
SIGNIFICANCE OF CAMBRIDGE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT: Pakistan emerged as the biggest Islamic state and fifth largest state of the world on 14th August 1947 A.D on the map of the globe. A sequel of untiring and inspirational struggle, behind its emergence, hails its significance. Pakistan was beset with so many administrative and financial problems besides, educational plight. In this article, I would discuss the University of Cambridge Educational System which challenged Pakistani educational system in every field of studies till secondary and higher secondary levels. Introduction of “O” and “A” in Pakistan has unveiled the feeble and deteriorating standard of education in Pakistan. This system has produced numerous position holders across the world surpassing and challenging the talents of modern world. Pakistan is a land of competent people who need a flare and push to shine on the globe. This system has polished our talent ushering them in the turf of west with dignity and esteem. This system even has far better course outline of Islamiyat from primary to secondary as compared to Pakistani secondary and higher secondary syllabus. This article elucidates the benefits and comparison of Pakistani and Cambridge system.

KEYWORDS: Education, University of Cambridge, Examination, System, Urban, Upper class, Private Sector, Cambridge education system, Education system of Pakistan.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE:

The University of Cambridge was founded in 1209 A.D. it was granted a royal charter by King Henry III in 1231 A.D. Cambridge is the second oldest University in England and fourth oldest University of the world. It maintains its high standard and research venture uplifting it as one of the best five universities across the world every year as examined by international educational forum. It is located at Cambridge, 80 kilo meters from London, England. It has currently 31 colleges and schools affiliated with university of Cambridge.¹

The University of Cambridge has over hundred departments, faculties besides central administration to nurture great deal of education to facilitate students across the world. One of the departments is Cambridge assessment. This department is representing for holding examination in over 170 countries giving them fair chance to compete students across the world with a high standard of education regardless of caste, creed and race. This department manages many exam boards including Cambridge assessment international education.²

This local examination syndicate termed as Cambridge assessment was formed 150 years ago aiming at providing quality education to those avid learners who don't have access to university of Cambridge and its affiliated schools. In 1858 A.D, 370 schools' candidates were examined by university. In 1864 A.D syndicate commenced examining internationally. It continued to render its services till 1998 A.D. under the same banner across the world including Pakistan.in 1998 A.D Cambridge assessment diversified and shared its responsibilities envisaging three examination boards and transformed new structure. One of the boards was Cambridge international examination which was renamed as Cambridge

assessment international education in 2018 a.d.³

Cambridge Assessment International Education:

Cambridge Assessment International Education (C.A.I.E) operates in 160 countries dividing them into nine regions. North America, Latin America, UK, Europe, Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Asia Pacific having Cambridge representatives in every region. More than 10,000 schools are parts of Cambridge learning community.⁴

Cambridge pathway is catered to the needs of the students ranging from 5 to 19 years old students. It facilitates wide range of subjects and flexibilities depending upon country's own educational policies suiting its students so as to conform to their educational requirement. It has four stages from primary to advanced level. Qualification acquired from Cambridge System is internationally recognised and valued.⁵

BRITISH COUNCIL:

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organization for enlightening cultural relations and educational opportunities. It functions more than 100 countries across the globe in the field of English language, Arts and Culture, education and civil society. It was founded in 1934 A.D by UK Government. As regards British Council Pakistan, it laid down its foundation in 1948 A.D at Karachi. It functions across Pakistan including Pakistan held Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Federal Administrative Tribal Areas. It conducts and organises UK based examination especially Cambridge University examination such as "O" and "A" level.⁶

INTER BOARD COMMITTEE OF CHAIRMEN:

The Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) was formed in 1972 A.D under Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. It aims at creating uniformity and conformity amongst educational boards and text books in Pakistan. IBCC has also been assigned to evaluate and provide equivalence to foreign qualification with corresponding Pakistani certificates such as Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC). It has strong forum of members to formalise policies and criteria. All Chairmen of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education are its members numbering 28 besides Chairmen of text book boards Directors of curriculum and etc.⁷

"O" AND "A" LEVEL SYSTEM AND THEIR COMPARISON WITH PAKISTANI SYSTEM:

The General Certificate Education (GCE) examination has been conducted at two main levels Ordinary level ('O' level) and Advanced level ('A' level) in the England. This system was introduced in Pakistan in 1959 A.D. University of Cambridge established an administrative board called "University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES)" for conducting examination outside the England. "A" Level is an Advanced Level qualification used internationally as pre requisite for University Education. This examination is taken following the two years study, which usually follows "O" Level examination.⁸

In order to facilitate all world wherever is possible. The University of Cambridge has divided the world in six administrative zones placing countries according to their international standard Time. As regards, Pakistan, she lies in zone 4 of CIE administrative zone.⁹

Cambridge University provides wide range of subjects numbering 47 to suit the environment, culture and educational system of every country in "O" Level pathway.¹⁰

With regard to "A" level, it has more variety of subjects numbering 83 providing vast range of interest to students to excel in their University education. It has more variety of language

papers as compared to “O” level.¹¹

“O” level is equal to Matriculation of Pakistan according IBCC. GCE “O” level is deemed equivalent to Secondary School Certificate (SSC) subject to fulfilling requisite schemes of students as under for Pakistani Nationals. Pakistan Board Examination eight subjects English, Urdu, Islamiyat, Pakistan Studies and Mathematics as compulsory whereas their subjects Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer for Science group, Accounts, Business Studies and Economics for Commerce group and any three other subjects for Arts group. In other words, any three elective subjects are to be taken besides five compulsory aforesaid subjects.

GCE “A” level is deemed to be equivalent to Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) subject to meeting specified requirement for a different group as under for Pakistani Nationals.

Pre-Medical Group: “O” levels eight subjects including three electives, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology and three “A” level subjects the same as “O” level with minimum “E” grade.

Pre-Engineering Group: “O” level eight subjects including three electives, Physics, Chemistry, Biology/ Computer Studies and three “A” level subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics with minimum “E” grade.

Commerce and Humanity Group : “O” level eight subjects including three elective subjects and any three “A” level subjects with minimum “E” grade.¹²

Being a Cambridge School teacher, now, I will discuss syllabi and course outlines of “O” level and “A” level.

As mentioned earlier, eight subjects are to be taken to qualify equivalence by IBCC Pakistan. CAIE has denoted each subject with subject code. For instance, Islamiyat is denoted with 2058, Pakistan Studies 2059, Mathematics 4024 and so on. Each subject has two components to be appeared essentially. Component number shows the administrative zone a country is placed in. Pakistan lies in zone 4 of CAIE. So, component of all subjects taken in zone 4 are denoted with even numbers. For instance, Islamiyat paper is denoted with digit 12, and paper 2 is denoted with digit 22 and so on. In other words, Islamiyat is shown with subject code like this 2058/12 as paper 1 and 2058/22 as paper 2. As regards science papers like Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, three components are taken as practical of these subjects to be taken or its substitute called alternative to Practical (ATP). Similarly, “A” level course is broken up into two years. First year is called Advanced Subsidiary whereas Second year is called “A” level’. In both years, two components are taken against each papers and their credit is transferred or accumulated in “A” level result. So, final result of “A” level is calculated after deeming as an “A” level results. In other words, two papers of a subject are taken in AS level remaining two are taken next year, and result is compiled after including marks of all four papers of a subject.

Cambridge system has shown wide spread growth in Pakistan. Since 1959 till now students from Urban Areas where this system is available, has increased manifold. According CAIE spokesperson, the total numbers of “O” level registration in May/June 2018 exam was 161412 where as “A” level entries were 91144. Till January 2019, British Council has registered 750 schools across Pakistan as “O” and “A” level students.¹³

It should be noted that Cambridge International Examination is the world’s largest provider of International Education programs and Qualification for 5 to 19 years old conforming to ISO 9001:2015 Certification. It has been ISO Certified since 2008.¹⁴

“O” and “A” levels have vast benefits and fruits as compared to Pakistani Education system

such as:

1. “O” and “A” level examination is globally recognised. So, admission to any University is possible whereas Pakistan’s board certificates are not globally recognised.
2. Curriculum of Cambridge backed examination is far superior to Pakistani system based on cramming method where as “O” and “A” level demands elaboration of concepts focusing on qualitative answers not quantitative.
3. Syllabi and Curriculums of “O” and “A” level examinations are usually revised after five years. Whereas no heed is forced in Pakistani system. Syllabi and Curriculums remain same for decades.
4. In “A” level only three subjects are to be taken whereas almost ten subjects are to be taken in Intermediate system of Pakistan. So, “A” level sounds convenient and less stress.
5. Varieties of the subjects are open for “O” level and “A” level students in accordance with tendency of a student.
6. Top Pakistani private University prefer to induct “A” level graduates as compared to Intermediate graduates.¹⁵
7. Economically “O” level “A” level examination is much more expensive than Matriculation and Intermediate system.
8. Fee structure of private school is exorbitant whereas, Government schools and Private schools offering Pakistani education system are affordable.
9. Cambridge system examination is conducted in English language a part from language papers whereas Pakistan’s system offers Urdu too as medium of examination. So, English of Cambridge students are even better than native system school students.
10. Course online and syllabi of Cambridge system are much superior to Pakistani system. So, students of “O” level and “A” level often excel in foreign Universities and Pakistani Universities a like.¹⁶
11. “A” level students are exempted from English proficiency test like IELTS and TOEFL. On the other hand, Intermediate students have to undergo these tests for taking admission in foreign Universities.
12. Syllabi of “O” and “A” level have international standard making students conversant with standardised west education. On the other hand, Pakistani system is another story.
13. “A” level syllabi cater to the need of hour.
14. Pakistani boards Intermediate and Secondary syllabi are not conceptual based. They are out-dated where as “O” and “A” level syllabi are formulated taking modern development into consideration based on revision from time to time.
15. Ratio of getting jobs after “A” level is much higher than Intermediate.¹⁷
16. “O” level path way refers to 11 years of studies whereas matriculation is of 10 years. So, students are supposed to study one more year to be equivalent to matriculation.
17. “O” and “A” level schools have better trained competent teachers whereas Government schools and colleges do not have that standard. So, the bars of Cambridge teachers are higher than native system teachers.
18. CAIE often provides outline and face to face teachers training enabling them to rise to occasion, coping with challenges of the classes and syllabi. Being a Cambridge teacher, I attended CAIE workshop at my native city.

19. CAIE conduct “O” level and “A” level examination twice a year. May/ June session and October/November session. So, students can appear in once they feel up to.
20. Cambridge system has no supplementary examination system like Pakistani educational system. Obviously, when exam is conducted twice a year by Cambridge, there is no need for supplementary exam.
21. “O” and “A” level schools provide ample facilities to the students such as environment, cleanliness, class rooms, electronic equipment’s, computer Labs, sports and extra-curricular actives. This greatly enhances and shines students’ abilities boosting their confidence.
22. At the time announcement of results by CAIE, Cambridge also publishes and provides online access to marking scheme of each paper. So, more transparency and clarity to paper checking is guaranteed. It allows great deal of proficiency and accuracy to potential “O” and “A” level students. This type of norms and procedure is not provided by Pakistani system.
23. Marketing schemes provide ample assistance to teachers and students alike for their mistakes and rectification.
24. Cambridge has particular support for teachers online. Teachers can register via their schools and keep in touch with CAIE examiners of each and every subject they wish to.
25. Examination papers of CAIE are not generally predictable. Cambridge often gives variety of question examining the capabilities of the students. So, improvisation is amply required from the students of “O” and “A” level.
26. “O” and “A” level education offers synergy of modern and religious education at par. For example, Islamiyat that is taught in “O” level as compulsory and Islamic studies at “A” level have huge syllabus concerning history and Islamic rites and rituals besides comprehensive study of pillars of Islam and their impact in the society.
27. Islamiyat in “O” level and “A” level also focuses on moral values of Islam entailing rights of non-Muslims and special stress on rights of women. In Pakistan education system of Matriculation and Intermediate we do not see this stuff in curriculum.
28. Assessment methods used in “O” and “A” level examinations are regarded better than local examination boards in Pakistan. As a result, country will evolve to a more competitive position in the global knowledge based economy.
29. Students of “O” and “A” levels are generally perceived superior to local educational system due to their conceptual embedded learning.

Conclusion:

Cambridge system is an alternative to Secondary and Higher Secondary School System in Pakistan. This system has permeated in the Urban Areas of Pakistan dividing educational system on financial affordability. It has been serving in Pakistan since 1959 A.D. this system is quite remarkable and standardized. Students of this system are quite better than Pakistani educational system’s production who surpass internationally in foreign universities in their higher studies. However, schools which follow this system have high structures of fee targeting only upper middle class and upper class. The exorbitant fee structure of Cambridge schools deprives astute poor children of this opportunity. Government must endeavor to bring plausible uniformity in educational system bringing all segment of the society to international standard.

In short, lots of improvement is direly needed in educational sector of Pakistan. Having two

main systems, National educational system and Cambridge system complexed the entire organization of educational sector. These two systems are differentiating and amounting to class differences on the basis of financial strength in Pakistan. Disparity is being augmented inculcating inferiority complex amongst poor and middle classes from very young age, which haunts their minds throughout their lives. The government must come forward and pave the way of parity and unity in educational system of Pakistan. This is the way class differences will be abolished preserving the fabric of Islamic society.

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