

Right To Free And Equal Education Opportunities: A Case Study Of Pakistan

Khalid Saleem¹, Shehzad Admad², Hira Atiq³, Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal⁴

1. Department of Teacher Education, University of Okara.
 2. Department of Educational Planning and Management, University of Okara.
 3. Department of Teacher Education, University of Okara.
 4. Department of Special Education, University of Okara.
-

Abstract

In the present era of science and technology education has acquired significant importance among the nations of the world. Along with the financial benefits, it is the source of preservation, transformation, and up-gradation of social norms, values, and cultures. Because of this education is assumed as the basic right of all human beings. At the same time efforts are being made throughout the world to provide free education to the masses so that no one can be deprived of their basic right because of the financial constraints. Since the world Declaration on Education for All 1990, efforts are being made to meet the basic learning needs of children youth, and adults. To materialize the notion of Education for All, the nations of the world agreed on a Framework for Action at Dakar, Senegal in 2000. Being the signatory of the Dakar framework, Pakistan had made efforts to provide equal and free education to all children, youth and adults. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan also ensures the right to education for all people. Moreover, all the education the Government of Pakistan through all policies and plans since 1947 had made provisions for equal and free education for the masses. The present study is an effort to summarize the international and national efforts for the provision of free and equal education to the citizens of Pakistan. To accomplish this qualitative research, the document analysis approach was used to highlight the efforts of Education for All. It was deduced that despite the hectic and laborious efforts of the Government of Pakistan the cherished goal of education for all has not yet been achieved. Pakistan is lacking far behind in almost all the targets of the Dakar Framework for Action 2000.

Keywords: Free education, Equal Opportunities for Education, Education for All, Gender Equality, Financial Constraints,

Introduction

In the present scenario of science and technology education is the most important element for human progress and national development. Despite being the engine of economic development it is also a basic human right. It is considered important as it preserves the culture, values, and

norms of society. At the same time, education is essential for the transfer of cultural values and in arms to the next generations through its formal and non-formal institutions. Education not only helps in transferring the culture but it enables the transformation of culture by adding and upgrading the existing norms and values. Today economic prosperity and individual well-being rest with the nations which are advanced in education and technology. Moreover, It helps in developing capabilities to fight against social injustice, violence, corruption, and several other social evils Govt. of (Pakistan. 2021).

According to Coleman (1975) “The term “equality of educational opportunity” has occasioned in recent years enormous confusion” As because of different interests, variations in socio-economic background, and individual differences the meaning of equality becomes irrelevant for certain individuals or nations. Moreover, the cost and equality of opportunities in different societies also depend upon the input and output of the system. Equality of educational opportunities cannot be maintained if there is an imbalance in the input and output of the system. Therefore, in different societies, the meaning of equal educational opportunities will be different depending upon the needs and social-economic status of that country.

Efforts are being made to provide equal and free educational opportunities to the masses for a long. Article 26 (1), of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 states that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory....” Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989, explicitly recognized this right in the following Article:

“States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and to achieve this right progressively and based on an equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- a. Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- b. Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;”

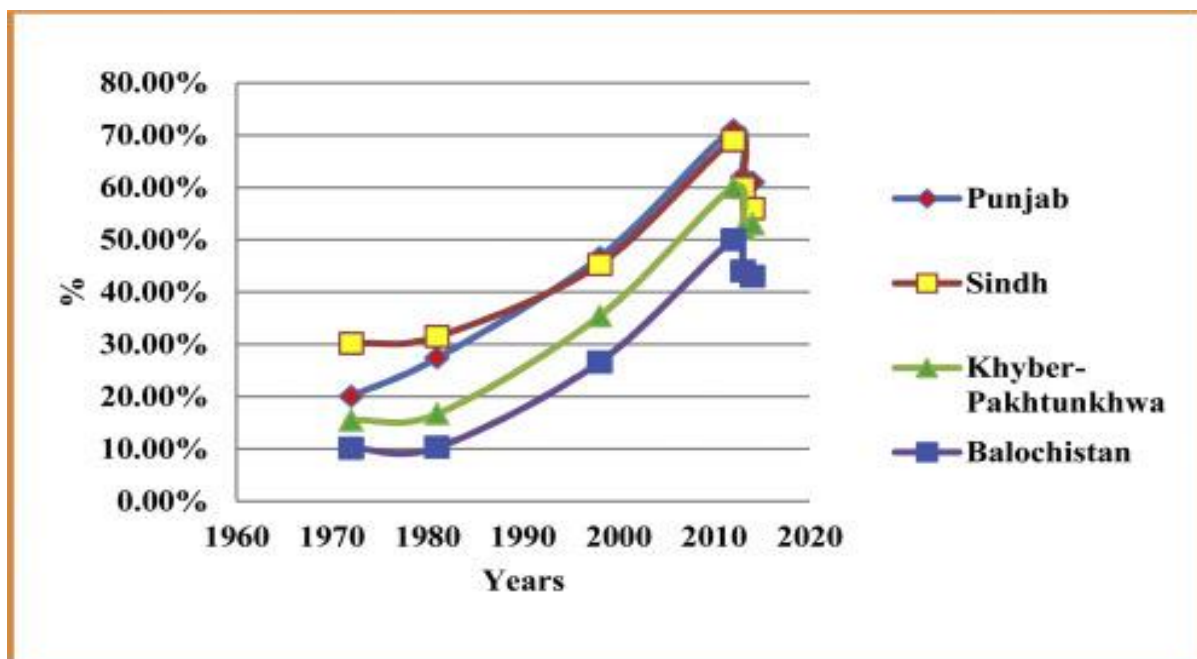
In the same way, Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 suggested the following measures for the provision of equal educational opportunities to all;

“ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality”

From the Pakistani perspective, similar efforts are being made since its inception in 1947. Different education policies and plans have recommended several mayors to provide equal education opportunities to all the sections of society. In this regard the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan through Article 25-A recommended that “The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law”

As the signatory of the Dakar framework of action Pakistan prepaid a National Plan of Action for education for all in 2001. This plan included several measures for the provision of education to the masses. As a result of the implementation of the action plan, a significant increase in the literacy rate was observed along with the provision of quality education on equality basis to the people living in different parts of the country. The following graph depicts the literacy rates in different regions of Pakistan over the last 60 years.

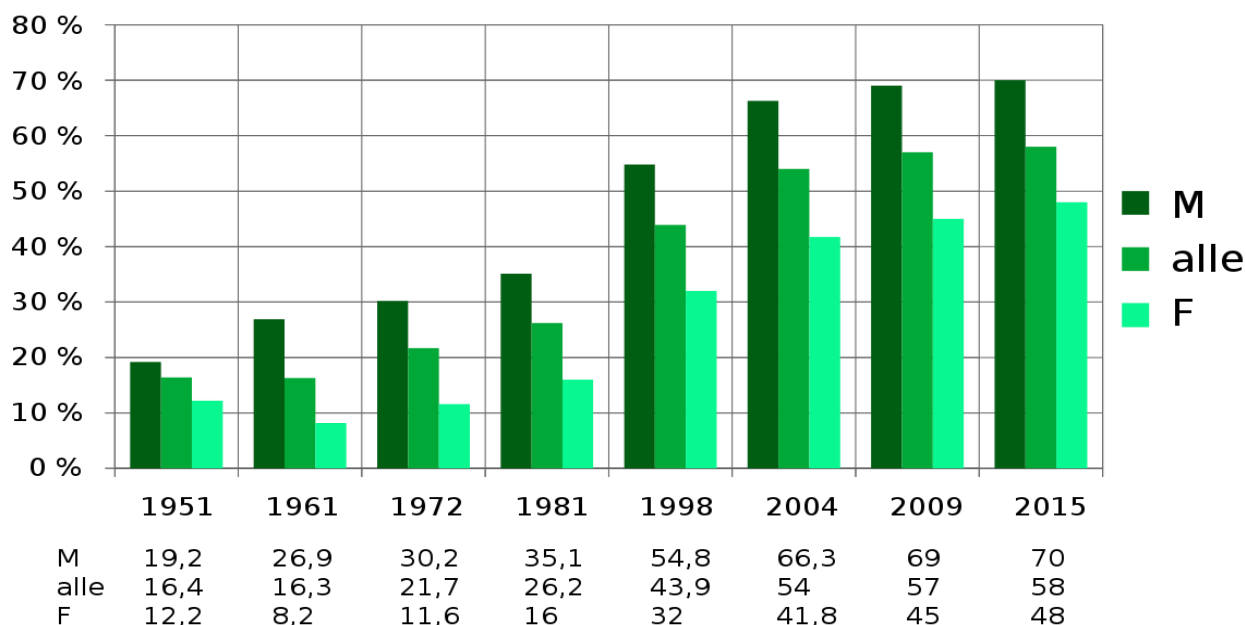
Figure 1: Comparison of region-wise literacy rates



Source: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psrb.2016.09.001>

Although statistically, it seems that Pakistan had made significant progress in terms of literacy rate but a wide gap still prevails between the literacy rates of the male and female population of the country. Total utilization of human resources, as well as the financial expenditures, had remained unsuccessful in reducing the gap between the literacy rate of males and females. Therefore it may be concluded that there are several other factors despite the poverty behind the low literacy rates of the female population. These factors may include the social and cultural issues and the willingness of the female folk for attending the educational institutions for making them literate. The Following graphical depiction describes the true story of the gender gap in the literacy rates of Pakistan.

Figure 1: Comparison of region-wise literacy rates



Source:

Purpose of the Study

With the ever-increasing population of the world, the need for education has tremendously increased. At present, the number of children attending the school is highest in the history but even then a large majority of the children are still out of school because of different reasons including financial constraints, lack of schools, gender disparities, socio-cultural barriers, etc. Bringing these out-of-school children into the mainstream of education is the challenge being faced by the developing countries, especially the third world countries. Hectic efforts are being made to provide free education to the financially deprived people so that they can get at least basic education. In the same way, efforts are being made by international organizations to narrow the gap between male and female students' enrollment in the public sector schools. By international organizations like United Nations Organization and subsidiaries and constitute organizations viz. UNICEF and UNESCO are working hard to manage free and equal education for all the people of the world. Similarly, at the national level, every country is also working hard to provide equal and free education to its citizens so that the out-of-school children may be provided equal and free opportunities for getting at least basic education. Pakistan being the signatory of several international memorandums and agreements is also trying to improve the educational infrastructure and facilities so that more people can be accommodated. She has launched many initiatives to accommodate out-of-school children on an equal basis. Therefore, It is being ensured that no child is left behind in acquiring education due to the gender race, or creed bases. The present research is being carried out to highlight the efforts being made by the international community and the Pakistani government to provide equal education opportunities to the people and support them in getting free education so that financial constraints cannot hinder their basic human rights in acquiring education.

Therefore, the present research was conducted to achieve the following objectives;

1. To describe the concept and importance of free and equal education
2. To summarize the measures of the Government of Pakistan for providing free and equal education opportunities to the people of Pakistan
3. To highlight international initiatives for making education free and equally accessed to the people of all gender and races across the world

Research Questions

The study focused on answering the following research questions

1. What is meant by free and equally accessed education
2. What is the importance of free and equal education
3. What measures/initiatives Government of Pakistan has taken for providing free and equal education opportunities to the people of Pakistan
4. What type of initiatives have been internationally recommended for free and equal education opportunities.

Research Methodology

As the research at hand intends to explore initiatives for free and equality-based education of the people, Therefore, to accomplish this study document analysis method was considered appropriate. It is the type of qualitative research in which different published documents are interpreted by the researcher to give meaning and voice to the concept or phenomena under investigation (Bowen, 2009). Moreover, qualitative research seeks investigation of the social phenomena in the naturalistic setting for in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative research describes the “Why” rather than “What” of a social phenomenon (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Most of the time qualitative research depends upon first-hand information and tries to seek this information from primary sources. To discuss the measures for free and equal education, the plans and policies Presented by the Government of Pakistan serve as the primary sources of information. Therefore, the study was carried out by analyzing the document from 1947. Document analysis is a method similar to the focus group or interview interpretations in which themes are generated and findings are extracted. There are three types of documents viz. Public Records, Personal Documents, and Physical Evidence (O’Leary, 2014). The study at hand investigates the public documents i.e. public records. Therefore, to highlight the mirrors of the government of Pakistan regarding free and equal education the documents including all the educational policies and plans of the Government of Pakistan were reviewed.

Results and Findings

Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947 efforts had been made for the promotion and up-gradation of the education system in the country. In the beginning, the ongoing education system of British India was adopted as a stopgap arrangement. But it was the priority of the Father of Nation that the system of education should be according to the ideology and the needs and requirements of the people of Pakistan. That is why soon after the inception of Pakistan a

national education conference was organized to discuss the major issues of the education system and to lay out the future dimensions for the education system in Pakistan. The conference was held in Karachi from November 27, 1947, to December 1, 1947.

Keeping in mind the economic status of the newly born country the committee on primary and secondary education discussed the provision of free education to the masses of Pakistan and recommendations were made to make arrangements for arranging at least primary education free of cost for all the Pakistani citizens. Item number IV(1) Of the agenda of the conference focused on “To consider the question of introducing compulsory and free education in Pakistan and to explore ways and means to secure this”. Whereas the committee on female education recommended several measures for providing equal opportunities for education to the women like the establishment of separate schools and colleges for girls and women, Allocation of funds to give scholarships to desiring to take up courses and subjects like nursing, commerce, radio engineering, etc. The committee also recommended that restriction of age limit should not be for the girls willing to join the technical education (Govt. of Pakistan, 1947).

Although the first education conference was a great initiative for structuring blueprints of the education system in Pakistan, the consistent political discontinuity and inconsistency of governments forced Pakistan to keep up following the education system of British India till 1959 when a Commission on national education was appointed by the president of Pakistan on January December 30, 1958, and was inaugurated on January 5, five 1959. The purpose of the Commission was to buddy beard framework of an educational system for Pakistan. The Commission submitted its report on August 30, 1959. The Commission on national education recommended several measures for free and equal education opportunities for the citizens of Pakistan. It was recommended by the Commission that equal opportunities for boys and girls should be provided and expansion and the primary education should be made equal in terms of quality and quantity (II,2). The Commission also focused on the equalization of educational opportunities for all the gender races and creeds (Chapter 15). It was also recommended that the scholarships may also be awarded on an equal basis keeping in line with the merit (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959). As far as the provision of free education is concerned it was noted that due to the poor financial conditions of the country it is not possible to provide free education at all levels to all people of Pakistan. Therefore, the Commission recommended that “it must at least try to provide free education to those who are most deserving of it and who will be able to contribute most to the development of the nation” Moreover it was also recommended that “In areas where free education has already been provided up to certain levels Government can either continue these concessions or sanction special scholarships for these areas” (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959, p.138).

The report of the Commission on National Education proved a milestone in the educational history of Pakistan as it shaped the future dimensions of education in the country. Several important and necessary changes and up-gradations in the system of education were made following the recommendations of the Commission. These recommendations paved the way for the preparation of the first education policy for the country and its proposals were also prepared in 1969. But, due to political unrest in East Pakistan, these proposals could not be finalized as the national education policy. Dear 4 actors the political restoration of the country,

the first education policy of the nation was approved in 1972. The policy imprinted several long-lasting effects on the education system in Pakistan including free education and equal education opportunities for the people.

The major focus of the policy was the nationalization of all the privately managed educational institutions. But, There were certain other aspects of the policy which considerably influenced the future of education in Pakistan including free education and equal education opportunities for the citizen of Pakistan. The policy board to provide free education but due to do you financial constraints it was stated that “Education will be made free and universal up to Class X for all children throughout the country. However, due to our limited resources, this will be achieved in two phases (Govt. of Pakistan. 1972, p. 3)”. In this regard the policies stated that “In the first phase, from 1st October 1972, education up to Class VIII will be made free for boys and girls in both Government and privately-managed schools will be suitably supported for the loss of fees incurred by them (Govt. of Pakistan. 1972, p. 3)”. Keeping on with the provision of free education for this country glasses the policy proposed that “In the second phase, starting from 1st October 1974, free education will be extended to Classes IX and X in all schools” (Govt. of Pakistan. (1972, p. 3).

The provision of equal education opportunities for all the citizens or power of Pakistan was also the main objective of the odyssey. In this regard, the policies stated that “Equalizing access to education through provision of special facilities for women, under-privileged groups and mentally-retarded and physically-handicapped children and adults in all areas in general and the backward areas in particular” (Govt. of Pakistan. 1972, p. 1).

Although the Education Policy, 1972-80 was the first attempt for streamlining the education system of Pakistan nevertheless it made significant contributions in this regard. But the decision to nationalize the private institutions proved fatal for the education system of Pakistan as it finished the healthy competition between the public and private sector institutions. However, it was the first attempt to universalize education in Pakistan and to provide free education to all the citizens of Pakistan. The policy was yet to achieve its objectives when the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown and a new education policy was put forward.

National Education Policy and Implementation Program 1979 Put forward several important measures to uplift the status of education in the country but there were no significant recommendations for free education except the provision of a certain type of interest-free loans to these students as policy stated “Fresh schemes for the award of scholarships and grant of interest free loans will be floated for these institutions (Govt. of Pakistan, 1979, p. 46)”. On the other hand, equal education opportunities are recommended for males and females. The policy stated Although the Islamic principles have taught the equality of both males and females yet it is not being observed in the provision of education facilities in the country. Therefore, efforts will be made to provide equal opportunities for education to both male and female citizens of Pakistan. Similarly, the policy also recommended a separate curriculum for the females to focus on their particular needs and interests (Govt. of Pakistan, 1979). In the same way policy recommendations focused on opening the Mohalla schools To cater to the immediate needs of

female education as there was a lack of funds for the opening large number of primary schools for girls.

In 1992 new education policy was introduced. This policy tried to modernize the education system by inculcating technological changes and the addition of computer education. For the provision of equal opportunities of education to the citizens of Pakistan, the policy stated that “Primary education shall be recognized as a fundamental right of every Pakistani child. Primary education shall be made compulsory and free so as to achieve universal enrolment by the end of the decade” p.16. Moreover, The policy jumped out a framework for achieving the cherished goal of universal primary education. it stated that “The program of universal primary education will be carried out through active participation of the community and elected representatives” (Govt. of Pakistan. 1992, p.18). The universalization of primary education required huge funding and due to the financial condition of the Pakistani economy, it was recommended that “Universalization of primary education will require massive resources. Thus, primary education will be supported through all possible sources including Iqra and Zakat funds” (Govt. of Pakistan. 1992, p.19). The policy also provided recommendations for female education so that they can be brought to power with their male counterparts in the social setup. In this regard, the policy stated that “Accordingly, increased access of females to general and vocational education through a wider spread of educational facilities, use of a mix of non-formal and distance education modes based on new education technology (Govt. of Pakistan. 1992, p.4).

The education policy 1998-2010 was put forward to make the education system acceptable to all sectors of life and to involve the private sector in education. It aimed at universalization of primary education and bridging the gap between male and female education. Therefore, it proposed to create educational institutions for females. The policy stated that “All types of disparities and imbalances would be eliminated” (Govt. of Pakistan, 1998).

Another education policy was put forward by the Government of Pakistan in 2009. This policy has also recommended several suggestions for free and equal education for the citizens of Pakistan. To accommodate the students from low-income families the policy recommended that the “Government shall establish at least one “Apna Ghar” residential school in each province to provide free high quality education facilities to poor students (Government of Pakistan, 2009, p.36). Similarly, for expanding the opportunities for education to all the groups of people, especially those from low economic status. The policy recommended that “private schools are being encouraged to offer admission and education services to 10% needy but meritorious students free of cost (Government of Pakistan, 2009, p.25). As far as the equal education opportunities are concerned the policy recommended “To provide and ensure equal educational opportunities to all the citizens of Pakistan and to provide minorities with adequate facilities for their cultural and religious development, enabling them to participate effectively in the overall national effort” (Government of Pakistan, 2009, p.18). In the same way provision of education to the female students was also discussed in the policy and it is recommended “To equalize access to education through the provision of special facilities for girls and boys alike, under-privileged/marginalized groups and handicapped children and adults” (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

Conclusion

The extensive document analysis revealed that there had always been a need for equal and free opportunities for education for all the sects of society. The international, as well as national agencies, had been striving hard to achieve the cherished goal of universal free education but this effort has yet not achieved success. Indeed developing countries, especially in the third world countries like Pakistan. Since its inception, Pakistan had made sincere and consistent efforts for the universalization of education to all the spheres of life. Several education policies have been developed to cater to the free and equal education opportunities for the citizens of Pakistan. These policies not only recommended measures for improving the literacy rate but also suggested ways to bridge the gap between the inequalities of gender race and creed in acquiring education. These efforts have remained successful to a limited extent as there is still a wide gap in the literacy rate of males and females. There still exists a gap in the facilities for education at the male and female institutions. Therefore, allocations of more funds and recruitment of human force are needed to overcome the challenge of free and equal education opportunities in Pakistan.

References

- Abbas, F., Rana, A. M. K., Bashir, I., & Bhatti, A. M. (2021). The English language proficiency as a global employment skill: the viewpoint of Pakistani academia. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, 9(3), 1071-1077.
- Ahmed, S. N., Abbas, F., & Qureshi, A. M. (2021). The use of social-networking sites in English language education: An exploratory study using SWOT analysis technique. *PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION*, 58(1), 4640-4650.
- Bhatti, A. M., Abbas, F., & Rana, A. M. K. (2021). An Empirical study of learning styles used by undergraduate English learners in public sector colleges in Pakistan. *Elementary Education Online*, 19(3), 1864-1864.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. New York: Routledge.
- Coleman, J. S. (1975) Equal Educational Opportunity: A Definition, *Oxford Review of Education*, 1:1, 25-29, DOI: 10.1080/030549875001010
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston: Pearson.
- Govt. of Pakistan. (1947). *Proceedings of the Pakistan educational conference 1947*, Karachi: Ministry of the Interior, Education Division.

Govt. of Pakistan. (1959). Report of the commission on national education, Karachi: Ministry of Education.

Govt. of Pakistan. (1972). The education policy 1972-80, Islamabad: Ministry of Education.

Govt. of Pakistan (1973). The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Karachi: Govt. Printing Press.

Govt. of Pakistan. (1979). National education policy and implementation programme, Islamabad: Ministry of Education.

Govt. of Pakistan. (1992). National education policy 1992-2002, Islamabad: Ministry of Education.

Govt. of Pakistan. (1998). National education policy 1998-2010: Islamabad, Ministry of Education.

Govt. of Pakistan. (2002). National plan of action on education for all (2001-2015). Islamabad: Ministry of Education

Govt. of Pakistan. (2002). Education sector reforms: Action Plan 2001-2004, Islamabad: Ministry of Education.

Government of Pakistan. (2009). National education policy. Islamabad: Ministry of Education.

Govt. of Pakistan. (2021). Pakistan economic survey 2020-21, Islamabad: Finance Division, Economic Adviser's Wing.

Govt. of Pakistan. (2017). National education policy 2017, Islamabad: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Government of Pakistan

Nazir, S., Abbas, F., & Naz, F. (2020). Historical development of orthography in English and impact of computer-mediated communication (CMC) on the emerging orthographic patterns in English. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(11), 162-175.

Kumar, S. (2022). A quest for sustainium (sustainability Premium): review of sustainable bonds. *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal*, Vol. 26, no.2, pp. 1-18

Allugunti V.R (2022). A machine learning model for skin disease classification using convolution neural network. *International Journal of Computing, Programming and Database Management* 3(1), 141-147

O'Leary, Z. (2014). *The essential guide to doing your research project* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Roof, David J. (2015). Problems of common interest: The shaping of education in Pakistan, 1970-2014, *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*. 9(1), pp. 35-51

Samina Malik & Kathy Courtney (2011) Higher education and women's empowerment in Pakistan, *Gender and Education*, 23:1, 29-45

Suhag, A. K., & Khan, N. (2020). National Educational Policies of Pakistan with reference to Social Justice: A Critical Analysis. *Global Educational Studies Review*, V(III), 166-174. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2020.\(V-III\).17](https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2020.(V-III).17)

Tarar, I. A., Khan Rana, A. M., & Abbas, F. (2020). Right to Education: Comparative Study of Constitutional Contours, Legislative Initiatives and Institutional Arrangements in India and Pakistan. *Elementary Education Online*, 19(3), 3365-3371.