

26th February , 2015 – “Adopt A School” – Dr. Faisal Bari

Key Messages:

Dr Faisal Bari discussed “adopt a school” policy from public policy’s point of view. Two important questions were discussed by the speaker: 1) why was the policy introduced? 2) What was the purpose behind the policy?

- Dr Bari discussed at length the idea of “Adopt a School”, and the relevant Public Private Partnership (PPP) laws passed by the provincial governments. The ‘Adopt a School’ policy was initiated by the government of Sind and Punjab in 1990s. Typically the policy involves a 10 years agreement between the adopter and the school to intervene in areas like infrastructure of the school.
- Evaluating the policy, the speaker pointed out only 500 out of 60,000 schools in Punjab have been adopted. According to the speaker if the government’s aim was to make all these schools better this figure reflects a complete failure of the policy.

CASE OF PUNJAB:

- The Speaker discussed the institutional structure for implementing the policy. For example in Punjab (according to this policy) a MOU is signed between the DCO and adopters whereby the schools are given to the private sector under the policy of ‘Adopt a School’. Strangely education department is not involved in signing the MOUs.
- Besides the governance structure there are various other problems with the ‘Adopt a school’ policy. For instance, MOUs were thought to be infrastructure related but it had clauses like responsibilities for grades, better teaching methods etc. Plus, the office of the DCO is not organized enough; frequent changes in the positioning of the DCOs, lack of organized data etc are certain other major issues related to the office of the DCOs.
- Evaluating further the speaker talked about how an EDO (Education district officer) controls the working of the government schools and the strong hold they have over the working of these schools. However, as far as the EDO office is concerned no education related work is carried out there. The work that the office of the EDOs undertakes primarily is related to issues like transfer and posting of teachers, promotions and salaries etc.

CASE OF SIND:

- In Sind relatively better structure exists but that does not guarantee better results too. The governance structure in Sind is personality driven and it focuses more upon community building rather than relying on the government.
- Sind Education Foundation (SEF) plays an important role in running the schools and the adoption process. SEF is a mediator between the adopter and the education department.

MOUs are also signed in Sind, but these are tri party agreement unlike in Punjab where only two parties are involved.

- Consequences of such a structure are that: you get small adopters in Sind (with one or two schools) and few big ones as well. Though the institutional structure of ‘Adopt a School’ policy is better in Sind does not mean it works better.

POLICY RESULTS AND EVALUATION:

- Have the schools been better off? According to Dr Bari assessment is being carried out using various techniques but they are various issues involved here as well. For instance, there is no benchmark or baseline to measure the performance of the school adopted. The data regarding the schools before adoption is not available which further complicates evaluation.
- According to Dr Bari for the last few years a little change is seen due to PPP Acts in both Sind and Punjab. For example the Acts now include infrastructure and service provision also, but the governance structure is still the same and it is governed by the MOUs

THE WAY FORWARD:

- The government needs to incorporate the strengths of the private sector to gain maximum results and minimize losses so that the society can gain
- Keeping in mind the vast literature on PPP (Public Private Partnership) the best management model must be designed so that the policy minimizes losses and the society gains at large. Although ironically the government seems reluctant to experiment further with this policy.