**Development of digital learning in Pakistan**

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The struggle to improve Pakistan’s educational system requires enhancements in both technological and digital infrastructure in both rural and urban educational centers. The educational setup across all provinces needs the development of a digital learning foundation accessible to everyone, regardless of gender or age. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the necessity to enhance the country’s digital learning infrastructure. Lockdowns resulted in the closure of educational institutions, prompting a shift towards online learning.
It’s disheartening to observe that Pakistan has made slow progress in adopting advanced technological standards, especially in the education sector, due to the significant associated costs.
Pakistan ranks in the bottom quarter of the Inclusive Internet Index, which evaluates the country’s access, affordability, and adaptability to technological advancements. The gender gap compounds these challenges; only 19% of Pakistani females have digital internet access compared to 37% of males.
These issues require attention, and the efforts initiated by the government are noteworthy. The Ministry of Information Technology launched the Digital Pakistan Policy in 2017 to enhance the utilization of information technology across various sectors, including education.
The Digital Pakistan Policy aims to strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors, fostering extensive integration of information technology. This involves accessibility software for online learning and hosting competitive exams. Additionally, incentives include subsidies for implementing technological infrastructure to promote digital learning tools. The Punjab Government furthered IT services and infrastructure through the Punjab Information Technology Board, though progress slowed after a change in government in 2018, leading to delays in policy execution. Ethical restrictions, such as bans on platforms like YouTube and Wikipedia due to blasphemy concerns, hindered digital growth.
The involvement of the private sector is crucial for enhancing the country’s digital infrastructure, especially in education. The private sector possesses substantial financial and human resources to leverage technological advancements, ensuring quality in education. Extensive efforts by the private sector are needed to digitize education for individuals with disabilities. Several initiatives, including the Aziz Jehan Begum Trust & Institute, the Special Talent Exchange Program, and the Pakistan Association of the Deaf, have been collaboratively launched with the private sector to provide meaningful, relevant, and accessible education for impaired students and staff.
Overall, it’s essential to recognize that quality education is vital for Pakistan’s economic prosperity and advancement. Stringent efforts are needed to digitize both public and private sector educational systems while also addressing the gender gap. These measures are essential for achieving excellence in digital learning adoption throughout Pakistan, and for increasing access to education throughout the country.