**Reimagining Education in Pakistan**

[Muhammad Omar Iftikhar](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Muhammad%20Omar%20Iftikhar)

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One of the sessions during the recently held Karachi Literature Festival (KLF 2022) was on the topic: Reimagining Pakistan’s School Education. Mr Farid Panjwani, Professor and Dean, Institute for Educational Development, Aga Khan University; Ms Fathima Dada, Managing Director of OUP’s Education division; Dr Mariam Chughtai is Director, National Curriculum Council of Pakistan; and Mr Zia Akhter Abbas, Executive Vice President, TCF were among the panellists in a session moderated by Ms Baela Raza Jamil, CEO of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi.

The moderators deliberated upon the policies that must be implemented to provide education to children across the country. They discussed the inadequacies looming over the country’s education sector for decades and how we, as a nation, can overcome it. There was conviction in the thoughts of the panellists who began their professional journeys from diverse backgrounds before entering into the field of education to add value to this sector.

Mr Farid Panjwani shared that the pandemic has raised questions about the need for schools. People pursued homeschooling of their children during the lockdown and thought it to be an effective alternative given the uncertain times they were living in. He added that three points must be focused upon to reimagine school education. First, there is a need to move away from rote learning as the child must understand the concepts. Second, schools should strengthen the child’s cognitive, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects. Third, better pedagogical approaches must be applied in classroom management. He also added that teachers are responsible to educate the children for the future. The future is unpredictable as most of the jobs we have today will become obsolete in the years to come and most of the jobs of the future do not exist today.

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Ms Fathima Dada was of the view that the child’s well-being is important and our education system does not address this aspect. She said that curriculum development, assessment to assess the health and advancement of the child, and focusing on the individual child’s progress are points that must be focused upon. She further added that policies and actions must be created for the out-of-school children so they may become economically active.

Dr Mariam Chughtai elucidated upon two points that pertain to the national and international levels. At the national level, the rote learning method should be changed to a concept-based learning approach. She said that a child must be able to explain a certain idea to anyone, without the need to memorize the definitions in the first place. At the international level, according to Dr Chughtai, we must forge age-old grade-based learning and replace it with concept-based learning. Furthermore, she shared four parts of the curriculum that must be worked upon and streamlined. They are standards, textbooks, teachers, and assessments.

During his talk, Mr Zia Akhter Abbas said that unfortunately in Pakistan the household’s financial status determines the kind of education the child belonging to that household will acquire. A low-income family cannot afford their child to attend private schools. He said that efforts can be made to provide the same level of education to a child who is living in the metropolis of the country and a child who resides in the rural areas.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at omariftikhar@hotmail.com and Tweets at @omariftikhar*