

Freelancing and Entrepreneurship in Secondary Schools of Pakistan

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Key Insights/ Abstract

The freelancing community in Asia is one of the fastest growing in the world, and is recorded to have billions of dollars of income per year. (Fahad, 2020) The focus of this research is to study whether freelancing and entrepreneurship should be added to the formal secondary education system in Pakistan as a subject to better equip students to earn in the future and perhaps in the present as well. For this, we interviewed two groups of students, one with prior exposure to freelancing

and entrepreneurship concepts and the other without this exposure. Through these interviews we tried to figure if students will be interested in learning Entrepreneurship and Freelancing as a subject. We found that almost all the students interviewed showed high interest in these subjects and particularly in being able to develop skills to start earning earlier rather than later, however they lack the support from educational institutions and Government alike to pursue these interests.

Research Context

With the rise of internet use over the past few years, Freelancing is becoming a more and more common means of income all around the world and especially in Asia. The freelancing community in Asia is one of the fastest growing in the world, and is recorded to have billions of dollars of income per year. (Fahad, 2020) Pakistan has been ranked as the 4th most popular country for Freelancing in the Online Labour Index published in 2017 by Oxford Internet Institute. (Sobia Shabbir, 2017) Since then, Pakistan has witnessed an exponential surge in Freelancing during last few years, mostly during COVID-19. (Jaffer, 2020) This rise in freelancing shows its importance as a source of income in a country like Pakistan where the number of conventional jobs have been decreasing in recent years (López-Cálix, 2012), while freelancing allows jobseekers to effectively earn from worldwide markets with very few restrictions. This also sheds light on the importance of Entrepreneurship in our country where job creation is a serious issue.

The focus of this research is to study whether

freelancing and entrepreneurship should be added to the formal education system in Pakistan to better equip students to earn in the future and perhaps in the present as well. Previous researches

have focused on other aspects of this problem; Abdul Basit Sheikh has studied how entrepreneurship awareness can be included in ICT studies, Faiza Masood studied what factors influence participation in freelancing, while Khurram S. Rana studied how social norms and knowledge about freelancing and entrepreneurship influences the participation in these activities.

The current literature lacks focus on younger students, especially in Pakistan, and what we can do to encourage them in the field of freelancing and entrepreneurship. Japan has introduced entrepreneurship as a subject for Grade 6 with amazing results. (zhe sheng, 2016) The question still remains that how effective this would be in a country like Pakistan and whether it is actually useful in secondary schooling system.

Research Design

For this study, we selected 20 students to interview and share their perspective. We selected 4 students from each class starting from class 6 up to class 10. The criteria for choosing a particular student for the study was that half of them were part of the school Club of Entrepreneurship and Freelancing other half did not have prior opportunity of learning entrepreneurship and

freelancing. 8 of the 20 participants were girls, while 12 were boys. Almost 4 interviews were conducted per day. The interviews were fairly structured with each participant (depending on whether they had prior exposure to freelancing and entrepreneurship) asked similar questions. Finally, the interviews were transcribed and most useful data was extracted.

Key Findings and Discussion

Of the group that had prior exposure to freelancing and entrepreneurship through a school club, most of the students agreed that being introduced to freelancing and entrepreneurship had a very positive effect on their life, mainly through a positive outlook for the future, higher hopes about earning and becoming independent and supporting their families, higher willpower to create new business ideas, and greater interest in developing skills. Some students pointed out the lack of support that they have from society to learn or participate in these activities. Most of these students agreed that they would definitely recommend their peers to get involved in freelancing and entrepreneurship.

The group that did not have prior opportunity

to learn about freelancing and entrepreneurship were mostly interested in the idea of freelancing and said they would participate in school if these opportunities were offered.

The most insightful experience was with students who are considered weak in their studies. For both groups they showed high interest and skills in freelancing and entrepreneurship meaning that these students would have higher possibilities of earning in the future if they were encouraged into entrepreneurial activities where they can build their confidence. Even though all the interviewed students were from diverse social backgrounds, the results were unanimous that they want to learn more about freelancing and entrepreneurship and have more opportunities.

Policy Recommendations

- The Government of Pakistan should add Freelancing and Entrepreneurship in formal curriculum for secondary classes as this will improve their earning potential tremendously.
- The young freelancers and entrepreneurs in Pakistan should be provided with incentives like tax benefits.
- The Government should provide incentives to experienced entrepreneurs to mentor young ones.
- The Commerce subject which schools are removing should be brought back with more modern techniques.

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