An encounter with Qazi Afaq Hussain
Secretary Education, Punjab

“I am in my 50s but I have already lived 100 years,” said Punjab Education Secretary Qazi Afaq in a frank-cum-formal chat with The Hope. However, his looks and the way he deals with his so-hectic job defy his age statement.

But how can one be 100-years-old in just 50 years?

“I am from the Civil Services of Pakistan, Special Services group. I am from the 79 batch; this means 28 years of service. I worked both in field as well as in the secretariat.” Mr. Afaq is not among those officers who enjoy their slot. Instead he has been devoted to serve the public regardless he is at the office or at home. He has worked as Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Deputy Secretary, Additional Secretary and now he is the Education Secretary. He took over the education charge just three months ago, so he has yet to set his own agenda for the promotion of education.

“I am not able to do anything which is my own. I am just pushing the agenda which is already there. We have the Punjab Education Sector Reform Program (PESRP) and I am pushing it forward. I am taking initiatives from where my predecessor left. So I am going ahead to revamp the PEF and the Punjab Examination Commission, improve educational boards, improve teachers’ performance, provide labs equipment, and furniture, open new schools etc.”

When his attention was brought towards literacy rate as low as 54%, Mr Afaq said he did not agree with the statement that literacy rate was low.

“It was 20 percent a decade ago and now it is almost 54 percent. We have done very well. Once you are on the right track and once you are on the ladder, it will be easy to achieve the highest level,” he believed.

“Hopefully, in the coming years, we will jump it to 70 percent and then ultimately to the target which we have in our mind. We are doing very well.

“During last two years the enrolment of girl students in class one has reached 60 percent. We have opened a lot of new schools, lots of schools are upgraded, teachers have been recruited, teachers have been trained. I would say quality of education has been improved. We have declared that education from class 1-10 will be free. We are providing free text books to the students and in addition to that for girl students we are giving a stipend of Rs. 200 to each child per month. All these are incentives. We have opened school councils to help parents as well as students in managing the studies.”

Mr. Afaq has been part of the PEF. “I was there six years ago. At that time it was almost dormant; nothing was being done because we did not have funds. Now the government owns education, so the PEF is also doing an excellent job and I will give full credit to its Managing Director Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik, and PEF staff.”

About the advantages of public-private partnership in education, Mr. Afaq said it was a must.

“Everything can’t be left to the government. A government can do lot of things but it can’t do everything. Education is one of those things where we should welcome the participation of the private sector. I am one of those people who always encourage public-private partnership, especially in the education sector.”

When asked what major flaws were in our education system, his single-word reply was ‘examination’.

When asked to explain it, he went on: “Our worst part and stigma is the examination system. There are grey areas and loop holes. We have to plug those holes. My first priority is to make the examination system a totally transparent, fair and merit based system.”

Editorial Board “The Hope” is grateful to Mr. Afaq for the time he spent with us. Perhaps
this was due to his old affiliation with the PEF and also
due to his commitment with education. But his source
of commitment stems from the place called Pakistan.
“Whatever we have it is because of Pakistan, because
of this country. I would strongly urge every body to
work for this country to make it progressive, united and
one of the best in the world.”

She is the Brain of Lahore

And her name is Sara Jameel, a student of Queen Mary
School.
She was discovered in a joint quest by the Punjab
Education Foundation (PEF) and the Trust for
Education and Development of Deserving Student
(TEDDS).

Both organizations arranged an inter-school quiz. An
award distribution ceremony was held at the Trust
School, Thokar Niaz Biag on Feb. 23, 2008 in which
a large number of students, PEF and TEDDS officials
participated.
The topper of the competition was awarded Rs 10,000
while other position-holders and participants were
also given different prizes.
PEF Chairman, Mr. Shahid Hafiz Kardar said the PEF
was trying to promote education among the children of
underprivileged class while offering them education at
a very low cost.
He said the PEF had also embarked upon the training
of teacher serving in very low cost private sector
schools. He said the Foundation was providing
financial assistance to over 1100 private schools in 18
districts of the province.
He further said the Foundation would soon Launch
Talent Scholarship Programme to assist the talented
students.

TEDDS General Secretary, Mr. Tahir Yousaf
appreciated the increasing number of participant
schools in “Brain of Lahore”.
He shed light on the importance of the curriculum
activities and said the TEDDS would soon Launch
another competition “Orator of Lahore” among the
private schools of the city.
PEF Managing Director Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik said
the Foundation was also creating an environment of
competition among the students, studying in
Foundation Assisted Schools. He said the Foundation
would also launch several new initiatives to facilitate
the students from underprivileged class.

Seminars in 18 districts---- all about education

ADU-SLM arranged seminars in 18 districts of Punjab
to raise awareness about new teaching methodologies
and techniques for the teachers of Foundation Assisted
Schools.
These seminars were held under the given schedule:
- Government City School, Bahawalnagar on Jan
  17, 2008.
- Siddique Kanju Hall, Lodhran on Jan 18, 2008.
- Govt. Pilot secondary school, Multan on Jan. 29,
  2008.
- Govt. Degree college for Boys, Muzaffargarh on
- Chakwal Grammar School, Chakwal on Feb. 09,
  2008.
- Dept. of Biotechnology & Biochemistry,
  University of Punjab, Lahore on Feb 13, 2008.

These seminars aimed at:
- Imparting paper designing techniques (to improve
  results of FAS schools in QAT),
- Catering the needs of different learners in the class
  rooms; Audio, Visual and Kinesthetic learners
- Teachings facts and concepts in sciences and
  mathematics
- Teaching language and its uses
Making lesson plans
Learning creation of mnemonics (Mind maps), Bloom’s Taxonomy
Using 3-D animations
Using AV aids in classroom.
DCOs, EDOs, DEOs of respective districts attended these seminars and appreciated the efforts of PEF in terms of financial and technical assistance of Foundation Assisted Schools. Principals and teachers of schools thanked PEF management for arranging such seminars for them. They requested PO-SLM, Ms. Salma Aziz to arrange such seminars on regular basis.

Rajanpur revels in FAS festivities

It's time to move to Rajanpur, the land of Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Fareed. The land reminds us of mystic ecstasies in the form of poetry of the saint. But this time, we will talk about FAS district coordination meeting with its partner schools, which was held on 31st January, 2008, at the Multipurpose Hall of Govt. high school, Rajanpur.

Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik, PEF Managing Director, was chief guest at the seminar. Principals, teachers and students of the partner schools were present on the colloquium. The participants spoke highly of the measures taken by the PEF for the promotion of quality education. The major focus of the seminar was on the feedback and suggestions of the correlate schools.

Most of the complaints raised on the occasion were about poverty and socio cultural obstacles towards female education.

Students performed traditional dress shows, tableau, and skits. Colorful stalls were also arranged where students exhibited their handicraft and art works.

Exploring the world professional development

A seminar on 'Exploring Practicalities of Implementing Professional Development Programs' was held on 14th of January 2008. The event was organised by Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) in collaboration with Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), University of Cambridge. Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik, PEF Managing Director, welcomed the guests and briefed them about the objectives of the PEF. He commended the seminar a huge step towards the betterment of quality education.

William Bickerdike, regional manager of South Asia, Cambridge University and Nick Sansome, director of education development, led the seminar.

The major focus of the seminar was on the certification and diploma programme for teachers of private schools, especially in the area of continuous professional development. It also covered the benefits of using CIE in-service teacher training program and exploring the practicalities of implementing it on a large scale.
Meeting with Ms. Daphne, ELT advisor, British Council

British Council will improve the level of English Language Teaching in its allied schools. Daphne Pawelec, English Language Teaching (ELT) advisor of the British Council, met with Dr. Allah Baksh Malik, PEF Managing Director, to discuss the teachers' needs for responsive professional development in the ELT.
At the meeting, both discussed diverse cultural hindrances and other problematic areas faced by English teachers. Dr. Malik told Ms Pawelec that language proficiency did not depend on linguistic knowledge but it was an outcome of practice. A passive listener can never muster spoken skills of a second language, he said. Ms Dephne agreed to the idea that in teaching of English to a group of students as their L3, conventional style of teaching should be changed.

Emerging Prides of EVS

Punjab Education Foundation Managing Director, Dr. Allah Baksh Malik said the Foundation was trying to promote education among the poor children at very low-cost.
Dr. Malik said this at a prize distribution ceremony of the “Pride of EVS” inter school quiz competition arranged by the EVS department of PEF at the Younas high school, Lahore.
The first prize and title of the Pride of EVS was awarded to Akif Mahmood of the Trust School. Dr. Malik said the PEF had also achieved the target of 10,000 vouchers in slum areas of Shalamar, Mughalpura and Harbanspura. The EVS program coordinator, Mr. Itikar Ahmad Rabbani said the voucher scheme was the only hope of poor parents in these slum areas to provide quality education to their children. Mian Kashif (FAS-Coordinator), Ms. Huma Rizvi (PO-ADU), Ms. Salma Aziz (PO-SLM) were also present at the ceremony and distributed the prizes.

5th FAS-QAT

Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS) program is providing quality education to 500,000 students of 1,100 schools. To ensure quality education in these FAS partners PEF conducts Quality Assurance Tests (QAT) on six monthly basis. Fifth FAS- QAT was conducted from March 1 to March 12, 2008 in 18 districts of Punjab. The process of the QAT conduction was outsourced to two partner organizations, Punjab University and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Bahawalpur. According to Ms. Huma Rizvi, in charge of the QAT, in order to ensure transparency and confidentiality in the process of QAT, the whole operation was monitored by monitoring teams of PEF. Thirty two teams were deputed for this purpose. Whole exercise went smoothly and result will be declared in second week of April.
Working together — A Virtuous Team

Life at Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) has been challenging and rewarding for me, since I joined the PEF back in August, 2005. A place where I sit to deal with digits and figures for the smooth organizational functions, affairs related to educational boom undertaken by the PEF are somewhat encouraging and sometimes challenging. But challenges steer us to go ahead, thanks to a conducive to groom environment created by all the PEF people. At PEF, the main responsibilities rest upon my shoulders to ensure risk free, cisco-secure and transparent financial discipline and management. Moreover, what makes my job diversified is that at one point I am meeting with foreign donors, mostly from the World Bank and DFID and briefing them about the PEF, the next moment I am around a slum school where most of learners have heart-aching stories to share with. But when I see visible change in learning environment in schools of slum areas and hardworking colleagues around, especially Dr. Allah Baksh Malik who is the PEF Managing Director, it brings smile to me. What makes my job more exciting is the different projects taken up by PEF Board of Directors.

Ms. Salma Aziz is Project Officer ADU-SLM (Secondary Level Mentoring) in Punjab Education Foundation. After M.Sc in Botany, she did her M.Phil in Industrial Bio-technology from Government College University Lahore. She is the proud member of the First Batch of PEF. She is the editor of PEF quarterly newsletter “The Hope”. She is playing pioneer role in capacity building of secondary level educators. As Project Officer she conducted secondary level trainings of 3200 teachers in 18 districts of Punjab.

Mr. Haroon Raheem is working in Punjab Education Foundation as Director FAS (Foundation Assisted Schools). He has worked with British Council Pakistan for 7 years on different positions. After MBA with major in Marketing, he successfully completed Certification in Marketing from MMC, Chartered Institute of Marketing UK. Presently, he is doing MS Total Quality Management from University of the Punjab. He has attended international specialized training programs and conferences in UK and other countries.

Contact Us:
19- Ahmed Block, Garden Town, Lahore.
Tel: 042-5940261-3, 042-9230729, 042-9230785
Fax: 042-9230785, 042-5940284-6
Email: pef@wol.net.pk
URL: www.pef.edu.pk