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The government's decision to waive the tuition fee and introduce English as a compulsory subject in the province has sparked a new debate amongst the educationists and stakeholders



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Education is one of the most important indicators referred to underline the difference between a developed and an under-developed country.

In a developing country like Pakistan, the governments, more often than not, have been found lacking in providing a majority of people belonging to deprived classes, their basic rights. In such a scenario, every bit of an effort aimed at providing relief

to the common man comes as a breath of fresh air, if the intentions behind it happen to be clear and above-board.

The newly elected Punjab government in its first cabinet meeting took some important decisions regarding the education sector that sparked a whole new series of debate amongst the educationists and stakeholders.

The government announced the waiver of tuition fee from class 1 to class 10 to provide

relief to the students of government schools. In the same meeting, it was decided to introduce English as a compulsory subject from class 1 as it was not being taught in primary classes earlier. Both the decisions, if looked from a neutral perspective are not without certain implications.

As far as free education is concerned, the government did not pay any heed to the allied expenses that prove to be a major burden on the students and their parents. The tuition fee from class 1 to 3 had been waived earlier during the tenure of Shahbaz Sharif as chief minister while the tuition fee for class 4 and 5 was Rs. 1 only, that from class 6-8 was Rs. 6 and for class 9-10 it was Rs. 15 only, respectively which may not stretch the paying capacity of the parents as much as the host of funds existing in government schools.

These funds are not only too many but are also need based, received according to the whims of the school administration like red cross fund, sports, library, laboratory, welfare, repair and renovation, uniform etc, besides other such funds that are

imposed by the school administration without any proper check and balance. A Farooq-i-Taleem fund was also introduced by Marzoor Wattoo as chief minister. These funds collectively are many times more than the actual tuition fee. These funds together with the expenses on books, stationery, uniform and transportation of the students make the parents bend their back without being fully capable of meeting the ever-increasing demands.

As for the decision to introduce English at primary level, the decision had also been taken by the previous government but had not been able to implement it. The government, perhaps has not taken into consideration the overhauling that the whole infrastructure would need for effectively implementing such a step. It would mean that the knowledge level of most teachers would have to be upgraded besides creating more vacancies of English teachers.

This would also mean that the syllabus for primary classes in government schools is devised in such a manner that the education imparted to them

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