



## Examining the Effect of Privatized Primary Schools on the Quality of Education under Punjab Education Foundation (PEF)

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*The primary purpose of the present research work was to analyze the effects of privatization on the quality of primary schools in Punjab working under the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) and to find out the factors which positively or negatively impact on quality of education. The study was conducted under the positivism paradigm with the quantitative methodology. Two self-developed 5-point Likert scale questionnaires were used to collect data. The cross-sectional survey design was adopted to collect data from the participants. A multistage sampling technique was used to draw data from 746 teachers. The perception of teachers in those privatized schools helped to evaluate and measure the impacts and effects of the PEF schools on the quality of education. Data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21. The result indicates a small correlation ( $r=.435$ ) between privatization and quality of education. The result showed a significant correlation ( $r=.231$ ) between privatization and quality of education. It was discovered that public schools lack the infrastructure, resources, and perceived quality that PEF-funded institutions do. A significant correlation was found between student outcomes and the quality of PEF schools. A conducive physical environment in classrooms satisfies the psychological and social well-being of students and up-to-date teaching-learning methodologies help to enhance the quality of education in PEF schools.*



## 1. Introduction

Privatization is considered to be converting the ownership of government retailing outlets from the government to the private owners or organizations. The primary concern of privatization was to improve the quality of the organization (Imran, 2008; Kikeri & Nellis, 2004; Walford, 2021). Privatization has become a common trend, especially in developing countries. There were a lot of enterprises which recently privatized to maintain the economic stability in the country as well as in the organization. It helps to maintain the structure of any organization in a proper perspective (Radic et al., 2021). In many different developing countries, privatization is now becoming a very common attribute because if a government considers failing to run an organization or government faces any hurdles to running it the government privatizes those organizations (Walford, 2021).

According to Baltodano (2023), educational privatization was the key act that helped to bring changes in education culture in education settings. The privatization of educational institutes was a very old trend because its origin belonged to World War II. In those days the structure of war-affected countries smashed, and the government was unable to stabilize those organizations (Ahmed et al., 2013; Barber, 2010). However, it was necessary to maintain those organizations to overcome the economic issues. So, privatization was being introduced in those countries. Privatization lies in the theory of neoliberalism (Fjellman & Haley, 2023). The concept of liberalism was rooted in the laziest fairway of leadership. It could be talking about the democratic culture in organizational settings (Baltodano, 2023).

The researcher discussed in his research work about privatization, in Pakistan, there were so many government sector scolds as well as privatized schools (Mirza & Nisa, 2020). However, the quality of government sector schools had such an embarrassing and low-quality educational structure as compared to private sector schools (Carvalhaes et al., 2023 ; Malik, 2010; Umar et al., 2023). In the education policy of Pakistan 1992, the government decided to privatize some government schools, which showed the worst results. This decision also proved a milestone for human rights and equal education for all. The government converted the ownership of those educational organizations' government to private. In the conversion primary, secondary, and higher institutes of education are adopted by different organizations or different owners. However, after this allocation, the government regularly checked the progress and achievements of those organizations (Malik, 2010; Siemon, 2023).

Some organizations and NGOs such as PEF, Care Foundation, and many more supported these privatized institutions. Especially in Punjab, there were a lot of schools, which were run by trusts and NGOs. The main concern of this privatization approach is to provide the quality of education at very low fees. Teachers of these organizations were trained and well-educated. Quality education plays the most important and very vital role in overcoming educational problems (Barber, 2010; Shah, 2010; Singh, Monga, & Kaur, 2015; Barrenechea et al., 2023). The achievements of educational outcomes could be measured by the annual result comparisons. The decision of privatization provided a lot of boost and energy to the education system of Punjab. Some hurdles were affected by the privatization, but the government and private owners of these institutes intelligently overcame it. The low



quality of government sector schools now becomes a resolvable issue. As a result, privatization was becoming a spreading trend in Punjab (Umar et al., 2023).

According to a survey, the literacy rate in Pakistan was 50% and in Punjab, the overall literacy is 46.56%. Punjab was the highest literacy-achieving province in the overall country (Baltodano, 2023). In the Government educational institutions of Punjab, the fee structure was reasonable, and the books were provided by the government. However, the quality of education was not up to the mark as compared to privatized schools. There were no proper checks and balances in the organizations about educational quality so, the government of Punjab decided to overcome this problem and took a big step towards privatization. The issues and hurdles were evaluated by the researchers that affected the decision-making process, but the big trouble was considered to be the policymaking about these privatized institutions (Baltodano, 2023).

The quality of education in schools plays a vital role in shaping the learning environment and enhances the students' learning output. PEF-funded schools play a very significant role in providing educational opportunities to the underprivileged masses. So, it is necessary to assess the quality of education in those schools, and also find out the factors which influence positively or negatively in educational quality in PEF schools. It is crucial to identify the situation of quality in PEF schools to analyze the disparities and their impact on students' academic outcomes.

Followings are objectives and research questions of the current study.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

1. To evaluate the effect of the privatization of primary schools in Punjab on the quality of school education.
2. To identify the factors contributing to the decline or improvement in the quality of education after privatization.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. How does the privatization of primary schools in Punjab affect the quality of school education?
2. What factors contribute to the decline or improvement in the quality of education after privatization?

## **2. Literature Review**

The privatization of education referred to the policies promoting liberalization and deregulation that led to the establishment of a market in educational competencies (Brogaard & Helby, 2022). It also enhances the competition between the public and private ownership of the education system. The role of the privatized education system has grown in many different parts of the world, and private education was promoted as the solution explored by some education experts (Fjellman & Haley, 2023). Baltodano (2023) discussed that, as a dynamic solution to the lack of sufficient quality education institutions, privatization played a vital role in spreading quality education.

Before jumping towards privatization in Pakistan, the circumstances and situation of nationalization should be discussed here first. The term Nationalization was used when any government took control of an organization or entity that was owned by the private owners or organizations previously (Barber, 2010). The nationalization policy was executed by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. The nationalization policy started on 2 January 1972, with the vision of promoting liberalization, and economic democracy, and the mainstream goal was to put Pakistan in line with the progressivism state (Carvalhaes et al., 2023). PEF is a non-profit government body that is working under the Department of School Education Government of the Punjab, Pakistan. The organization was established in 1991 which helped to encourage and promote education in privatized educational institutes in Punjab. PEF was restructured in 2004 to modernize its strategies and keep some major changes with the changing requirements of the education sector. Now, the main vision of the Foundation was to encourage and support the efforts of the private sector through financial and technical assistance, to increase the quality of education through Public Private Partnership, to develop and innovate new strategies to champion wider educational opportunities at an affordable cost to the underprivileged masses. The main head office of the organization was in Lahore. Currently, over two million most deserving and competent students are enrolled in PEF partner schools all over Punjab. The girl's ratio in those partner schools was 45% (Ahmed, et al., 2013).

As discussed, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto attempted to seize control of private schools in the 1970s to provide education for all. However, this has unexpected repercussions such as more government control and lower educational quality. It was clear by the 1990s that this strategy could have been more effective (Singh et al., 2015). There were problems with outdated curricula, inadequate facilities, and a shortage of competent teachers in public education. As a result, the government began considering other approaches, which paved the way for more private-sector involvement in education. At that time the government took the initiative to privatize educational institutions.

Privatization is not a very new concept. Its roots were met in the late sixteenth century. The act of privatization is done by government bodies developed to evaluate the economic circumstances (Singh et al., 2015). Privatization is concerned with the theory of neo-liberalism; neoliberalism was a concept associated with freedom. In the neo-liberalism concept, anyone has the right to run their organization with their own will. It affects the organizational structure, and it also helps to develop the recontamination of the organization (Imran, 2008)

The privatization of the education system is becoming a very vast phenomenon day by day. It is the process that could be defined as the management, and transformation of any asset, functions, and responsibilities of any education system or any educational institution. Privatization is carried out by different types of private actors who are responsible for running any organization. Privatization helped to provide a discrimination-free education to everyone. In the Privatized educational institutions, the quality and equality of education for all is one of the most important and core responsibilities. As primary education is a compulsory component of an educated and modern society, so (Singh et al., 2015). Privatization in the education system was becoming a very vast spreading phenomenon day

by day. It was a process by which anyone could be defined as the management, and transfer of any asset, functions, and responsibilities of any education system or any education institution.

The literature revealed that, in Pakistan there are different kinds of educational institutions such as madrassas, private schools, and government schools are working to enhance the literacy rate of the country. Madrassa's education only focused on religious education. Private schools only focus on English education and modern subjects and the quality of education in those institutions is high, but the fee structure is also very high. Admission to those private schools is not affordable for everyone. On the other hand, the fee structure of Government schools is reasonable and affordable for massive, but the quality of education is also very low. However, in the 1980s, the government began to shift their strategies, easing education regulations and policies, and allowing the private sector to adopt government schools (Rind & Knight, 2022).

PEF was a government initiative of public-private partnership to increase the quality of education (Faiz et al., 2022). The main aim of PEF is to support and encourage the efforts of private owners and organizations through financial and technical assistance. It also encourages developing new strategies to provide wider educational opportunities at an affordable cost to everyone, especially for neglected communities (Faiz et al., 2022). PEF introduced wonderful initiatives such as the Education Voucher Scheme (EVS), Foundation Assisted School (FAS), Academic Development Unit (ADU), Continuous Professional Development Program (CPDP), New School Program (NSP), and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) (Ansari, 2021). The PEF has taken many initiatives for affordable quality education for underprivileged and neglected communities of society. Currently, over 2.6 million students are getting free and quality education in 7,468 PEF partner schools across the Punjab. PEF provides financial assistance every month to partner schools on a per child enrolment basis @ a rate of Rs.550/- for primary level, Rs. 600/- for elementary level, Rs. 900/- for Secondary (Arts), Rs.1100/- for Secondary (Science), Rs. 1200/- for Higher Secondary (Arts) and Rs. 1500/- for Higher Secondary (Science). After an extensive review of the literature, it was revealed that there is a lack of research work that finds out the quality of PEF schools in Punjab. Present research work helped to analyze the situation and actual condition of education quality in PEF-funded schools (Ansari, 2021).

### **3. Research Methodology**

The paradigm of the study was post-positivism. The design of the study was causal-comparative type and quantitative. The data was collected with the help of a survey method. Due to a lack of time and resources, it was not possible to collect data from all 36 districts of Punjab. So, PEF schools of four districts of division Lahore were selected as the sample of the study. In District A 102, B 55, C 25, and D 19 PEF schools are working. A total of 201 schools were included in the population of the study. Multi-stage sampling technique (Cluster sampling) was used to draw the actual sample of the study sample. The sample size of the study was 746 teachers from 40 PEF schools. The data was collected from 285 participants from district A, 201 from district B, 150 from district C and 110 from district

D. Two well-structured questionnaires were developed to evaluate the quality of education in privatized schools. The questionnaire one helped to analyze the effects of privatization in schools. The second questionnaire helped to determine the factors which positively or negatively impact education quality in schools. Both questionnaires were verified and checked by the experts. Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 was used to analyze the data. Reliability stats, descriptive statistics, correlation statistics, and regression analysis were conducted to find out the results and to achieve objectives.

#### 4 Results & Discussion

**Table No 1: Reliability Statistics**

Scales	Cronbach Alpha	No of Items
1	.869	56
2	.749	35

The value of questioner no 1 was .869 and it clearly showed that the results are reliable. The environment of PEF schools is relatable and conducive to providing quality education. The result of the second questionnaire .749 also showed reliable results. This indicates that important factors like the physical structure of schools, psychological environment, sociological relationship among students, and educational resources are also better than public schools.

**Table No 2: Gender Descriptive**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid Male	282	37.8	37.8	37.8
Female	464	62.2	62.2	100.0
Total	746	100.0	100.0	

The frequency table 2 showed the gender description of participants. The ratio of female participant is comparatively high then the male participants. The sample size of male participants was 282 with 37% and the female participants were 464 with 62%.

**Table No 3: Age descriptive**

	Frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid 21-30	274	36.7	36.7	36.7
31-40	355	47.6	47.6	84.3
41-50	117	15.7	15.7	100.0
Total	746	100.0	100.0	

The frequency table of age description indicated that the group belonging to the 21-30 age group was 274 in number and their percentage was 36.7. The 31-40 age groups were 355 in number and their percentage was 47.6 and the last group which belonged to the 41-50 age group was 117 in number and 15.7 in percentage.

**Table No 4: Experience Descriptive**

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Less than 1 year	208	27.9	27.9	27.9
1-3 years	327	43.8	43.8	71.7
3-7 years	211	28.3	28.3	100.0
Total	746	100.0	100.0	

The frequency table indicated that the respondents who had less than 1 year of experience were 208 in number and their percentage was 27.9. 1-3 years experienced groups were 327 in number and 43.8 in percentage. The 3-7 years experienced respondents' group was 211 in number and their percentage was 28.3.

**Table No 5: Position Descriptive**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Primary	141	18.9	18.9
	Elementary	174	23.3	42.2
	Secondary	131	17.6	59.8
	Contract based	300	40.2	100.0
Total	746	100.0	100.0	

The above descriptive table indicated that the primary teachers were 141 in number and their percentage was 18.9. The elementary teachers were 174 in numbers and their percentage was 23.3. The secondary teachers were 131 in number and their percentage value was 17.6. The teachers who were on contract were 300 in number and their percentage was 40.2.

**Table No 6: Education Descriptive**

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
M.A/M.sc	443	59.4	59.4	59.4
M.Phil	295	39.5	39.5	98.9
PhD	8	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	746	100.0	100.0	

The qualification descriptive table indicated that the respondents who had master's Qualification were 443 in number and their percentage was 59.4. The respondents who did M.Phil. were 295 in number and their percentage was 39.5. PhD degree holder respondents were 8 in number and their percentage was 1.1. With the help of correlation analysis, the researcher identified the relationship between privatization and the quality of education under Punjab Education Foundation schools. It also helped to the position of progress in providing quality education.

**Table No 7: Correlations (N=746)**

	Effects of Privatization	Quality of education
Privatization	1	
Quality of education	0.435	1

The correlation table indicated that the Pearson correlation value was .435, so the value indicated that the relationship between privatization and quality of education had a moderate correlation. The privatized schools under PEF tried to give a better and quality education with their limited resources. The sig two tail values were .000 of the total 746 respondents.

**Table No 8: Regression Analysis on variables (N=746)**

Variables	B	SR	Beta	T	P
Effects of Privatization	181.205	.081		19.020	0.000
Quality of Education	0.265	0.17	.135	3.719	0.000

Regression analysis was conducted to predict the effects of privatization on the quality of primary school education. A significant impact was found ( $F=36.86$ ) = 1525 ( $R<000$ ) with the  $R^2$  value 26. The study participants predicted that privatization was the cause of quality education at the primary school level in Punjab. The participants (organizational outcomes) increased by .26 %.

#### 4.1 Discussion

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) was an organization that adopted different government schools. Privatization provided a quality education with low fees or without fee structure. These schools worked under PEF and provided quality education. The perception of PEF teachers about privatization revealed that the quality of education in schools is comparatively better than the government schools. Prosper, (2008) also evaluated in his research work that non-governmental organizations can help to enhance the literacy rate of the country and help to enhance the quality of education in those schools. The results of the present research work line up with the Prosper, (2008) study. The government converted the ownership of those educational organizations' government to private. But the Government also arranges inspections and proper checks and balances to maintain the prosperity of PEF schools. The government regularly checked the progress and achievements of those organizations.

It was also revealed that the teachers at PEF schools are well-trained and educated like Government teachers. The government also arranges some training sessions and





professional development programs to enhance their professional competencies. Many teachers revealed that they continue their studies or wish to continue further education in the future. The results of the study revealed that the salaries of PEF teachers are not enough for them. Teachers sometimes feel less satisfied and demotivated due to fewer amounts of salaries.

As the main aim of PEF schools is to educate underprivileged children, it was revealed that those schools successfully worked on their agenda and trying to enhance the literacy rate of the country. Some positive factors such as relevant teaching methodologies, the conducive physical structure of classrooms, a friendly and satisfied social and psychological environment, teaching-learning methodologies, and relevant assessment systems help to increase the productivity of schools. The results revealed that female teachers are more educated than male teachers and their motivation level is also higher towards their teaching than male teachers. The reason behind the motivation was the salary of schools. Male teachers have to run their house expenses on their minimal salaries. On the other hand, 60% of female teachers do their jobs just to make themselves financially independent. The dissatisfaction hurts the quality of education in PEF schools. As discussed earlier, most students belong to the underprivileged and low socio-economic status, so the results also showed that financial assistance for students provided by the PEF helps them to continue their education. Different curricular and co-curricular activities arranged by the PEF schools for students help to enhance the quality of education in schools. Results revealed that privatization positively affects the education system and helps to increase the literacy rate of the country.

## **5. Conclusion**

The study's conclusions offer convincing evidence that infrastructure quality has a big impact on how well students perform. PEF-funded schools consistently outperformed public schools in terms of student involvement, motivation, and academic success because of their better physical resources, condition, and perceived quality. To bridge the gap and ensure every student has access to high-quality infrastructure that supports their learning and achievement, government policies and active community involvement can be extremely important.

The current research was quantitative in design and focused on analyzing the quality of education in PEF-funded schools. A similar study should be conducted with a mixed-method research design. It will help to deeply explore the condition of PEF schools. The study highly recommends that research be conducted to analyze the quality of privatized schools in different provinces of Pakistan. So an obvious comparison of privatization at primary level under different provincial governments should be displayed.

## 5.1 Recommendations

Based on the results of the present research work, it is recommended that to maximize the resources and experience of the private sector for infrastructure development, the government may encourage public-private partnerships. Provide precise instructions for maintenance and upkeep to ensure the highest possible standard of the teaching-learning process. The government may encourage privatized organizations to actively participate in decision-making and planning processes. Authorities may arrange frequent training sessions to polish the teachers' professional development.

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