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From Tradition to Modernity: A Qualitative Analysis of Societal Shifts in Education as a Social Institution

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Abstract

The modernization phenomenon transforms societies socially, economically, culturally, and politically toward more multifaceted approaches to life. As one of the fundamental social institutions, education has been meaningfully influenced by modernization. This study was primarily designed to obtain qualitative insights into the role of modernization in transforming education as a social institution. The data were collected purposively from different stakeholders of District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A total of seven FGDs and 35 in-depth interviews were conducted with informants through an interview guide. After thematic analysis, the results disclose that modernization has changed traditional teacher-centered approaches to more student-centered and cooperative teaching approaches. The practice of corporal punishment has weakened due to legal restrictions and awareness. Educational institution has been significantly influenced by the addition of ICT tools. Besides, modern trends emerged like distance education, the emergence of specialized disciplines, curriculum transformation, etc. On the other hand, hindrances remain, including unequal access to technology, infrastructural deficiencies, excessive academic pressure, and concerns regarding students' personality development. The study highlighted the need for well-adjusted policies that integrate technological development with educational and cultural values.

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Introduction

Theorists concerning the early modernization focused on the interaction between the social and economic development and the reform in education. According to Parsons ([1961]), in modern societies, education serves as a means for role assignment and social cohesion. Similarly, Inkeles & Smith ([1974]) expressed that cognitive orientations (such as rationality and achievement motivation) are fostered due to modernization, which are rooted in formal education systems. Modern-day scholars further elaborated this standpoint, probing how modernization

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revisits educational goals and structures. Moving on the same analogy, Apple (2004) criticized modernization as concurrently hegemonic and emancipatory, observing that education can reproduce social disparities even as it assumes modern contexts.

Digital transformation in education is considered one of the most noticeable impacts of modernization. Technological innovations like artificial intelligence (AI), virtual learning environments, and Learning Management Systems (LMS) have restructured teaching and learning methods. Selwyn (2016) further elaborated that technology in education should not be seen as impartial; its addition reflects wider socio-economic plans. Digital acceleration and research were further emphasized during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hodges et al. (2020) underlined the change from old-style classrooms to online education, stressing both the chances for extended access and challenges associated with digital justice. Many research studies pinpointed positive results of educational technology, including augmented student engagement and personalized knowledge (Means et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2020). Though Warschauer & Matuchniak (2010) noted that without systemic backing, technology can broaden current educational inequalities.

Within educational institutions, governance structures have been impacted due to modernization. Neoliberal policies, stressing accountability, competition, and market logic, have redesigned public education (Ball, 2012). Performance-based evaluations, standardized assessments, and school autonomy are now unescapable features worldwide (Carnoy, 2015). Anderson (2022) maintained that while such improvements aim to expand efficiency and results, they frequently rank quantifiable attainments over holistic education. Likewise, Rizvi & Lingard (2010) emphasized how international policy borrowing forms national education plans, occasionally at the expense of local contextual requirements.

Curricular modernization has highlighted STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education and 21st century capabilities like creativity, digital literacy, and critical thinking (Trilling & Fadel, 2009; World Economic Forum, 2020). These tendencies reflect a universal redefinition of educational aim from memorization of knowledge to skills related to the knowledge economy. On the other hand, scholars like Giroux (2011) critique this transformation, highlighting that an overemphasis on STEM decays humanities and civic education, which are important for democratic practice and social justice. Modernization has been associated with expanded entrée to education through inclusive policies and mass schooling. UNESCO (2021) described a significant advancement in primary school admission globally. However, modernization also increases disparities. Digital divides, gender disparities, and socio-economic barriers continue, restraining reasonable involvement in modern education systems (OECD, 2020). For example, Jagers et al. (2019) shed light on the frequent failure of modern curricula to tackle cultural diversity, resulting in exclusionary practices that sideline marginal groups.

Education is one of the significant factors bringing multi-layered transformation in society (Imran et al., 2023). Societal expectations and cultural norms are influenced through educational modernization. It forms individual ambitions toward modern occupations and lives (Archer & Yamashita, 2003). Hitherto, this cultural change can cause pressures between indigenous knowledge systems and globalized educational models (Brodie, 2011), raising worries regarding cultural homogenization.

Based on the above literature, it clearly reflects that modernization has deeply redesigned educational **institutions** by altering governance, enhancing technology-mediated learning and policy settings, expanding access, and reforming curricula. Though modernization is not homogeneously advantageous, it brings risks of disparity, cultural dislocation, and policy misalignment when applied without a background understanding.

Objectives of the Study

The study is primarily based on the following study objectives.

1. To know about the impact of modernization on educational institutions in the study locale.
2. To know about how modernization impacted the educational institution.
3. To put forward policy recommendations based on the study findings.

Research Methodology

The existing study titled "From Tradition to Modernity: A Qualitative Analysis of Societal Shifts in Education as a Social Institution" was designed under the umbrella of qualitative strategy, using thematic analysis. Methodology in qualitative research is a systematic approach that seeks to comprehend human behaviors, experiences, and social phenomena in their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This methodology is extensively accepted in education, social sciences, and health research since it provides an intricate understanding of societal norms, human behavior, and institutional practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). The research was conducted in Swat (a northern district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan), where most people reside in rural areas. The sampled participants were selected from 07 tehsils of the district Swat. For the qualitative study, the researchers carried out seven (07) focus group discussions (FGDs) in the study area, with one FGD in each Tehsil of District Swat. The number of participants in each FGD ranged from 7 to 11, as outlined by Neumann (2014). In-depth interviews are widely used in sociology (Patton, 2015) for obtaining more detailed results (Briggs, 1986). To further strengthen the qualitative study, the researchers purposively interviewed 35 informants through an interview guide in the study area in total, with 05 key informants in each Tehsil. The researchers selected potential participants from different stakeholders of Pakhtun society in Swat, i.e., literary persons, lawyers, intellectuals, community leaders, and politicians, and respectively. In addition, the data further went through the coding and identification process of different themes and sub-themes as per the thematic analysis procedure. For quality research, the researchers must take into consideration ethical concerns. Following Creswell (2010), the researchers followed the ethical considerations during the process of research.

Results and Discussion

The researchers probed into the different thematic aspects of the educational institution concerning the impact of modernization, which include teaching pedagogies and methods, the concept of corporal punishment, ICT-enhanced learning materials, and curriculum transformation. The emphasis has been given to know the mode of education/educational systems, distance education, and co-education, facilities/infrastructural development. Besides, the researchers focused on character and personality growth, faculty capacity building programs, and child-centered early education, respectively.

The thematic aspects mentioned earlier of education are summed up by the researchers in the following lines in detail:

Teaching Pedagogies and Methods

When we talk about modernization, the importance of education cannot be ignored. It is one of its main pillars, which cultivates the seeds of modernization in any society. The essence of education depends on the way of teaching. Teachers are the disseminators of knowledge in schools, colleges, universities, and madrasas (school). The overall development and performance of students are interlinked with the performance of their teachers. The dream can be materialized if the teachers are well-equipped and have command over their subject(s), and they know how to teach the contents of a particular subject in a particular manner.

Mr. Wajid Ali Khan expressed his views, *"In the Swat state, unlikely today, education was not considered an industry. Teachers were passionate about their teaching profession. They provide multipurpose education, which benefits the students in multifaceted ways, like physical exercise, ethics, and a strengthened spiritual relationship. On the other hand, madrasa (religious school) teachers are not equipped with modern teaching methodologies"*.

Another participant of the study, Mr. Hanif Qais, stated that *"In the past, teachers were stricter and less cooperative in their teaching methodologies. Nowadays, teachers are more cooperative, talented, and equipped with the latest knowledge"*.

Corporal Punishment

The concept of corporal punishment is not a new phenomenon in educational institutions. In educational institutions, particularly in schools, teachers use physical and psychological punishment to inculcate the educational content in the minds of their students.

Mr. Karam Mandokheil stated, *"The traditional education system was carried out under the umbrella of corporal punishment. The intensity of corporal punishment was severe in the past. However, over time, due to educational awareness, the role of media, where social media is very active, highlights such cases where corporal punishment is practiced"*.

The majority of the study participants revealed that corporal punishment was a brutal act of punishment in the past, when people were ignorant and uneducated. Even teachers were unaware of the drastic consequences of corporal punishment. Further, corporal punishment develops a sense of inferiority and low self-esteem in the students, which significantly affects their academic performance and professional achievements in their future careers. They further pointed out that due to this practice, students remained reluctant to express their inner potentials, and they feel fear from their teachers while asking questions or even become unable to ask a question because of a lack of confidence, which was distorted due to corporal punishment. This also resulted in the development of violent tendencies in the students, which ultimately left imprints on the rest of their lives.

Subsequently, they further argued that as a result of modernization, corporal punishment had been banned by the government, and teachers who are found to be involved in giving corporal punishment are subject to punishment as per the law. The media is a strong force of checks and balances regarding the reporting of such cases of corporal punishment. This is why, due to the fear of disciplinary action from the government side and the active role of social media, corporal punishment is no longer practiced in most educational institutions. They further highlighted that due to the ban on corporal punishment, where the government introduced the slogan of *"Maar Nahi Pyaar / affection/love instead of violence"*, results in the deviant behaviours among students, and they don't care about the teacher's instructions.

Mr. Jouhar Ali stated that *"From one perspective, corporal punishment, which was practiced in the past at schools and even in colleges, was good up to a certain level. Due to this practice, students were more obedient and serious towards their studies. Nevertheless, due to modernization, whereas the government has banned o corporal punishment now, the effects are adverse"*.

Majority participants of this study revealed that the provision of a conducive and friendly environment is one of the fundamental requirements for effectively achieving any desired goal. Those organizations that provide such an environment where people can work and express their inner potential openly ultimately result in a quality output of achieving the required result. Simultaneously, educational institutions are the backbone of uplifting society. The situation of student's centered or friendly environment is imposing in the developed nations; however, this scenario is different and presents a gloomy picture in the developing countries like Pakistan.

ICT-Enhanced Learning Materials

The twenty-first century is considered the era of technology. It plays a vital role in our lives and is considered a base for growth in a country. A low economy cannot grow without technological advancement. The impact of technology can be seen in our everyday lives, including education. The use of ICT is positively associated with an increase in access to education and improving its relevance and quality (Raja, 2018).

Mr. Syed Ahmad Khan stated that *"Previously, the learning materials were much simpler. When we were students, we used Takhtai (a small wooden board for taking notes), Qalam (a wooden pen), and Da Sayai Dawat (an ink bottle). Matta Khata (a type of mud) was used for liquid painting on both sides of Takhtai and then kept in the sun. I am surprised that in a limited period due to technological advancement, different gadgets have been introduced, which almost replaced Takhtai".*

The majority of the study participants opined that in schools, the traditional pattern of learning materials is now replaced with modern technological gadgets like Tablets, Computers, projectors & visuals, LED screens, etc. provides fantastic convenience to both students and teachers. The use of the internet, especially by teachers, is also one of the essential features of today's technological advancement, wherein teachers can prepare their lessons and lectures on time in the desired manner. They are getting the help of different tutorials and different materials to enhance their academic capabilities. It helps create curiosity in students' minds and helps them retain and understand various concepts in a better way. Another mega impact of modernization is distance learning and online degrees with the use of technology.

The participants of the study further revealed some positive impacts of modernization, such as mind training software, computers, digital cameras, 3D visualization tools, projectors, PowerPoint presentations, etc., which are all technological developments that are vital for and have proven to be significantly contributing to the academic world, where teachers can help out their students effortlessly grasp a concept. On the other hand, there are specific negative impacts associated with the modernization of educational institutions, which divert their concentration from academics. These negative impacts include the decline of writing skills, an increasing ratio of cheating (like the use of mini cameras, high-tech watches, graphical calculators, etc.), and diversion of focus (all-time connected online, text messaging, or SMS, busy with cellphones, iPhones, etc.).

Besides, on the advantages and disadvantages of technological gadgets in education, most participants opined that it is useful for both teachers and students. They are getting equipped with a modern technological world to easily access the required material and tutorials to cope with their assigned tasks. It is also time-saving as technology provides anything within no time. On the other hand, certain disadvantages are like keeping in view our country's socio-economic level, wherein the government spends less and allocates fewer budgets on education. So, technological equipment like projectors, multimedia, computers, laptops, electric backup, etc., is not being provided to all educational institutions as per their requirements. Another limitation is that most teachers are of the old generation, who cannot run these modern gadgets and equip themselves with the teachings of the new syllabi. These teachers also find it time-consuming as they are unable to operate it speedily. It also affects the thinking and creativity level of the teachers and students. It is also costly for students who cannot afford such gadgets. They further added that the use of such technological equipment is hazardous to health as well.

Mr. Syed Ahmad Kahn stated that *"The concept of ICT materials emerged with modernization. Historical pieces of evidence show that the tools of teaching were much simple like for students, there was a Takhtai, which was then transformed into Tor Salait (Black Slate), wherein students used white color Salitee (a slab of stone/concrete used as a pen/chalk) for writing on the black slate. The blackboard was wooden or on the cemented wall. Now, new technological gadgets are in practice. The use of technology is negligible in Madrasas as they depict a conservative mindset. Teachers in public schools are reluctant to the new technology compared to the private school's teachers".*

Curriculum Transformation

Curriculum is the basis for determining educational excellence. It is the curriculum that sets priorities and goals for achieving quality education. Most of the participants shed light on the comparative analysis of the curriculum and the emergence of new subjects and disciplines in the educational institution in the Pakhtun society due to modernization. They believed that previously the curriculum was much simpler and the number of subjects as few compared to the present day. Moreover, there is no doubt that changes in the curriculum occurred due to the government opting to accept the educational models developed by developed countries. The industrialization process also paved the way for creating several employment opportunities, where the government felt the need to alter the curriculum and introduced new specialized disciplines to make it on par with the requirements of the new era.

Mr. Humayun Khan Gul stated that *"Curriculum was somehow reflecting the indigenous cultural aspects. However, today, the curriculum is dominated by Western concepts, stories, and ideology. Simultaneously, different specialized disciplines emerged for combating the challenges of present-day modern life".*

Mr. Ahmad Bashir viewed that *"The present-day curriculum puts pressure on the students, wherein they are unable to get command of it effectively. In meager time, we want the child learns several things, irrespective of her/his capacity, whether he/she could cope with the whole curriculum or not? Another thing is the increased number of specialized disciplines, which also negatively affects children/youth's personality. We put the burden of the luggage of books on children's shoulders, more than their body weight. In this modern world, we are trying to get the required result from our children just like machines".*

Distance Education

As discussed earlier, the population has massively increased in recent decades, which ultimately put pressure on the government to meet its basic needs like education, employment, food, shelter, protection, etc. The majority of the participants of this pressure also exist in the educational sector. The educational institutions have a low capacity to accommodate a large number of prospective students as regular students. That is why the educational sector's concerned quarters thought to provide distance learning to the common masses.

Dr. Umar Hayat expressed that *"Education is the most basic and dire need of society. The modernization wave also molded the nature of education. The huge bulk of the population cannot be accommodated in the educational institutions as regular students. Now, there is a ray of hope in the shape of distance learning for those who are employees or those women who are due to cultural and financial hindrances are unable to avail educational opportunities as regular students at the campuses due to cultural and financial hindrances".*

Mr. Ahmad Shah stated that *"The concept of distance education is a purely new phenomenon and is undoubtedly the consequence of modernization. Now people are engaged in doing their businesses, jobs, etc. This is the best option for them to opt for distance learning at their doorstep. In Pakhtun culture, those areas where women are hindered from their mobility may easily avail this opportunity".*

Co-education

The majority of the participants opined that co-education was practiced in the recent past when Swat was a princely state. However, it is worth mentioning that co-education was only confined primary level. In a few cases, up to the middle level, the number of schools was minimal, and women's schools did not exist or were in far-flung areas. Due to the non-availability of transport and other socio-economic barriers, they were compelled to fulfill their thirst for getting an education in a co-education environment. Besides, the overall traditional mindset in Swat was not in favor of coeducation, and it was considered deviant behavior. This tendency is now reduced due to the

awareness brought by the media, and now people can quickly move around the world, which in one way or another brings the impact of modernization.

Mr. Shahid Ali Khan highlighted that *"Co-education is the Western concept that affected our indigenous cultural pattern. Pakhtuns are indeed strict concerning the observance of Purdha (veil); however, due to the non-availability of separate educational institutions, there is no other way out of getting an education. If the government provides separate educational institutions for women, we will not opt for co-education for our children".*

Facilities/Infrastructural Development

Proper infrastructure and facilities are an integral part of academic development. The majority of the participants viewed that although the last Wali (King) of the Swat state was much inclined to establish educational institutions and develop infrastructure and provide proper facilities to schools and colleges. However, apart from building construction, the rest of the facilities were not that much up to the mark, as students were used to sitting on the mat, which was full of dust, etc.

In contrast to the above, today, the media is playing a pivotal role in highlighting societal issues. In the near past, different governments worked out strategies for educational development. The present government is calling for change and has declared an emergency in the field of education. However, the situation is pathetic, and children's areas are using those rugs, which are unhygienic and not proper for sitting in the class. Even in today's modernized society, there are many schools which are lacking the necessary facilities like classrooms, boundary walls, water, washrooms, electricity, furniture, pick and drop, etc. However, some of the participants were of the view that nowadays, educational institutions have been fully equipped with modern infrastructure and facilities, which have significantly improved the standard of education.

Mr. Fazal Karam highlighted that *"Poor infrastructure is the dominating attribute in educational institutions. With time, we observed some improvement where the government is now focusing on enhancing the infrastructural and other facilities".*

Personality Development

Personality is the blueprint of an individual's attitude and behavior. We socialize in different social settings. The educational institution is an important social institution that is mainly responsible for equipping individuals with knowledge and is responsible for personality development, especially character building.

The majority of the participants of this study revealed that in the past, character building was the utmost priority of the teachers. However, due to the commercialization of the education system, it has now become a secondary task while they mainly focus on their ratings and making earnings. In the past, students were more obedient and respectful. If a teacher was seen coming from somewhere, the students tried to escape from that place because they feared that the teacher would show their concern about why children are wasting their time in leisure instead of focusing on their studies. The teachers were used to report the same matter(s) to the concerned family elder(s) that your child was seen in that particular place. This sort of check and balance from the teacher's side was very advantageous and contributed to the balanced personality development. Even the teachers were such keen observers that apart from students' names, they also memorized the names of the students' fathers or other guardians. Nowadays, students are more deviant, and they least bother about caring for their elders and teachers. Also, the use of mobile and social media molded their mind, which results in creating a lag to bridge the gap.

Some of the participants opined that although children are more prone to using mobiles and social media, they are not disrespectful to their parents and teachers. It is the generation gap that results in misunderstandings and

labelling the youngsters as disrespectful and deviant from the cultural norms and values. The same results in the development of perception in the minds of children, that parents and other elders are labelled as strict and conservative by their children.

Mr. Abdul Qayyum Balala believed that *"The pattern of personality development has been transformed into a new shape influenced by the component of giving more freedom and liberty to the students. This may be due to several reasons, like government policy of ban on corporal punishment, where the government is focused on the policy of "Maar Nahi, Pyaar," meaning you should not treat students with violence, instead to mend their behaviour with affection and love. In comparison to the present, in the past, teachers guided their students with care and stick policy, where the stick policy was dominant".*

Mr. Muhammad Faisal revealed that *"The modern education system deteriorated the overall personality development of children. Students are now more deviant and disrespectful to their teachers and parents, whereas this was not the case in the past. If we compare both times, we were much more obedient and respectful to our teachers and elders than the present-day students. Media and the internet played an important role in mending the behaviour of students".*

Faculty Capacity Building Programs

The majority of the participants of the study were of the view that there were no such training and capacity building programs. However, the level of commitment and passion to their teaching profession was high. Nowadays, technological advancement has paved the way to equip teachers and staff with modern-day techniques for performing their assigned tasks in a better manner.

Mr. Inam Ur Rahman stated his views as *"Modern-day teachers and staff are far better in terms of harnessing new skills and approaches in the educational sector. In the past, teachers and staff were only confined to the basics of their domain. Now, due to modernization, this trend has been changed greatly in a diversified manner".*

Child-Centered Early Education

The preponderance of the participants in this study believed that unlikely the past, due to the emerging trends of modernization, people are now inclined towards sending their children to educational institutions at a very early age. This trend might be due to the socio-economic pressure, which compelled parents to put their children at a very early age in the schools. The media is playing a pivotal role in highlighting different new approaches to education, like playgroup etc.

However, some of the participants argued that this trend of sending children to schools at an early age is not good; instead, it deprives children of the very fundamental aspects of socialization at the family level.

Mr. Rahmat Shah opined that *"The majority of the parents send their children to the schools at a very early age; wherein different types of issues are associated with it. This trend might be because the parents, especially the educated mothers of the new generation, may not bear the burden of socialization of their children; rather, they remain busy watching dramas, fashion shows, going shopping for new arrivals, cooking, etc."*

Mr. Fazal Karam highlighted that *"The case has now changed as people are now more engaged in their complex circle of life. Now they send the children for early education. In the past, there was no such awareness, education, job opportunities, and life were simple, whereas the means of subsistence were agriculture. Life was moving simply, and there was no such awareness or social pressure that could compel parents to send their children for early education".*

Conclusion

It has been revealed that modernization has altered educational institutions to a greater extent with respect to teaching methods, technological integration, disciplinary practices, institutional infrastructure, and curriculum development. Old-style teacher-centered methods have slowly shifted to cooperative learning methods and become more student-centered. Corporal punishment, which was a common corrective practice, has mostly been minimized due to legal restrictions and growing public awareness of its negative mental. Modernization has also replaced the old-fashioned learning tools with modern ICTs and digital resources beneficial for enhancing teaching and learning mechanisms. On the other hand, challenges like limited resources, insufficient technological skills among some teachers, unequal access to technology, etc., still exist. Keeping in view the evolving demands of modern-day society, different specialized disciplines have emerged, and the curriculum is under regular periodic changes; however, increasing academic burden on students is one of the major concerns.

The growth of distance education, the early childhood education programs, and the steady acceptance of co-education reflect the broader impact of modernization on institutional practices and educational accessibility. Despite these developments, resource disparities and infrastructural deficiencies continue to affect the quality of education. In a nutshell, modernization has shaped new prospects for enlightening educational systems, but its paybacks can only be entirely understood through sensible policies that integrate cultural values, adequate institutional support, and technological progress.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the educational system in the context of modernization:

1. Educational institutions must support teachers to implement contemporary pedagogical methods that underscore critical thinking, student participation, and collaborative learning. To integrate innovative teaching techniques into classrooms (the use of ICTs), teachers are required to participate in professional training programs continuously.
2. The government shall revisit balanced disciplinary policies and ensure their implementation in letter and spirit to promote respect for teachers, a sense of responsibility, and positive behavior.
3. The government authorities should allocate enough funds to equip educational institutions with contemporary technological possessions like computers, internet connectivity, multimedia projectors, and digital learning platforms. Also, identical access to technological services should be guaranteed for both rural and urban educational institutions.
4. Apart from the above, in a nutshell, there is a dire need for curriculum reform and rationalization, extension of distance education opportunities, introduction of gender-sensitive educational policies, upgrading of educational infrastructure, stress on moral education and character building, and strengthening policies concerning early childhood education.

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