

Policy Brief #51

Setting the Priorities: Metro Bus Vs Out-of-School Children

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Introduction

The question as to what are the significant factors in shaping the road to development is of fundamental and primal importance in the present circumstances when the government is focusing more on infrastructure rather than literacy and skills transfer. On social media, there is a clear-cut division between people's perception about Rawalpindi/Islamabad Metro Bus Project versus Education. [1] [Error! Reference source not found.] In the case of China, infrastructure stock, labour force, public and private investment play an important role in economic growth.[9] Similarly development practitioners consider physical infrastructure a precondition for industrialization and economic development.[13] It is critical to deliver growth, reduce poverty, and achieve broader development goals.[10] Over the last few years, Africa has witnessed some modest improvements in infrastructure development, especially in telecommunication sector. But, it is ranked at the bottom among all the developing regions.[7] On the other hand, educated labour has a much higher marginal product. A positive as well as direct effect of human capital on growth has been estimated.[3] Countries that start with a higher level of educational attainment grow faster for a given level of initial per capita GDP.[11] Growth of human capital is the most contributing factor for achieving sustainability. [6] For individuals, societies as well as economies as a whole, investing in human capital is critical, even more so in the context of shifting population dynamics and limited resources.[8] As the proportion of service sector in Pakistan's economy is growing with every passing year, it is imperative to carry out more soft interventions like educating and training our human capital rather than making hard infrastructural interventions.

Current Scenario

Metro is an about 50 billion rupees project. However, we could have used these funds on our education. According to official figures, our literacy rate is 58%, which shows the state of education in Pakistan is not much encouraging as compared to other regional countries. According to Alif Ailaan report [1], the total number of out-of-school children is 25 million and out of these students, 5,095,866 fall between the ages of 5-9 at primary level. It is astonishing that 498,224 out-of-school children belong to the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, which are supposed to be the more educated urban centres.

Statistical Possibilities

In a broader context, the statistics of constructing a school are as follows:

Primary school	Cost in US \$	Cost in PKR
Construction	111600	11367018
School Vans	8600	875953
Land development & Transfer charges	4700	478719
Furniture	7600	774098
Library Books	700	71299

Equipment, utilities & initial supplies etc.	2300	234267
Total	135500	13801352.5

(The citizens Foundation 2014)

The cost of primary school infrastructure is 0.1 billion. Additionally, primary school has six schoolrooms, 240 schoolchildren and 9 tutors to demonstrate Urdu, English, Social Studies, Islamiat, General Science, and Mathematics. The staff is assumed to consist of:

Staff	Grade	No. of members	Salary p.m. in PKR	Cost in PKR
Head Teacher	16	1	10000	10000
Average Teacher	9	9	6200	55800
Clerk	5	1	5400	5400
Gardner	2	1	4900	4900
Peon	2	1	4900	4900
Gate Keeper	1	2	4800	9600
Sweeper	1	1	4800	4800
Ayah	1	1	4800	4800
Total				95300

(SDPI, Action Aid & CPDI)

Consequently, Rs 0.139 is needed to enrol 240 out of school children

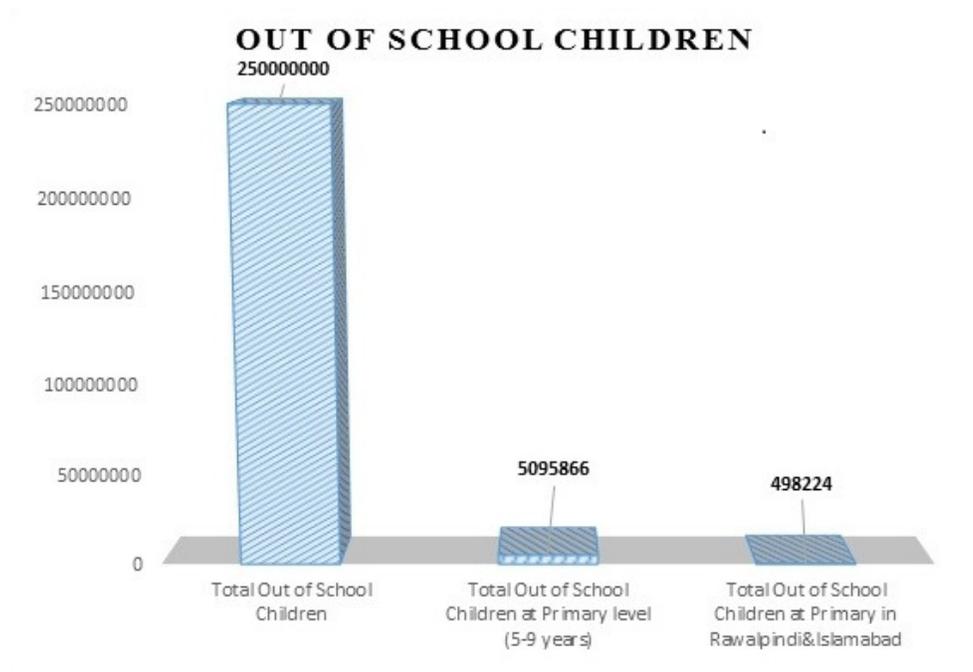


Figure 1

At present, adjust 0.05 million out of school children of Rawalpindi/ Islamabad at primary level.

$$498224/240 = 2076 \text{ (Schools required)}$$

Cost of single school is 13801352.5 PKR

So, an amount of PKR 288.5bn is required to build 2,076 schools. On the other hand, we have spent PKR 50 billion on Metro Bus Project whereas the cost of a single school is 0.139 bn.

$$50\text{bn}/0.139\text{bn} = 360$$

The cost shows that the government can build 360 schools. Moreover, if each school has 240 students then the number of students produced each year would be 86,400. Consequently, instead of using 50bn on Metro project, the government can give priority to 86,400 out of school children of 5-9 years and can send them to school and can invest on a long-term basis.

Conclusion

An analysis of the whole scenario doesn't mean to criticize infrastructure projects but to rethink about the priorities. Currently, the government should focus on education, as the country needs to improve international indices. In the category of out-of-school children, Pakistan is ranked second after Nigeria. In Human Development Index (HDI), Pakistan is ranked at 113th. Finland was at risk of becoming the economic stepchild of Europe. South Korea was ravaged by civil war. Yet over the past half century, both South Korea and Finland have turned their schools around — and now both the countries are hailed internationally for their extremely high educational outcomes. Our social indicators show a

downward trend over the past few years. Our leadership more focuses on short-term investments like roads, mass transits, flyovers specifically Metro projects, but is averse to put in money in education sector which don't generate instant outcome. It brings far-reaching benefits for the country. After a calculation, it seems that the government decision to build Metro is the rigid one as those 86,400 out of school children is a deal for future. South Korea is an ideal example according to the discussion. It is considered in G20 (Group of Twenty) countries because it invested heavily in education in the 1960s and 1970s and is now reaping the dividends. Its GDP is several hundred times more than Pakistan. It's time for a new strategy. An effective education produces a population having skills and mindset, which are needed for economic progress and prosperity.

Recommendations

1. The government needs to run a comparative analysis before setting their priorities.
2. Bot Infrastructure and Education are important components of development so the government should not neglect any of them as a whole.
3. The government should set their priorities on the basis of data.
4. The government needs to improve global indexes.

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