

Transcripts of the interview of Mr. Asad Umar, Senior Vice President of Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) by Ms. Mehnaz Aziz, Chief Executive & Founding Director of Children's Global Network Pakistan (CGN-P) on 13th September 2012 at the PTI Office in Islamabad.

The following were the participants in the interview:

1. Mr. Asad Umar, Senior Vice President of Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI)
2. CGN-P Team: Ms. Mehnaz Aziz the Chief Executive, Zahra Khan, Mohammad Saeed and Zaeem Siddiqui

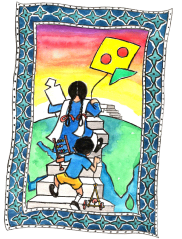
Ms. Mehnaz Aziz introduced herself and explained the work being undertaken by CGN-P over the past few years and the series of interviews being undertaken by CGN-P with different political parties seeking their views on the education policy they plan on implementing. Mr. Asad Umar clarified that the PTI at the moment is in the phase of formulating an education policy, which will provide detailed information and steps on how to achieve the education goals defined by PTI. Hence, all the information and views provided by Asad Umar during this interview might not reflect PTI's mandate, but pertain to his personal views. Currently PTI has detailed policy reforms on the following:

1. Economic Policy
2. Local Governance
3. Industrial
4. Skill Development
5. Energy

Educational, Health and National Security detailed policy reforms are still being debated by the party and soon will be released.

Q. What is PTI vision and stance on Education?

Ans. Mr. Asad Umar, who has been given the responsibility to formulate the economic policy for PTI, stated that he could only express PTI's vision from the economic perspective. He said currently the state is spending less than 2% of its GDP on education, which PTI would like to increase to at least 5%, or in absolute terms, 5 folds of what is being spent now. He said education is essentially investment in Human capital, and as human capital will increase, so will the growth of the economy. In this context, PTI and Mr. Asad Umar also plan to invest in skill and vocational trainings. He cited that less than 1% of the children are not getting skills and vocational training and less than 1% is being spent in this sector, much less to what other developing nations around the world are spending. Currently, even an educated person is finding hard to get employed in the market due to the possession of wrong set of skills. Hence imparting such quality skills will also boost the economy by creating employment opportunities.



Mr. Asad Umar said fundamentally there were 3 aspects of the education sector, which required immediate attention, and were becoming the focus of PTI's education policy:

- a) The benefits of education should be distributed with equity and equality. And to achieve this, the multi-polar education system will have to be demolished. He said that currently different education systems such as madrassahs, O & A level, Matric are coexisting in Pakistan, which is engendering class and egalitarian divides amongst the people. This system needs to be abolished and instead one unified system should be introduced, so that through education a child belonging to poor households can compete on equal grounds with the child from an affluent background.
- b) Secondly, he said that quality of education is also very important. Talking about numbers alone will not serve the purpose as the learning outcomes of children currently studying in government schools is very low "a child of grade 5 is in reality is at par with a child of grade 2'.
- c) Other civic and moral duties, ethics and values should also become the focus of education.

However, a clear implementation has not yet been finalized and the policy on education will be made public around October.

Q. How is PTI's approach different from other parties?

Ans. Mr. Asad Umar stated that PTI is the only party raising and talking about these issues, let alone acting upon them. The problem as to why nobody has been successful in achieving them, according to him, is fundamentally not because there is dearth of expertise in the education sector, but because it has never been in the personal interest of the ruling parties.

Mr. Asad Umar explained that the answer to many dilemmas in the country including education lies in the political economy of Pakistan. The political and economic elite of the country has made choices that have contributed to their own short-term well-being while denying the majority a chance to be educated, healthy, peaceful and prosperous. These choices can be seen in the way revenue is raised, how and what the resources are spent on, and opportunities shared.

He further maintained that the insurgency in Baluchistan, extremism elsewhere, and the decline of law and order in Karachi, are all manifestations of a rebellion against the status quo. It is time the elite of Pakistan paid a higher and fairer share of taxes, allowed merit to prevail in the distribution of opportunities and a greater proportion of the resources to be spent on the needs of the less affluent. Only investment in the skills, knowledge and building capacity of the human capital in Pakistan will take it forward.



Another problem according to Mr. Asad Umar lies in the over-centralization of power and unless the people at the local/ground level do not have the power or capacity to deliver services on their own, it will be very difficult to bring about a change. Mr. Umar explained that there's a lack of capacity at the local level and grass-roots for successful service delivery. Prioritization is also an issue and decisions are extremely politicized. Service delivery should be insulated from politicization. PTI's local governance policy been created with this objective in mind that clear and accountable delivery mechanisms are but in place.

PTI, he explained does not constitute a limited number of people but rather is a body of very active 10 million people hence it is not the leadership's interests that are being safeguarded, but rather the interests and the ideology of the whole body that is the driving force behind PTI's vision and mandate. He explained policy formulation and decision-making is a rigorous process within the party, every notion that is proposed is put forward for debate. The language issue is being actively debated upon within the party.

Q. What is PTI stance on the Education Curriculum?

Ans. The quality of curriculum is questionable; there is lack of innovation. The pedagogical approach still adheres to rote learning. The curriculum should be designed keeping in mind the context of Pakistan and the diversity, values, history and cultural heritage.

Q. Examples of district level implementation awakening?

Ans. Political realities have to be taken into consideration. The present system maintains and holds the power. Delegation of authority and decision-making is needed at the district level. Institutional changes will have to take place; currently only JI and MQM are established institutional parties while the rest are family parties. Through only the strength and expertise of the people will the institutions will be strengthened.

Q. What is a PTI view on the 18th Amendment?

Ans. Mr. Asad Umar stated that fundamentally 18th amendment was a good step, as power needs to be decentralized and devolved to the provinces. The decision making power can be taken by the provinces in context of the local realities and demands. However, he maintained that control over certain matters is best if it remains centralized - examination and certification are some examples.

Q. What is PTI election slogan on education?

Ans. Mr. Asad Umar said that PTI realizes that a slogan in an highly important part of politics as your messages need to be broken down into simple and few words, lucid enough for the common man. However, as of now, PTI hasn't finalized on the slogan yet.

Q. Views on donor's funding?



Ans. Mr. Asad Umar stated that his personal experience of working with DFID in the PSDF projects proved to be beneficial and good. Yet, he said that the funding from donors has stagnated the development of Pakistan by taking away the self-driven initiatives and independent think. He said donor projects are not only not demand driven and do not categorically reflect the whims of the people, but also the projects (no matter how good) are restrained by the project timelines. This is critical especially in the case for education, which is a gradual development process and achieving growth through 1 or 2 years is highly improbable.