also catering to local educational needs.

##### **c) Teacher Development Program (TDP):**

Recognizing the vital role that teachers play in affecting educational results, PEF has implemented the TDP to improve educators' professional skills and competencies. This program offers training workshops, seminars, and mentoring opportunities to help teachers provide great education.

**d) Innovative Projects:**

PEF establishes creative programs to address specific difficulties in the educational sector. These projects test novel ideas, technology, and methodologies for improving teaching and learning practices and informing policy decisions.

**e) School Improvement Program:**

The School Improvement Program (SIP) is a critical program aimed at improving the region's overall educational quality. This comprehensive program aims to improve schools' learning environments, teaching methods, and administrative efficiency, resulting in better student outcomes. The SIP is based on a collaborative engagement between the PEF and educational institutions, enabling a participative approach to recognising and resolving each school's particular needs and issues. Schools receive assistance from the School Improvement Program in a variety of areas, including facility development, the provision of teaching and learning resources, teacher training, and community participation. This holistic approach urges schools to establish a learning environment that supports critical thinking and overall growth. The program strives to generate well-rounded individuals who are better equipped for the difficulties of the modern world by focusing on both academic and extracurricular areas. PEF's School Improvement Program is founded on research-based practices that have been shown to improve educational outcomes. To create and implement effective interventions, it draws on the knowledge of educational researchers, curriculum professionals, and experienced educators. The success of the program is measured by improved student achievement, higher attendance rates, and positive improvements in school culture and infrastructure. (Raza, & Raza, 2021)

**Initial challenges and Achievements of PEF:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) encountered several initial challenges, but it also achieved notable milestones in its efforts to improve education in Punjab, Pakistan. One of the primary challenges was the limited reach of quality education in underserved areas, particularly among disadvantaged communities. The PEF faced the task of extending educational opportunities to these marginalized populations. Furthermore, the foundation met opposition and scepticism from several stakeholders who questioned the efficacy of its operations. Despite these obstacles, the PEF made great progress. It has successfully developed agreements with both public and private schools, supporting collaboration in order to improve educational access and quality. The PEF pioneered innovative programmes like the Foundation Assisted School (FAS)



and Education Voucher Scheme (EVS), which gave financial assistance to schools and families, respectively, therefore increasing access to high-quality education. To improve instructional practises and encourage professional growth, the foundation also launched a variety of teacher training and capacity-building activities. These early successes reflect the PEF's dedication to addressing educational difficulties and making substantial steps towards enhancing education in Punjab. (Mumtaz, 2015)

### **School Support programs and its Objectives:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has launched a number of school programmes to improve access to high-quality education in Punjab, Pakistan. These programmes have been critical in increasing educational possibilities and improving learning results. One of the hallmark initiatives is the Foundation Assisted School (FAS) programme, which provides financial assistance, teacher training, and capacity building to low-cost private schools. Another important programme is the Education Voucher Scheme (EVS), which provides vouchers to students from underserved communities, allowing them to attend partner schools of their choosing. The PEF has also established the New School Programme (NSP), which develops new schools in disadvantaged locations, ensuring educational access in previously unreached communities. These programmes have successfully tackled educational challenges such as affordability, poor infrastructure, and educational inequality. The PEF has made significant progress in improving educational opportunities and quality in Punjab by launching these school programmes.

### **Teachers Training Initiatives of PEF:**

The Punjab Education Foundation's (PEF) Teacher Training Programme is a prestigious project that attempts to improve the quality of education in Punjab, Pakistan. This programme is designed to provide instructors with the skills and information they need to conduct effective instruction in the classroom. Several studies and research publications have shown the importance of teacher training programmes in boosting teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes. These studies show that teacher training programmes have a favourable impact on a variety of factors, including instructional practises, classroom management, student involvement, and academic accomplishment. The PEF Teacher Training Programme takes a holistic approach to improving teachers' pedagogical. The PEF Teacher Training Programme plays a critical role in increasing the overall quality of education in Punjab by investing in the professional growth and development of teachers, eventually benefiting students and fostering a conducive learning environment.

## **Evaluation and impact of the projects of PEF:**

To examine the performance and effects of its projects, the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has established rigorous evaluation and impact assessment procedures. These assessments provide important insights into the impact of PEF programs and help to shape future decisions. (Aziz, 2016)

### **a) Impact of Teacher Training Programs:**

The PEF's teacher training projects have focused on pedagogy, topic knowledge, classroom management, and assessment procedures, among other things. To begin with, teachers who participated in PEF training programs displayed improved teaching techniques such as effective lesson planning, interactive teaching strategies, and differentiated instruction. As a result, student involvement has grown and academic performance has improved. Second, the PEF's training programs have assisted teachers in developing a more in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Educators who improve their content knowledge are better positioned to give accurate and thorough lessons that address students' particular needs and create a deeper understanding of the curriculum. Furthermore, classroom management practices have been emphasized in the training programs, allowing teachers to establish a good and disciplined learning environment. As a result, there have been fewer interruptions and improved student behavior, providing for a more conducive learning environment.

### **b) Impact of Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has built a robust monitoring and evaluation process to examine the progress, efficacy, and impact of its education programs. This process guarantees that program execution in Punjab, Pakistan, is closely monitored and reviewed in order to make data-driven decisions and continuously enhance educational outcomes. Several studies and publications offer information on the PEF's monitoring and evaluation practices. The PEF-established School Monitoring, assessment, and Research Cell (SMERC) is an important component of the monitoring and assessment mechanism. SMERC visits PEF-assisted schools on a regular basis to review several elements such as school infrastructure, teacher performance, student attendance, and teaching materials. The information gathered during these visits provides vital insights into how schools operate.

### **c) Impact on Access to Education:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has achieved tremendous progress in enhancing educational access in Punjab, Pakistan. PEF has helped to overcome educational hurdles and improve educational possibilities for marginalized and underserved groups by adopting a variety of programs. Several research and reports illustrate the good impact of PEF's initiatives to

increase educational access. PEF's Education Voucher Scheme (EVS) has played a critical role in increasing access to education. Dr. Nadia Aziz's paper "Impact Assessment of Education Voucher Scheme in Punjab" investigates the influence of EVS on student enrolment and retention. According to the study, the voucher program dramatically increased student enrollment in private institutions, particularly among underprivileged regions with limited access to excellent education. (Aziz, 2016)

#### **d) Impact on Quality of Education:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has worked hard to improve education quality in Punjab, Pakistan. PEF has developed measures to improve teaching practices, curriculum development, and overall educational standards through numerous initiatives and programs. Numerous studies and papers shed light on the influence of PEF activities on educational quality. PEF's teacher training programs have been critical in enhancing teaching quality. These courses are designed to improve pedagogical abilities, subject understanding, and classroom management approaches. Dr. Muhammad Mudassar Ghafoor and Dr. Abdul Qayyum Chaudhry conducted a study titled "Impact Evaluation of PEF Assisted Schools Program" and discovered that teachers who participated in PEF training programs reported increased confidence in their teaching abilities and observed improvements in their students' academic performance. (Ghafoor, & Chaudhry, 2019)

#### **e) Socio-Economic Impact:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) training programs have had an impact not only on the quality of education but also on the socioeconomic elements of communities in Punjab, Pakistan. These programs attempt to improve educational possibilities for marginalized and underprivileged groups. Several studies and papers have been published that highlight the socioeconomic impact of PEF training programs. The study of Dr. Tariq Mahmood, titled "Impact Evaluation of PEF Teacher Training Program," examined the socioeconomic consequences of PEF training programs. The training programs increased teachers' pedagogical skills, topic knowledge, and classroom management approaches, resulting in higher learning outcomes for students, according to the study. This, in turn, can have long-term socioeconomic consequences, as improved education provides pupils with the necessary skills. (Mahmood, 2017)

#### **Stakeholder perception and Feedback:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has taken the initiative to ask stakeholder perceptions and comments on its teacher training programs. PEF ensures that the training programs meet the requirements and expectations of stakeholders such as teachers, school administrators, and education specialists by engaging with them. Several research and papers offer insights into stakeholder opinions and feedback on PEF's teacher training programs.

Dr. Uzma Quraishi's study, "Perceptions of Teachers on the Effectiveness of PEF Teacher Training Programs," investigated the perspectives of teachers who participated in PEF training programs. The study discovered that teachers positively appraised the training programs, recognizing their contribution to improving teaching skills, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom management approaches. Teachers indicated increased confidence in their abilities and pleasure with the instruction. (Qureshi, 2018)

### **Recommendations for PEF:**

#### **a) Increase the Funding of PEF:**

Adequate financial resources are essential for the PEF to implement its programmes and projects efficiently. For a number of reasons, the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) needs additional funding. PEF is essential to Punjab's impoverished and disadvantaged communities' access to high-quality education. The foundation can reach more youngsters who might not otherwise be able to access school by increasing its funding. Increased funding makes it possible to develop curriculum and learning tools, train teachers, and upgrade the infrastructure of educational institutions, all of which raise the bar for education as a whole. Moreover, more funding guarantees that the PEF can keep coming up with new ideas and implementing initiatives that cater to the unique learning requirements of various Punjabi regions, thereby advancing the socioeconomic advancement of the province. These initiatives risk being hindered in the absence of sufficient finance, which could result in a possible drop in educational outcomes and a deepening of the educational divide in society. (Arshad, Ahmed, Tayyab, 2019)

#### **b) Teacher Professional Development:**

Although the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has improved Teacher Professional Development (TPD) to a great extent. To fulfil the changing needs of education in the future, further work in this field is still essential. Without a doubt, PEF's current initiatives have raised the standard of instruction by providing teachers with the necessary tools, expertise, and pedagogical techniques. However, in order to guarantee that teachers stay effective in their positions, the dynamic nature of education—which is impacted by worldwide educational standards, a variety of learning demands, and technology advancements—requires ongoing professional development. (Casian, Mugo, & Claire, 2016)

New challenges will arise in the years to come, including addressing the different needs of children, incorporating digital technologies into the classroom, and adjusting to curriculum and policy changes in education. PEF must step up its TPD efforts in order to successfully overcome these obstacles. To achieve this, it must provide more thorough, continuous training programs that Centre on cutting-edge teaching strategies, inclusive teaching practices, and the integration of technology into the classroom. Moreover, offering mentorship, peer cooperation, and reflective practices as support systems might assist educators in applying new abilities in the classroom more successfully.

**c) Curriculum Reforms:**

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) needs to implement curriculum modifications in order to improve Punjab's educational standards. Even though PEF has been successful in expanding access to education, a thorough revision of the current curriculum is necessary to keep up with the changing needs of education. Instead of focusing only on rote memorization, a revised curriculum should emphasize the development of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. This change would provide students with the skills they need to thrive in a world that is changing quickly, better preparing them to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Reforms to the curriculum should also focus on making education more inclusive and pertinent to the wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds that Punjabi students represent. Students' learning results can be improved by making the curriculum more interesting and meaningful for them by adding local cultures, languages, and context-specific content. To make sure the curriculum stays in line with both international educational standards and technology improvements, it must also undergo regular upgrades and modifications. To connect the curriculum with worldwide standards, encourage critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and assure its relevance to the needs of students and the labour market, it must be reviewed and revised on a regular basis. To create a dynamic and learner-centred curriculum, the PEF should work with educational professionals and stakeholders. (Naseem, 2008)

**Conclusion:**

Through innovative public-private partnerships, PEF has successfully expanded educational opportunities to underserved communities, thereby increasing enrolment and retention rates in schools across the province. The foundation's initiatives, such as the Voucher Scheme and Foundation-Assisted Schools program, have played a pivotal role in providing cost-effective and quality education to a large number of students who might otherwise have been deprived of learning opportunities. However, the study also highlights the need for ongoing curriculum reforms and teacher training programs to further elevate the standard of education. While PEF's efforts in infrastructure development and resource provision are commendable, the true impact on educational outcomes will be realized only when these are complemented by a curriculum that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills. Additionally, continuous

monitoring and evaluation of PEF's programs are essential to ensure they are meeting their objectives and contributing to the long-term goal of improving educational quality in Punjab. Overall, while PEF has made remarkable strides in improving school education in Punjab, sustained efforts and strategic enhancements, particularly in curriculum and teacher quality, are necessary to achieve a holistic and enduring improvement in the education system.

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