

5th March, 2015- “Education Policy for Pakistan: In light of New Poor Economics of Banarjee and Duflo”—Dr. Asad Zaman

Key Messages:

Dr Asad Zaman emphasized the importance of knowledge and how knowledge is power and needs to be used in the right direction. He emphasized upon various problems in providing education in Pakistan and what can be done regarding this in the light of Duflo and Benerjee’s ‘New Poor Economics’.

- Dr. Zaman discussed how economic theories focus upon growth and accumulation of wealth. Hence the idea of more investment lies at the heart of all economic theories. The speaker criticized the modern economics and models like Solow growth model which for example fail to make any distinction between the types of consumptions and investments. According to the speaker the most fruitful investment to be made is the investment in human beings especially the poor section of the society.
- Dr Zaman said that the cost of fighting poverty is low but lack of political will hinders the fight against poverty. For example only \$40 billion is required to provide food, health, education and other amenities of life to every person around the world. Why is it not being done? One probable answer, according to the speaker, is the incorrect economic theories being taught.
- Duflo and Banarjee’s theory on poor talks about how poverty as not just one big problem. The authors argue that numerous small problems that make up poverty. These problems need to addressed separately.
- The speaker highlighted various problems of education in Pakistan. The public schools fails to deliver the desired results in education in spite of having for instance better qualified teachers as compare to private schools. However, for Dr. Zaman the lack of motivation on both the ends is the biggest reason for the failure.
- According to the speaker even private schools are not an answer to this problem. Education, in private schools is relatively better but teachers are less qualified and are paid lesser. Community driven programs like the BalSakhi program in India can be replicated for better results. Dr. Zaman said that currently, the type of education being offered is that of colonial descent which means to prepare few to rule the country (top down approach)
- The speaker highlighted how the bigger picture with close attention to its details must not be ignored, for example parents making choices on behalf of children.
- Dr Zaman concluded by saying that it is not only failure of hardware but software as well that causes problem. Based upon the teachings of Banarjee and Duflo, Dr Zaman proposed that it is not just about building schools but also about changing the hearts and minds of the nation.