

Communities Taking Charge:

Bringing Quality back into Public Primary Schools



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Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child

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Acronyms

AEO	Area Education Officer
BT	Bachelors of Teaching
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CT	Certificate of Teaching
DCO	District Coordination Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
DTE	District Teacher's Educator
DFID	Department for International Development
EDO	Executive District Officer
EFA	Education for All
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IDIs	Individual Depth Interviews
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MeT	Measures of Effective Teaching
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey
SMC	School Management Committee
SPARC	Society for Protection of Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive Summary

Background

IIm Ideas is a DFID initiative that is working towards developing and strengthening the education sector in Pakistan. SPARC is a rights' based national NGO working on Child Rights, which is currently working with IIm Ideas in developing and implementing an advocacy strategy to improve the quality of services in Government Primary schools in Multan and Bahawalpur Districts. This research is part of enabling SPARC to develop an effective advocacy campaign in light of the study findings, which cover the entire spectrum of Primary Education in districts of Multan and Bahawalpur by identifying reasons for growing trend of private schools in comparison to public schools.

The deterioration in the quality of public school education has adversely affected Pakistan's progress towards achieving the education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has also affected a large chunk of the school going population as in spite of considerable growth in the private sector, majority of the school going population (especially from low income groups) attend state schools. This research is part of SPARC's larger community mobilization and advocacy efforts to improve the state of public sector education in Multan and Bahawalpur, two major districts of the underdeveloped Southern Punjab region. The research will inform SPARC's mobilization and advocacy efforts by serving as an evidence base on the factors that are causing an 'exodus' of students from public to private educational institutions.

In order to understand the research problem completely, all major stakeholders were engaged during data collection, i.e., parents, children, school staff, government functionaries and elected representatives, both as sources of information and active participants. The project methodology is synergistic with first step towards formulating and implementing an advocacy strategy to strengthen government primary education sector, focusing on the needs of all stakeholders. A qualitative research approach was used considering the research focus and purpose, which required an understanding and assessment of concerned stakeholders' attitudes, perceptions and practices regarding primary school education both from demand and supply aspects. Data collection was conducted through key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, interactive group sessions with students and case studies in urban and peri-urban localities of Multan and Bahawalpur districts. Each tool was designed and conducted to ascertain explicit information pertaining to specific stakeholders.

The study covers a total of 64 schools (32 schools from each district: 16 public and 16 private schools). The private school sample was stratified to include equal numbers of low and medium fee schools with a monthly fee ranging from PKR 150 to 800. The selection of schools was done through a list of public and private schools provided by the District Education Department. Only urban and semi-urban Union Councils were selected considering that private schools mushrooming is significantly higher in urban and semi-urban localities. Selection of specific schools was done through purposive sampling, with data collected from only those private and

public schools that are in the same catchment area and in case of private schools have a fee structure between PKR 150 to 800 per month.

Key informant interviews were conducted in all 64 schools and ten institutional stakeholders' interviews were carried out in each district. Furthermore, in each district, a total of 32 Focus Groups Discussions were organized with parents: 8 mothers FGDs and 8 fathers FGDs belonging to low to lower middle income households with children currently enrolled in private schools, with similar break-down with mothers and fathers of children enrolled in primary level public schools. Interactive sessions with primary class children were conducted with groups of eight to ten children in five selected private schools and five selected public schools.

The study findings confirm the growing trend of private schooling of primary age children amongst parents living in low and middle income urban and peri-urban localities of Multan and Bahawalpur districts. Interaction with parents revealed that their choice of school was determined by a number of factors which included; distance of the school from a child's home (especially in case of girls); quality of teaching determined by regular teacher attendance, satisfactory classroom discipline, responsive school management, adequate school security, and increased interaction with teachers to learn about their child's progress in school. These features were lacking in most of the public schools included in the research and were causing more and more parents to enroll their children in private schools.

The shortcomings in public sector schools can be classified into two major categories. The first relates to the poor state of infrastructure and supporting facilities in the government sector schools. The public school students complained about the appalling state of hygiene in their classrooms and toilets. In many cases, the school furniture was inadequate and/or damaged; the classroom windows were broken and students were deprived of a secure and comfortable learning environment. The second category relates to the quality of teaching in public and private schools. In this regard, the former were understaffed and teachers were more lax in performing their duties; individual attention for weak students was non-existent and corporal punishment was administered at an alarming frequency to discipline children or to improve their learning outcomes. Students also complained about poor classroom discipline in public schools which affected their ability to learn. These factors were forcing more and more parents to consider private school education for their children. Thus parents were willing to overlook positive aspects of public schools which included; a formal administrative and reporting structure, absence of school fee, playgrounds, attractive school buildings, recognized degree and qualified teachers.

The public school sector was marred by a lack of or inefficient disbursement of development funds for individual schools which was resulting in a constant depletion of school facilities. In addition, community based monitoring mechanisms like School Management Committees (SMCs) which could check the performance of public sector schools were inactive in both districts. The public school administration also complained about constant shifts in government policies (especially after change in government) which had negatively affected the performance of the sector. In this regard, the district administration expressed its helplessness in bringing about any major

changes at the local level as all policies were being formulated at the provincial level and their impacts were delayed by a lengthy bureaucratic process.

On the whole, the research is indicative of an exponential growth of private schools in low to lower middle income urban and peri urban localities of the selected districts. This is because of a supply and demand mechanism which the public sector schools are unable to match. Improvement of primary school education is an important area of concern for successive governments; however, the policies made at higher levels need effective implementation for them to have any impacts at the grassroots level.

The report provides a number of recommendations at the policy, school management and community levels to improve the state of public sector education in the target districts.

Policy level

There is a dearth of funds for individual public sector schools in both districts. Therefore, it is important for EDO education office and provincial education department to review, streamline and institute a process of efficient disbursement of school funds at the district level according to the needs of the schools. It is quite evident that majority of the public sector schools have similar drawbacks mostly lack of human resources and poor infrastructure and lack of maintenance funds;

There is a need to reiterate the 'Education for All' slogan as enshrined in Article 25-A of the Constitution not just on paper but also in spirit to address the root causes of children not being enrolled in schools. Government needs to use a realistic and practical approach to address the issue of child labor and lack of empathy of particular segment of parents towards the importance of education. Focus should be on the very poor and marginalized social economic groups;

Although there is a growing consensus regarding female education, additional emphasis needs to be paid in the districts on the importance of educating girls. Community mobilization campaigns should be initiated in this regard;

Government should involve NGOs/CBOs as third party monitors to oversee the operations of public sector schools, especially with regards to teacher attendance in class: spot checking exercises should be initiated. For this purpose, donors and other funding sources should be consulted for potential partnerships;

Education policies need to be grounded and in touch with the realities at the grassroots level. Policy formulation should be a consultative process with inputs from district level stakeholders (teachers and school management committees should be given adequate representation in the process).

Schools Managements and Teachers

Public sector schools should be encouraged to raise their own funds by organizing community level events and fund raising drives. The school management from such schools should actively engage with local influentials in this regard. The schools should also tap the corporate sector for activity or need based funding like provision of clean drinking water, improvement of playgrounds etc.

It is also suggested that public schools managements should form cluster level groups, not only as partners but also as pressure groups to influence the district government department as well as any other related stakeholder;

Public sector schools should organize extra-curricular activities (sports and debating competitions) to interact with parents on a more frequent basis. In this regard, bigger events can be organized by cluster level schools.

Public schools management should encourage the role of School Management Committees in their areas and involve them in mobilizing local communities in various school improvement activities on a self-help basis not only to combat lack of funds issues but also to create ownership amongst the parents regarding the school;

Community/Parents

Being the users and thus the most important stakeholders in this regard, there is a continuous need to sensitize the local communities regarding the importance of educating their children with emphasis on equal importance to girls' education and harms of child labor. It needs to be kept in mind that child labor is an issue closely linked to poverty therefore communities and parents have to be provided with options and informed about the values and returns of education;

Public schools should work out a community mobilization approach in their respective localities not only through the School Management Committees (SMCs) but also in others ways like maybe set up weekly or fortnightly booths and organize orientation sessions to encourage parents to enroll their children in public schools;

Communities Taking Charge: Bringing quality back into public primary schools

1 Project Background

Pakistan is severely off track in its progress towards education related Millennium Development Goals relating to education for all. The literacy rate for the population (10 years and above) in Pakistan remained around 58% in 2011-2012¹ which is noticeably lower than the adult literacy rates of other countries in the South Asian region including India (adult literacy rate: 83%), Sri Lanka (90%) and Nepal (70%)². The country's progress towards realizing the Education for All goals is equally disappointing: for instance, according to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012, approximately one fourth of the 19 million children in Pakistan (aged five to nine years) are currently out of school. This is in contrast to the trends of primary school enrollment in the rest of the world where the number of children enrolling in or attending primary schools has increased from 84% in 1999 to 91% in 2010. In this regard, the greatest increase in enrollment was observed in parts of the developing world, including the Arab States, South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa³.

The above mentioned trends are disappointing, especially in context of Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan which obligates the state to provide free and compulsory education to all individuals (up till the age of 16 years). This can be attributed to a number of factors including poverty, cultural conservatism (especially in opposition to educating girl children), and lack of accessibility: however, one of the major factors is the decline in the number and quality of public sector schools which can be entrusted with providing free and quality education to a large number of children belonging to low income groups.

According to available data, the main issues contributing to low quality education in public schools are inadequate infrastructure, high rates of teacher absenteeism, high student teacher ratios (the national student teacher ratio is 47: 1- the international standard is 25:1), stagnant school curriculum and poor teaching quality because of political influence in the teacher recruitment process⁴.

The deteriorating standards of public sector education in Pakistan have made room for private sector to fill the gaps in the service delivery of the former. The private sector has grown to cater to the needs of different classes and includes schools which provide educational services to high income groups (The Beaconhouse School System, the City School), middle income groups

¹ Highlights of the Pakistan Economic Survey 2012-2013
(source:http://finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_13/HGHLIGHTS%202013.pdf)

² Andrabi, T, Das, J and Khwaja, A.I, (2008) 'A Dime a Day: The Possibilities and Limits of Private Schooling in Pakistan' in *Comparative Education Review*, vol.52, no..3.

³ SPARC (2012) 'Education' in *The State of Pakistan's Children Report*, Islamabad: SPARC Publications

⁴ Ibid

(the Dar e Arqam and Allied School Systems)⁵ and low income schools (numerous registered and unregistered schools located in urban, peri-urban and rural areas).

There has been a considerable growth in the number of private sector education providers in the last two decades. This growth has been especially visible in the large urban centers throughout Pakistan whereby the number of private schools has grown in both absolute and relative terms (in relations to the public schools). For instance, an exponential growth in the number of private educational institutions was witnessed in Pakistan between 1999 and 2008: it was estimated that the number of private schools in the country increased by 69% in relation to public schools which increased by a mere 8%⁶. Similarly, it was estimated that the number of students enrolled in private schools in the year 2000 exceeded six million. This increased to around 12 million in 2008- which is equivalent to 34% of the total school enrollment in Pakistan⁷. As of 2005, there were more than 50,000 private schools throughout Pakistan which account for more than a third of the school enrollment at the primary level⁸.

This should be an alarming situation for the government, which is already struggling hard to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of achieving Universal Primary Education by strengthening public sector primary schools in all regions of Pakistan. Thus, considering the situation, the government needs to assess and take steps to improve the quality of education in public schools

1.1 Study Justification

In Multan and Bahawalpur Districts of Southern Punjab, between 1998 private schools have grown by 69% while the government education sector has increased by 8% despite considerable state interventions to bolster the public education sector in the province: these include low cost government schools, free education and end corporal punishment initiatives. This indicates the poor quality of service delivery of the public sector schools which is not only resulting in the growth of private sector education but also causing an “exodus” of students from government to private schools.

IIm Ideas is a DFID initiative working towards improving various education related issues through local partners to strengthen the education sector in Pakistan. SPARC is a rights’ based national NGO working on Child Rights, working with IIm Ideas in developing and implementing an advocacy strategy to improve the quality of services in Government Primary schools in Multan and Bahawalpur Districts.

The project aim is to address the gap in the quality of public and private sector schools through a synergistic approach encompassing research, community mobilization and advocacy in order to achieve the following objectives.

⁵Dar, H. (2012) ‘Private Schools- Quality of Education in Pakistan’ *The Express Tribune*, 24 June.

⁶I-SAPS (2010) ‘Private Sector Education in Pakistan: Mapping and Musing’, Islamabad: I-SAPS/ DFID.

⁷Ibid

⁸Andrabi, T, Das, J and Khwaja, A.I, (2010) ‘Education Policy in Pakistan: A Framework for Reform’, Pakistan: Policy Paper Brief for International Growth Center, Pakistan.

1. *To create evidence base on gaps in public sector schools and factors that attract students to private schools in districts Multan and Bahawalpur;*
2. *To increase community capacity to engage with duty bearers and media;*
3. *To improve responsiveness of policy makers/education officials on gaps in public sector education through more effective horizontal accountability.*

The project relies on a combination of research and grassroots/policy advocacy to achieve its objectives. For formulation of an effective advocacy strategy, an evidence based research was designed to identify the major factors behind the ‘exodus’ of students to private educational institutions and help in underscoring the inadequacies and gaps in the service delivery of public sector primary schools.

In order to understand the research problem completely, all major stakeholders were engaged, i.e., parents, children, school staff, government functionaries and elected representatives, both as sources of information and active participants. The project methodology is synergistic with the first step towards formulating and implementing an advocacy strategy to strengthen primary government primary education sector focusing on the needs of all stakeholders.

This report presents and discusses the findings of the SPARC research conducted in Bahawalpur and Multan districts, which will support in informing the subsequent mobilization and advocacy phases of the project.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Background

Private sector development has long been promoted as a viable strategy for addressing the economic stagnation of underdeveloped countries. Ideally, this process should be inclusive, allowing poor communities to participate in and benefit from the economic development that follows the growth of private sector. In this regard, the growth of private sector in areas pertaining to the provision of basic services like health and education is considered a welcome development because of multiple reasons. Firstly, private sector is synonymous with efficiency which is traceable to a completely different operational style from the public sector: the latter is marred by corruption, bureaucratic delays and operational inefficiencies. Secondly, because of better monetary compensation, the private sector attracts qualified professionals who can ensure a better quality of service delivery⁹.

Increasing the role of private sector in education service delivery can have several advantages. For instance, the private sector can improve the quality of service delivery and increase the available choices for communities who are not being adequately served by the public sector¹⁰. Similarly, private schools are also marked by low teacher absenteeism (because of increased accountability of teachers to parents), smaller class sizes, and more individualized attention¹¹. Furthermore, the private sector is multilayered and has the potential to cater to the educational needs of the rich and poor alike. This is evident from the growth of low-cost private sector schools throughout the developing world: these schools are playing an important role in addressing the shortcomings and inefficiencies of public sector schools, prompting low income families to send their children to private schools¹².

The demand for non-government schools is on the rise across the globe. According to UNESCO, approximately 16% of the world's school going population was enrolled in private schools in the year 2000. By 2009, this number had increased to around 20%. The major reasons behind this growth in private schools were: an insufficient supply of public school spaces; the low quality educational service delivery offered by public schools in general and; the presence of a public school system that fails to meet the demands and diverse needs of various families¹³.

Critics of private sector development argue that private enterprise is driven by the motivation to increase profit and the encroachment of private enterprise in areas which fall within the basic

⁹Osemeke, M. (2011) 'Problems and Prospects of Private Sector Organizations in Nigeria' in *International Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 6, No. 4

¹⁰Patrinos, H,A, Osorio, F,P, and Guaqueta, J. (2009) *The Role and Impacts of Public-Private Partnerships in Education*, Washington D.C: The World Bank.

¹¹Tooley, J. (2009) *The Beautiful Tree: A Personal Journey into How the World's Poorest People are educating Themselves*. Washington DC: Cato Institute.

¹²Heyneman, S, P and Stern, J. (2013) 'Low cost private schools for the poor: What public policy is appropriate?' in *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. XX, No. XX (Article in Press).

¹³UNESCO (2009) *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*. EFA Global Monitoring Report (Full) UNESCO: Paris

rights of all individuals can have disastrous consequences for the poorest of the poor who cannot realize these rights without government support and welfare. In this regard, the for-profit schools have no essential interest in delivering educational services to the poorest of the poor while large scale non-profit interventions in the education sector cannot sustain themselves without state subsidies and support. Hence, the growth of low cost private sector schools may allow the government to absolve itself of the responsibility to ensure the provision of basic services like quality education to poor and vulnerable communities¹⁴.

The claims of efficiency, low cost and high quality associated with private sector education can only be realized under certain conditions. These require minimum standards for the functioning of private schools, transparent accountability, adequate regulation and an effective legal framework¹⁵. Furthermore, basic level education cannot be provided to a large population base without the active involvement of state authorities. This argument supports the fact that there is no state in the world that has achieved universal literacy by relying solely on the private sector: this is especially true in the case of developing countries.

In addition, increased reliance on the private sector may result in an overall deterioration in the quality of public sector education service delivery. Parents may be inclined to send their children to private schools to overcome the shortcomings of public sector education system. This may prove to be a short term fix for the students and their families; however, the overall impacts of this 'exodus' can be deleterious, especially for the public education system at large. For instance, the transfer of students from public to private schools results in the 'skimming' of bright and motivated students from the former which has an overall impact of reducing teacher and student motivation¹⁶.

Finally, the most important factor that proponents of the growth of low cost private sector education often ignore is the inability of the poorest families to pay private school fees.

A 2011 survey revealed that almost 70% of the male students and 90% of the female students in public sector schools in Karachi stated that poor quality of school administration was the major factor behind the low quality of education in public schools. Similarly, 55% of the male students and 45% of female students were of the view that absence of co-curricular activities in public schools was one of the defining features of low quality education service delivery. Other reasons highlighted in the survey included; outdated curriculum (65% males; 85% females), ineffective school inspections (65% males; 90% females), absence of health facilities in schools (40% males; 50% females), poor teaching quality (95% males; 95% females) and absence of scholarships at the secondary level (45% males; 35% females)¹⁷.

¹⁴Lewin, K. (2007) 'The limits to the growth of non-government private schooling in sub-Saharan Africa' in Srivastava, P., Walford, G., (Eds.), *Private Schooling in Less Economically Developed Countries: Asian and African Perspectives*, Symposium Books: Oxford

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See Supra Note 4

¹⁷Faizi, W, N. (2011) 'The main reasons of declining education standards at secondary level in Karachi, Pakistan' in *Educational Research and Reviews*, Vol.6, No.2.

2.2 Low Cost Private Schools and the Need for Improving the State of Public Education Sector

Before proceeding with this discussion, it is pertinent to mention that unlike the government or public schools, private educational institutions cannot be subsumed under a single category. For instance, private school may belong to one of the following categories;

- A school being operated by a church or mosque.
- A school being run by a community or individual entrepreneur or proprietor.
- An educational institution being run by an NGO.
- A school registered with state authorities or relevant ministries.
- A school being operated under a temporary license.
- And, a school operating without registration or license¹⁸.

This makes classification of private schools problematic and also complicates the monitoring of the quality of education in the private sector. This is especially compounded by the presence of a large number of unregistered private schools which evade the state established regulatory mechanisms for ensuring quality of education. Furthermore, a major criticism on low fee private schools relates to the quality of service delivery offered by these institutions: a large majority of such schools offer sub-par educational services which are hardly an improvement over public school education¹⁹.

A large section of the population relies on public schools for educating girl children, especially at the primary level. For instance, a research study revealed that public schools were preferred over private educational institutions for educating girl children in most rural areas of Pakistan. This was especially true among low income households where girls competed with their male siblings over limited resources; hence, private schooling, which is supposed to offer better educational services, is reserved for male students only²⁰. This reveals that lack of government attention to the plight of state schools has highly adverse impacts on female education as girl children are mostly dependant on public schools for their education. This is reflected in the lower rates of progression to secondary schools among girls: only 30% of the girls enrolled in primary schools in Pakistan get promoted to secondary schools as opposed to 37% boys²¹.

Furthermore, studies undertaken in developing countries have revealed that free primary education offered in public schools can boost enrollment rates but cannot guarantee completion of primary school education. This is because the government is responsible for maintaining the quality of education in public educational institutions and if state authorities fail to maintain high quality education standards in public schools, the enrolled students are more likely to drop out²². Hence, free primary education initiatives should be buttressed with high quality educational

¹⁸ See Supra Note 4

¹⁹ Alderman, H, Orazem, P, Paterno, E, (2001) 'School Quality, School Cost, and the Public Private School Choices of Low Income Households in Pakistan' in *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol.36

²⁰ Sathar, Z, Asif, W, and Sadiq, M. (2013) 'Struggling against the Odds of Poverty, Access, and Gender: Secondary Schooling for Girls in Pakistan' in *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, Vol 18

²¹ Ibid

²² Kimenyi, M. 'The Bad Economics of Free Primary Education' *The Nation*, September 7.

standards to retain a large number of students and to ensure that the enrolled students complete their course of study.

Private schools also attract students because of better accessibility. In this regard, private schools usually operate at the neighborhood or *mohalla* level and save low income groups from investing in transport costs for their children. This is especially relevant in the case of girls as parents are apprehensive of sending female students to distant localities for schooling. The situation is compounded by the poor standards of education offered at public schools which forces parents to look for private schools for their children.

The Millennium Development Goals 2015 obligate the signatory states to ensure universal primary education by 2015. Pakistan is considerably behind other South Asian states in ensuring universal primary education for its population. The public school system of the country can play an instrumental role in providing free and compulsory education to millions of children in Pakistan; however, there is an urgent need to improve the state of these public schools to ensure that children, especially from low income groups are not deprived of their fundamental right to quality education.

2.3 Improving the State of Public Sector Schooling in Multan and Bahawalpur

Like the rest of the country, Multan and Bahawalpur have witnessed an exponential growth in the number of private schools. This is apparent in the latest statistics provided by the district education departments of Multan and Bahawalpur which show that private educational institutions either outnumber or are nearly equal to the number of government schools in both districts. For instance, in Multan there are 1,285 functioning private schools as opposed to 1,440 public schools in the district.

This growth in the number of private schools in both districts can have important ramifications for the education of low income groups. In this regard, the increasing number of private schools in both districts can negatively affect the capacity of poor families to access educational facilities. This is especially relevant, considering that both Bahawalpur and Multan are among the most underdeveloped districts of Punjab: for instance, the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey for 2010-2011 ranks Multan and Bahawalpur at 25 and 32 among the 36 districts of Punjab. The ranking is based in terms of the quality of education, health, sanitation and water supply in the district.

Any intervention aimed at improving public school education will mostly benefit children from low income groups who cannot afford to pay the fees of even low cost private schools. In addition, the improvement in educational service delivery of public sector schools will be a positive step towards ensuring universal literacy in Pakistan by 2015.

3 Research Overview

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the extent of and the reasons behind the growth of private sector education in target districts resulting in an exodus of students from public schools to private educational institutions. To achieve the research goal, secondary data was reviewed to understand and assess the condition of primary education in general and situation of government primary education vs private sector primary education in particular; while primary data was collected from selected urban and rural localities of districts Multan and Bahawalpur from a cross section of parents, students, school managements and institutional stakeholders.

The research had the following objectives:

- To identify the various 'push' and 'pull' factors which coerce parents to enroll their children in private schools rather than public schools;
- To assess the parents perceptions about and assessment of the quality of education and facilities both in private and public primary schools to compare and identify gaps between the two sectors;
- To assess students perceptions and feedback regarding the quality of education and facilities in private and public primary schools in order to compare and identify gaps between the two sectors;
- To assess the education facilities in public and private primary schools in general and identify the challenges in the public sectors schools in particular;
- To understand the education sector and services available at the district level and assess the role of the various concerned institutional stakeholders in that regard.

3.1 Research Approach and Methodology

A qualitative research approach was used considering the research focus and purpose, which required an understanding and assessment of concerned stakeholders' attitudes, perceptions and practices regarding primary school education both from demand and supply aspects.

Data collection was conducted through Key Informant Interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, interactive group sessions with students and case studies in urban and peri-urban localities of Multan and Bahawalpur districts.

Each tool was designed and conducted to ascertain explicit information pertaining to specific stakeholders:

Key Informant Interviews:

KIIs were conducted with school principals or head teachers in each selected school. The school was the focal data collection hub in the whole research process and entry point for the research team, therefore, it was important to understand each selected school's background and functioning. The school management KIIs also supported in identification of parents for the focus groups and students for the interactive sessions;

In-depth interviews:

IDIs were conducted with institutional stakeholders: District Education Department Officials, school principals, and concerned private and civil society activists working in the education sector in the two districts;

Focus Group Discussions:

FGDs were carried out with mothers and fathers of students in both public and private schools' with children studying in one to five standards. Separate FGDs were conducted with mothers and fathers keeping in view gender sensitivities as well as (if any) varied roles and responsibilities in context of children's education;

Students Interactive Sessions:

Separate participatory and interactive group sessions were organized with students in public and private primary schools to assess children's perceptions and feedback about the facilities and conditions of their schools;

Case Studies:

Thematic case studies were conducted highlighting individual cases related to various push and pull factors which compel parents to switch schools or choose a particular school in either public or private sector. (Case Studies are attached in Annex I).

All data collection tools were conducted with the help of guidelines and checklist to facilitate the researchers. (Tools attached in Annex II to V)

3.2 Sampling and Sample Size

Considering that this was a qualitative research, the sample size was determined in a manner whereby equal numbers of private and public primary education institutions were randomly selected in each of the two districts. The selection of schools was carried out in each tehsil of the respective district again in order to have a district wise geographical representation.

The study covered a total of 64 schools (32 schools from each district: 16 public and 16 private schools). The private school sample was stratified to include equal numbers of low and medium fee schools ranging from PKR 150 to 800 monthly fees. The selection of schools was done through a list of public and private schools provided by the District Education Department. Only urban and semi-urban Union Councils were selected considering that private schools mushrooming is significantly higher in urban and semi-urban localities.

Selection of specific schools was done through purposive sampling, with data collected from only those private and public schools that are in the same catchment area and in case of private schools have a fee structure between PKR 150 to 800 per month.

Key informant interviews were conducted in all 64 schools and ten institutional stakeholders' interviews were carried out with five in each district.

In each district, a total of 32 Focus Groups Discussions were organized with parents: 8 mothers FGDs and 8 fathers FGDs belonging to low to lower middle income households with children

currently enrolled in private schools, with similar break-down with mothers and fathers of children enrolled in primary level public schools.

Interactive sessions with primary class children were conducted with groups of eight to ten children in five selected private schools and five selected public schools. The school selection for the children's sessions was done on a convenience basis according to availability of students and willingness of the school management. The selection of children for the sessions was done by the researchers to avoid any bias by the school management or teachers.

The table 1 below provides information on the sample size of the study.

District	KIIs school management	FGDs parents	Students Sessions	IDIs stakeholders
Multan	32 school principals or head teachers	8 mothers private schools; 8 fathers private schools; 8 mothers public schools; 8 fathers public schools	5 sessions with private school students; 5 sessions with public school children;	3 District Education Department officials; 1 civil society activist; 1 others
Bahawalpur	32 school principals or head teachers	8 mothers private schools; 8 fathers private schools; 8 mothers public schools; 8 fathers public schools	5 sessions with private school students; 5 sessions with public school children	4 District education officials; 1 civil society activist; 1 others
Total	64 KIIs	32 mothers; 32 fathers	10 private schools students; 10 public schools students;	2 EDOs education; 2 DEOs; 3 District education department officials; 2 civil society reps; 1 others

3.3 Field Researchers and Training

A team of eight researchers (4 females and 4 males) conducted the field research. Three days field training was organized in Multan on the research objectives, tools and sample size. A research approach and tools pretest was done on the second day of the training in an urban locality of Multan followed by the 3rd day in which findings of the pilot were shared in light of which the research approach and tools were reviewed and finalized.

3.4 Data Analysis

All FGDs, IDIs, KIIs and interactive sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim in Urdu.

For analysis purposes, the transcripts were manually collated according to districts and respondents categories corresponding with the research variables to underline the main trends and patterns emerging from the data. Data was quantified wherever possible in terms of responses of participants including background characteristics of the FGD participants.

4 Community Assessment of Primary Education: Findings and Discussion

This part of the report presents and discusses the research findings according to the following sections:

- Background Characteristics of the FGDS participants and other respondents;
- Overview of Education Services: The Research Context;
- Community Access to Education;
- Community Preferences of Private Vs Public Schooling;
- Quality of Education;
- Community Attitudes towards Education;
- Returns to Education;

The data clearly indicates universal themes emerging from the research with close similarities in the attitudes, perceptions and practices of all stakeholders in both Multan and Bahawalpur; therefore, information in the subsequent sections has been presented according to themes while any district variations have been discussed separately.

4.1 Background Characteristics of Research Respondents

As mentioned in earlier section on methodology, information was gathered from parents of children studying in private and public primary schools, principals of selected private and public primary schools, children from public and private sector schools and institutional stakeholders from government and private sectors.

This section provides information about the background characteristics of these respondents/participants. The institutional stakeholders are not included as their background characteristics were thought irrelevant in the context of research findings.

4.1.1 School Principals

The background data of the interviewed school principals show a higher proportion of males in comparison to females with the exception of public sector schools of Bahawalpur. In both districts, it is evident that principals of public sector schools were more qualified with a high number having education related trainings like CTs, BTs and MeTs.

It is also apparent that public sector school principals had more experience overall in the education sector but had spent less years as principals in the present schools. The most probable reason assumed for this can be that being government employees, the respondents had undergone various transfers from one school to another. Data also reflects that in the public sector schools, most respondents had to go through the government promotion processes and were not recruited directly in their present positions, unlike many respondents in the private sectors schools.

Table 2 below shows details.

Table 2: Background Characteristics of Interviewed School Principals in Private and Public Schools in Multan and Bahawalpur Districts

Characteristics	Private Schools	Public Schools	Private Schools	Public Schools
Districts	Multan District	Multan District	Bahawalpur	Bahawalpur
Gender	Females – 4 Males – 12	Females – 4 Males – 12	Females – 4 Males – 12	Females – 9 Males – 7
Education level	Matric – 1 Intermediate – 1 Bachelors – 6 Masters – 5 Education trainings – 4	Matric – 3 Intermediate – 1 Bachelors – 7 Masters – 6 Education trainings – 13	Matric – 1 Intermediate – Bachelors – 9 Masters – 5 Education trainings - 6	Matric – 2 Intermediate – 3 Bachelors – 2 Masters – 9 Education trainings – 11
Number of years in present school	Less than 5 yrs – 6 5-10 yrs – 5 10 plus yrs - 6	Less than 5 yrs – 7 5-10 yrs – 1 10 plus yrs – 8	Less than 5 yrs – 10 5-10 yrs – 3 10 plus years – 3	Less than 5 yrs – 6 5-10 yrs – 5 10 plus years – 4
Numbers of years' experience in education sector	Less than 5 yrs – 0 5-10 yrs – 5 10 plus years – 10	Less than 5 yrs – 1 5-10 yrs – 1 10 plus years – 14	Less than 5 yrs – 2 5-10 yrs – 7 10 plus years – 6	Less than 5 yrs – 2 5-10 yrs – 3 10 plus years – 11
Number of years in present position	Less than 5 yrs – 6 5-10 yrs – 5 10 plus years – 5	Less than 5 yrs – 11 5-10 yrs – 2 10 plus years – 3	Less than 5 yrs – 10 5-10 yrs – 3 10 plus years - 3	Less than 5 yrs – 9 5-10 yrs – 3 10 plus years - 4

4.1.2 Focus Group Discussions Participants

This research was conducted in low and lower middle income urban and peri-urban localities of Bahawalpur and Multan. As reflected in the participants profiles and also expressed in the parents' groups, most people lived in large families supported by mostly one earning member.

It is evident from the background characteristic data of FGD participants that both parents of children in private schools had higher education levels with lower number of illiterate fathers and mothers and higher number of higher secondary education parents.

The income profiles of public and private parents' households were quite similar with slightly more fathers engaged in skilled labor and private businesses amongst the private schools fathers. Public school children's parents had larger family sizes although the difference is not that large (but is noticeable).

(Detailed Tables attached in Annex VI)

4.2 Overview of Education Services: The Context

The data from all stakeholders strongly indicates a growing trend towards private education especially at the primary school level due to multiple reasons, which will be discussed in more details in the later sections. Some of the overarching reasons are; easier physical access to private schools, poor state of government schools and indications of social stigma associated with government school education.

4.2.1 Availability of schools

In Bahawalpur and Multan districts, in every locality where the research was carried out, parents groups reported that there were at least four to five schools within the vicinity of the area therefore availability of schools was not an issue for anyone.

“There are so many schools now that availability and access to schools cannot be used as an excuse by any parent to not send their children to school. Yes, I agree that there can be other reasons for not sending a child to school but it cannot be access.” (Fathers FGD Public Schools Children, District Multan)

There were a considerably higher number of private schools which according to all respondents and participants were now present in every locality and in substantive number of cases in every street as compared to public sectors schools, which were located at central locales for greater outreach.

4.2.2 Access to schools

A higher preference of private schools mentioned in every FGD and a majority of KIIs was because of easy physical access. Parents in both districts said that physical access to schools was one of the main determinants during their selection of schools especially for primary school age children and young girls.

“When parents select a school for their children, amongst their main concerns is easy access to the school.” (School Principal, Government Primary Model School, Tehsil Multan, District Multan)

In all communities most of the children walked to schools, with some dropped and picked by their parents and a few who came via Rickshaws hired on a monthly basis. In all groups, several parents expressed their preference for schools that were at a walkable distance.

“Most of the fathers in this locality are daily wagers, we don’t have the time to drop and pick up the children, so it is best that there school is nearby and they can walk there themselves or the mother can take them.” (Fathers FGD Private Schools Children, District Multan)

In private schools parents groups, mothers and fathers said that government schools were not located at a convenient distance and it was difficult for children to walk the distance without any adult supervision.

Access to the school also influenced girls’ school enrollment. In 49 out of 64 focus groups, mothers and fathers mentioned that many parents did not send their daughters to schools which were not located close-by due to socio-cultural barriers to female mobility.

4.2.3 Value of education

Across board, all parents said that majority of the people were aware about the value of education and understood its importance in life. While there was a growing recognition of the importance of education, the parents’ FGDs (also supported by the school management

interviews findings) suggest that in most cases, education mostly remained limited to primary level with a relatively higher drop-out rate after primary standards.

There were a significant number of children out of school in every community, the prominent reasons for which were universally expressed by all groups:

Poverty was mentioned as the main reason whereby many parents were unable to send their children to schools or they dropped out due to economic pressures. In both districts, it was mentioned that it was common to have one child work to support the education of younger siblings;

Illiterate parents did not send their children to schools and preferred their sons to work while girls stayed home until they were married off; Child labor was also discussed in all groups as another significant reason for low school enrollment in low income localities as families needed supplementary income;

Families which moved from one locality to another usually found it difficult to relocate their children in another school and stopped sending them to schools;

A noticeable number of parents in both districts also expressed their dismay over co-education in schools and said that they did not approve of it either and many parents did not send their daughters to schools because of co-education. It needs to be mentioned here that most public and private primary schools have boys and girls studying together;

4.3 Affordability and Access to Education (fees, uniforms, and other education costs)

Education was considered an expensive proposition for the research target parents whether they had children studying in private or public schools. However, parents with children in private schools were under more economic stress due to higher fee rates and greater educational needs of the children. It needs to be kept in mind that parents with children in private schools cannot be classified as 'not poor' and lived within limited resources, therefore, had to struggle hard to pay for their children's education.

In both districts, parents reported that private school fee started from Rs. 150 and went up to Rs. 2,000 and more in their localities. In the sampled private schools, the fee rate was mostly between Rs. 200 to Rs. 400. All other expenses were also borne by the parents including books, uniforms, stationary and other expenses.

In comparison, in the government schools, there was no monthly fee for classes 1 to 3; for grades 4 and 5, it was only Rs. 20. In most instances, books were provided free of cost by the schools. Parents just had to buy uniforms, shoes and bags at the start of the year.

However, in both groups of public and private school parents; a considerate amount of their income was spent on children's educational needs. According to the parents they could manage

the fee easily in most instances, but it was the other related expenses which added pressure to their already limited resources.

“I have educated all my children in private schools and now the eldest is in college, younger one is in matric and youngest is in fourth class. But in this process, I have become a psychological patient. People here prefer private schools to public schools and are also happy with their decision as quality of education is of main concern, but most parents are depressed and under constant economic pressures.” (Fathers FGD, Private Schools Children, District Multan)

There are also indications from the data (although not conclusive) that people were not sending all their children of school going age to schools. In many focus groups, both mothers and fathers were vocal in expressing their helplessness in meeting the requirements of their children’s education and assessing from their feedback it can easily be interpreted that many were unable to send all their children to school.

Data reflects that parents of public school children had lesser financial constraints concerning children’s educational needs and school fee, but it does not mean that they were not pressed financially.

“In order to send our children to school, we do extra work to earn more money.” (Fathers FGD, Public School Children, District Bahawalpur)

“Fine, the fee is low in public schools and most of the time the school also gives free books, but these books are given just once a year and children keep losing stationary and damage their books, which have to be paid by the parents. I know many people whose children dropped out of school because they could not afford it any longer.” (Fathers FGD, Public School Children, District Multan)

Similarly, mothers in Bahawalpur district, with children in private schools said that to fulfill the educational needs of their children, many mothers worked from home doing tailoring, stitching and handicraft work, which served a supplementary income.

Another common coping mechanism was for parents to take loans for paying school fee or buying books, pushing people into debt.

“We take loans for paying the fee or buying stationary. But then this loan has to be paid back and by the time one is able to pay the previous loan, another one begins a few days later.” (Mothers FGD, Private School Children, District Bahawalpur)

In some peri-urban communities of the two districts, parents said that livestock was another safety net for lots of parents. In time of need, they sell a cattle head to meet the requirement.

4.4 Private Vs Public Schools: Parents Preferences and Rationale

Again there were no mentionable variations in the data from both districts and similar views were expressed by parents with children in public and private schools. In all groups, parents agreed that most parents in their respective communities preferred sending their children to private schools.

“Here more than 70 percent parents send their children to private schools. Private schools are more accessible and provide better education. Parents now have higher expectations from their children’s education.” (Mothers FGD, Private school Children, District Bahawalpur)

“Now more children go to private schools. In our community more than 60 percent children go to private schools because parents think they are better than public schools.” (Fathers FGD, Public School Parents, District Multan)

It was quite clear from parents’ responses from both public and private schools that their expectations from educational institutions were met more by private schools as compared to public schools. Parents gave the following responses in context of their expectations from their children’s schools:

- Good infrastructure – building, classrooms, playground, latrines;
- Library;
- Good and sufficient furniture;
- Drinking water;
- Electricity: Lights and fans;
- Qualified teachers; Have proper qualifications and experience in teaching
- Regular and attentive teachers; Give and check homework on a daily basis
- Responsive management; Follow-up and take action
- Communicative staff and management; accessible to parents and keep parents informed
- Quality syllabus – (Mentioned by fewer parents)
- Religious education – (mentioned by a significant number of parents in both categories)

Parents with children in private schools said that they preferred private schools although they felt financially stressed because public schools did not provide quality education and neither did public school impart any other life skills to the children like good manners and communication skills.

“Small children of private schools can speak in English. My seven year old daughter corrects me in English now when I give a reference of some fruit or vegetable in Urdu. Nowadays English is very important in order to become a successful person.” (Mothers FGD, Private School Children, District Bahawalpur)

In approximately 18 private schools parents FGDs out of 32, participants said that primary level education was the foundation for the child’s future education, which is the reason parents try to provide quality education to the children even if it is financially burdensome for them. Several

parents said that they might decide to switch their child to a public school after primary level as by then the child would have developed a good base to carry on his/her own.

Majority parents felt that quality and qualification of teachers was the most important determinant for good education. This was supported by several responses which included; private schools had more teachers and children were provided individual attention which was very important for young children; teaching methodology was more interactive and children enjoyed their learning; In most cases, teachers were from the same neighborhoods and children usually went to the same teachers for tuitions as well; there were less students in class; School management was responsive and followed-up on any complaints by the parents; parents were provided regular progress reports of their child on a monthly or fortnightly basis.

Data shows that for most parents, with children in private schools, first preference was a private school. Only five parents (3 in Bahawalpur and 2 in Multan) said that they had moved their children from public schools to private schools because they felt that the child was not learning anything there. There were many examples also narrated by the participants regarding poor quality teaching in government schools as a result children failed to learn even up to the required standard.

“My cousin’s son goes to a government school in class 5. I asked him to write a paragraph in Urdu and he could not. In comparison my son is much brighter and can speak English as well.” (Fathers FGD, Private Schools Children, District Bahawalpur)

In the public school parents FGD, there was only one father in Multan who said that he had shifted his son from a private school to a government school because he was not satisfied with the education in the previous school.

4.5 Quality of Education (teaching, learning, infrastructure, management)

In the section above, we discussed the reasons for parents’ preferences of private and public schools. In this section we will discuss parents’ assessment of their children’s present education institutions.

In the 32 FGDs with public school children’s parents, in 18 (19 in Multan parents and 6 in Bahawalpur district) parents expressed satisfaction with the quality of education in their children’s schools. They felt that the teachers were qualified and experienced, which is also reflected in the school principals’ background characteristics, infrastructure was good with plenty of space and the management and teachers were accessible and cooperative.

In the private schools children’s FGDs, all parents expressed satisfaction regarding their child’s schooling. It seems that one of the main barometer for effective education for parents was daily homework and its’ checking. Mothers were especially very vocal about Homework and its’ checking, which they felt was not a practice in government schools.

“Giving and daily checking of homework shows that the teachers are efficient and attentive which does not happen in government schools.” (Mothers FGD, Private Schools Children, District Bahawalpur)

In most of the public schools parents FGDs, participants agreed that one of the reasons for parents' preference of private schools was more individual attention given to the students by the teachers. (This was discussed in 28 public schools FGDs out of 32 in both districts).

A higher level of dissatisfaction was reflected amongst the public schools parents in Bahawalpur then Multan. In ten out of 16 FGDS parents said that the quality of education was not good in their children's schools as compared to seven FGDs in Multan. According to these parents, teachers did not give the required attention to the students therefore students had no interest in their studies.

Main criticism of private school parents of public schools was lack of teachers with one teacher teaching classes of more than 60 students, irregular, inattentive and impolite teachers. In three public school parents FGDs, participants mentioned that it was common in public schools for the teachers to leave the class with another slightly older student while the teacher either went to teach another class or went about his/her personal business.

Another common theme that emerged predominantly from private schools parents groups but was also mentioned by a few participants amongst the public schools parents FGDs in both districts was better and cleaner learning environment with more discipline in private schools, whereas in public schools no discipline was maintained and teachers and management remained quite indifferent to rowdiness on the campuses and abusive language used by the students (boys mostly).

Lack of discipline in government schools was mentioned by several private school parents and a few public schools parents as well ironically, there was a common perception amongst both mothers and fathers that for effective learning physical punishment by teachers should be allowed to a moderate extent and since the government policy of banning corporal punishment in public schools, the teaching standard and school discipline had suffered noticeably.

“Children need to be physically reprimanded if they don't study properly. In public schools now teachers have become totally relaxed after the ban on physical punishment as a result there is no discipline and students are not scared of poor performance.” (Fathers FGD, Private Schools Children, District Multan)

In 21 fathers FGDs in both public and private schools categories, it was mentioned that private schools charged a higher fee therefore felt more obliged and accountable for the performance of the child. Therefore, parents had higher stakes and were more vigilant in monitoring children's performance.

A counter argument by public school fathers in Multan regarding better results shown by private school children was that private schools did not maintain any standard and passed all children because they are afraid to lose students.

“Private schools are a business and parents and children are clients which is why they are treated well by the school management and teachers. School management is worried about losing their clients so they please everyone by passing every student.” (Fathers FGD, Public School Parents, District Multan)

This was indirectly supported by a discussion in a private schools mothers' focus group in Bahawalpur district in which mothers said that children in government schools failed and many parents then switched to private schools because all children pass in private schools.

Majority of private schools are located in residential areas therefore lack proper space especially playgrounds and other common areas. Classrooms are usually small thus enrollment is limited. In comparison, government schools in most cases have their own infrastructure with larger common spaces with most having playgrounds and libraries for the students.

Only one private school in Bahawalpur had enough space for a playground and a library. This is the same school which also provided transport for the students thus was basically a fairly large institution. These two areas were mentioned by all private school parents, which were lacking in their children's school.

In 22 public sector school FGDs (out of 32) in both districts, parents said that their children's schools had libraries and playgrounds. However, there were certain discerning voices also.

"The library has no books and the chairs and tables are broken." (Father, Bahawalpur)

"The playground gets flooded during rains and the school has to be closed sometimes during rainy season." (Mothers, Multan)

Although, most Government schools had latrines and clean drinking water facilities but in seven schools parents said that latrines were in poor state and in six there was no drinking water in schools. In comparison, all private schools had latrine and drinking water facilities for children.

A common perception amongst private schools parents in both areas was that government school certificate had higher recognition and value in the employment market while private school certificates were not recognized everywhere. This perhaps was the main reason for moving children from private to public schools after primary standards.

4.6 Attitudes towards Education

As also mentioned earlier, there was an overwhelming importance given to education of children amongst the selected participants and was also reinforced in the stakeholders interviews, in which respondents said that now parents realized the importance of sending their children to schools with the exception of the very poor households with affordability issues.

Mothers in both districts strongly believed in the value of education and were of the view that it created consciousness and awareness amongst the children and groomed them for life. Across board, parents said that with changing times, education was the need of the hour.

"There so much competition now that those without education don't stand a chance in the employment market." (Fathers FGD, Private Schools Children, Multan District)

"Without education, one is like a blind man. You cannot find your way in life without education." (Mothers FGD, Public Schools Children, Bahawalpur District)

Although, everyone except a few participants agreed that girls education was just as important as boys, but also conceded that in case of choosing between a son and daughter for schooling, parents would definitely opt for the son because there were higher returns to sons education. In several FGDs in Bahawalpur, women said that because of economic pressures, it was common for parents to drop out a girl from school in order to continue the education of their sons.

“I know of many families in which girls work in the fields with the parents so the family can earn extra income to educate the boys.” (Mothers FGD, Private Schools Children, Bahawalpur District)

While sons were perceived as the future life support of parents, girls were considered outsiders as they get married and leave for another home. It was evident that parents despite promoting education for girls limited their achievements in comparison to boys. This attitude was reflected more amongst the public schools parents groups while in private schools parents groups, more equal opportunities were encouraged for girls also.

“Girls education, I think, is more important than boys because educating a girl means educating the entire family. She is the future mother and an educated mother will definitely educate her children therefore contribute in the wellbeing of the society.” (Fathers FGD, Private Schools Children, Bahawalpur District)

Parents associated better futures and societal respect with education. Everyone agreed that education provided more employment opportunities. In all groups, parents said that they wanted better life for their children and did not want them to live in the same conditions as them.

4.7 Returns to Education

As expected most parents especially mothers had high aspirations regarding the future education plans of their children. Parents in Private schools FGDs, had higher aspirations as compared public school parents who seemed more realistic. In private schools groups, invariably, every second and third mother in both districts wanted their sons and daughters to become doctors and engineers, while the fathers wanted at least college level degrees.

In the public schools, parents were more subdued in context of future aspirations and many said that Matriculation level education would be sufficient and as long as the child was able to differentiate between right and wrong in life they would be satisfied.

All parents said that there was absolutely no harm caused by education and no matter what even with little schooling children learned something positive that would benefit them in their lives.

“Education enables a person to stand on their own feet and find a suitable job later. Even if one is unable to find a job and educated person can do some business. Similarly, educated girls can support their husbands by teaching tuitions at home or even doing a job nearby.” (Fathers FGD, Private Schools Children, Bahawalpur District)

5 Children's Perceptions and Assessment of their Schools

This section of the report presents data from an interactive exercise conducted with children from five private and five public primary school children in each district. The objective of this participatory tool was to get the children to share their opinions and feedback about their schools and discuss their likes and dislikes in context of their schools. This information will enable the advocacy team to integrate the needs of the children into the advocacy strategy.

Data for this section has been collected through an interactive exercise keeping in mind primary school age children. Eight to ten children from each selected school were selected randomly from grades 3 to 5 by the SPARC researchers with the consent of the student and the school management. In a group, on chart paper, children were asked to draw a picture of their school and make balloons (going up in the air) for everything which they liked and stones (pulling down) for everything they disliked about their schools. During the exercise, the school management and teachers were requested to leave the room to avoid any bias or influence on the students.

The information gathered during these sessions corresponds with many perceptions of the parents but in some areas also negates some of parents' assumptions regarding their children's schools. Majority of the students included in the discussion stated that all decisions relating to their education was made by the mutual consent of their parents. In some cases, close relatives like grandfathers and uncles were also instrumental in suggesting a school for a child. For instance, one of the students from a public school group in Multan stated that his parents could not decide upon a school for his primary education. Then his uncle intervened and recommended the government school (where he was studying during the time of research) because two of his sons were studying in the school and he was satisfied with the quality of teaching in the said school.

A number of public schools students in both districts reported that their parents wanted to send them to private schools but had to switch to government educational institutions because of various reasons which included; accessibility issues, inability to pay school fee, and migration to a new locality. Similar to parents and school principals' feedback, accessibility issues were a primary concern for girl students whereby parents preferred schools that were in the close vicinity of their homes. For instance, one of the participants from a girls' government school revealed that her parents had no choice but to send her to a government school because all of the private educational institutions were at a considerable distance from her house. She further explained that initially her parents had enrolled her in a private school but shifted her to a government school immediately afterwards out of concern for her safety.

5.1 Public Schools Children's Perceptions

5.1.1 Positive Aspects of Public Schools

Table 3 shows the various aspects of their schools which the students found positive and considered worthy of mentioning as a facility which they found uplifting and beneficial. It is obvious that students had a different view of schools as compared to the parents especially in terms of teachers and quality of studies. In all the groups in both districts, students mentioned

the teachers and quality of studies as a positive aspect. In all the groups, children mentioned colorful classrooms with chart papers on the walls with many mentioning play grounds, swings, school furniture and drinking water as other facilities which they liked about their schools.

The table also indicates better infrastructure facilities in Bahawalpur public schools as compared to Multan public schools with a higher number of groups reporting gardens, swings and furniture in the classrooms.

Table 3: Positive Aspects of Public Schools according to Students

Multan: Public Schools		Bahawalpur: Public Schools	
Positive Aspects of Public Schools (Balloons)			
Positive Aspect	No. of Groups	Positive Aspects	No. of Groups
Regular attendance	1	Good teachers	5
Flag in the assembly ground	2	Enjoy Studying	5
Colorful charts in classrooms	5	Flag	3
Good quality education/teaching standards	5	Colorful charts in classrooms	5
Regular assembly	2	Greenery (trees and flowers in school grounds)	5
Regular examinations	2	Clean toilets	1
Good school syllabus	1	Presence of Desks (school furniture)	5
Encouraging teachers	2	Water tap/supply	2
Availability of classroom	3	Kid's room	1
Chairs and desks (School Furniture)	3	Clock in classroom	2
Regular teacher	5	Playground with swings	5
Availability of drinking water	5	Fruit trees in the campus	2
Attractive school building	3	Staff room	1
Prayers in school	2	Administration office	2
Kid's room	2	Drawing Classes/	1
Toys for children	2	Books and stationery	1
Fans	3	Electricity Connection	1
Playground	4	Playing football, cricket and hockey in school ground	1
Clean classrooms	3		
Children in clean uniforms	1		
Clean toilets	2		
Canteen	2		
Friendly children	2		
Trees and flowers (greenery)	2		
Monitoring visits by	1		

government officials	
Adequate security	1
Electricity connection	1
Disciplined classroom environment	1
Computer Labs	2

Some of the features highlighted by the government school students point towards positive developments in public sector education; for instance, some groups identified the presence of kid's playing areas, availability of toys, attractive school buildings, computer labs and colorful class decorations (using charts and pictures) as positive aspects of their schools. Some of the students involved in the exercise were especially keen to visit their schools regularly because of the child friendly atmosphere in their classrooms. A number of children also identified the presence of playgrounds, greenery (flowers and trees in the school garden), and attractive school buildings as positive features of their schools. These facilities are less likely to be found in low fee private schools that are established in rented or privately owned houses and barely provide enough space to the students to engage in extra-curricular activities. This highlights the fact that through proper utilization of funds and effective administration, government schools can provide attractive and stimulating learning environments for children.

5.1.2 Negative Aspects of Public Schools

The negative aspects of public schools mentioned by the students basically focus on unhygienic and unclean conditions of school premises, toilets and damaged infrastructure like walls, windows and floors.

Most of the negative aspects identified by the public school students dealt with student behavior, excessive use of physical violence to discipline children, and poor condition of school infrastructure. For instance, almost all of the groups agreed that the students in their schools were not disciplined and regularly got into fights with each other. Bullying in government schools was also common and younger students were targeted on a regular basis by their seniors. Other forms of unruly behavior identified by the participants included; deliberate damage to school property, causing damage to stationery and charts, spitting, common use of expletives and disrespectful attitude towards teachers. Some groups also pointed out that the school uniforms of a large number of students in their schools were dirty (unlike the private schools) and the teachers did not pay any attention to this. Furthermore, most of the students did not have any awareness about health and hygiene practices and did not keep themselves clean which had an overall negative impact on classroom environment.

On the other hand, the students also identified heavy handedness on part of the school administration whereby corporal punishment was regularly employed to discipline children or to improve their academic performance. This was commonly identified by children in six out of ten groups included in the activity and shows that government initiatives like the 'Mar Nahin Pyar' (end corporal punishment) have failed to curb the traditionally entrenched attitudes that condone physical violence for disciplinary purposes. This was reported by students from both girls and boys primary schools; for instance, some respondents from a girls' school revealed that their

teacher not only hit them with a stick but also forced them to stand in painful postures for hours over minor mistakes.

“All of our teachers administer corporal punishment... We get beaten up if we are naughty. Sometimes our teacher gives us too much work... if we do not complete it then we are punished. Sometimes we are made to stand in the murgha²³ posture.” (A Public School Student from Multan)

The students also identified that they were regularly given homework by their teachers. The frequency of feedback given by the teachers varied as teachers in some schools did not check the homework on a regular basis. However, all of the groups agreed that the teachers employed corporal punishment if the students failed to complete their homework on time.

On the infrastructural side, the students complained about the lack of hygiene in their schools. The students were of the view that they had to study in rubbish heaps in their classrooms and around school buildings as the schools lacked supporting staff to perform cleaning duties on a regular basis. Moreover, the toilets in most of the government schools were in poor hygiene conditions and a large number of students complained about the odious smell from toilets which adversely affected the overall classroom environment. One of the groups from a girls’ public school revealed that during winters the school administration forced them to clean their classrooms and school toilets.

“In winters, the school administration makes us clean schools. We feel very cold... I do not like cleaning the school toilets” (A female student from a public school in Bahawalpur)

Other infrastructural issues that cropped up during the discussion part of the exercise pointed towards the lack of basic facilities in government schools. For instance, the students complained about the lack of clean/safe drinking water in schools which often resulted in diseases. Some of the participants also pointed out that they did not have access to cold water for consumption during summers. Some of the groups also pointed out that their school buildings had not undergone repair for a long period of time and that they did not like the classroom environment in their schools. These groups identified damaged blackboards, unpainted walls, broken furniture and insufficient fans in their classrooms as major issues in their schools.

“We don’t have chairs and desks in our school so we have to sit on a mat during class.” (A Public School Student from Multan)

Table 4: Negative Aspects of Public Schools According to Students

Multan: Public Schools		Bahawalpur: Public Schools	
Negative Aspects of Public Schools (Stones)			
Negative Aspect	No. of Groups	Negative Aspect	No. of Groups
Absence of leveled playground	2	Unclean classrooms	3

²³ A pain inducing posture for punishing students

Unclean uniforms	2	Unhygienic toilets	5
Damaged furniture	3	Poor condition of toilets	1
Inadequate furniture	3	Noise in classrooms	4
Unclean toilets	4	Littering	4
Unclean classrooms (accumulated rubbish)	5	Sitting on the floor	3
Unsafe drinking water	3	Damaged windows	1
Unavailability of cold drinking water in summers	1	Damaged ventilation windows	1
Broken windows	4	Damaged walls	1
Damaged boundary wall	1	Fighting among students	1
Corporal Punishment	4	Corporal punishment	1
Bullying and fights between students	5	Unpaved floor	3
Poor classroom discipline	3	Poor condition of classroom	1
Students damage school property	3	Termites	1
Students damage books and stationery	3	Spider webs	3
Writing on school walls	1		
Administration forcing children to clean classrooms and school toilets	1		
Children involved in stealing	1		
School access is difficult	1		
Load shedding/ Electricity breakdowns	1		
Lack of classrooms	1		
Electrical appliances (fans, bulb) don't work	1		
Unpainted/damaged walls	1		
Unhygienic students	2		
Absence of religious education	1		

5.2 Private Schools Children's Perceptions

The positive aspects discussed by children from private schools were an endorsement of the views presented by parents as well. Students in all groups in Bahawalpur district mentioned good teachers while in four out of five groups in Multan district students said that they liked the encouraging attitude of their teachers. It was also evident from the private schools children's responses that private institutions had added value for money by providing a more conducive learning environment with colorful classrooms, crispy clean uniforms, gardens, swings etc.

Table 5 indicates, especially amongst Multan District groups, that children enjoyed social interaction and learning basic etiquette and manners. Religious education was also given more importance in private schools as compared to public schools, which was again supported by information from parents' groups.

Table 5: Positive Aspects of Private Schools According to Students

Multan: Private Schools		Bahawalpur: Private Schools	
Positive Aspects of Private Schools (Balloons)			
Positive Aspect	No. of Groups	Positive Aspect	No. of Groups
Encouraging attitude of teachers	4	Good teachers	5
Wearing school uniform	2	Enjoy Studying	5
Respect for teachers	2	Flag	3
Taking care of school infrastructure	2	Colorful charts in classrooms	5
Disciplined class environment	2	Greenery (trees and flowers in school grounds)	5
Hardworking students	2	Clean toilets	1
Stress on religious education	2	Presence of Desks (school furniture)	5
Friendly interaction between students	3	Water tap/supply	2
Student and teacher punctuality	2	Kid's room	1
Availability of cold drinking water in summers	1	Clock in classroom	2
Teaching of basic etiquette	2	Playground with swings	5
Colorful charts in classrooms	2	Fruit trees in the campus	2
Good quality education	3	Staff room	1
Poems displayed on classroom walls	1	Administration office	2
Singing national anthem in assembly	1	Drawing Classes/	1
Presence of administration office	1	Books and stationery	1
Canteen	3	Electricity Connection	1
Course books	1	football, cricket and hockey in school ground	1
Availability of stationery	1		
Regular assembly	1		
Greenery	1		
Availability of blackboard	2		
Swings in the playground	1		
Playground	2		
Availability of classrooms	2		
School building	1		
Good student hygiene	1		
School parties	1		

Table 6 presents the negative aspects of private schools presented by the students during the group exercise. Like the participants from the government schools, private school students complained about the poor hygiene condition in the school, especially in school toilets. They stated that children were not properly disciplined and freely littered the classrooms with rubbish which was then not cleared by the school administration because of a lack of supporting staff. Bullying and fighting amongst children was also identified as a major negative aspect of private schools. In this regard, a number of groups highlighted that younger children were mostly targeted by adult students who often damaged the former's books and stationery.

The students gave mixed feedback on the extent of homework given by the teachers and the frequency of teacher feedback on the work done by the students. Some of the students complained that they had to do an excessive amount of homework which they had to complete out of fear of being punished by the teachers. Others stated that although they were asked to do homework regularly but the teachers were not consistent in their feedback.

The students also complained about the administration of corporal punishment in their schools. The different types of corporal punishments identified by students from private schools varied from hitting with a stick to making students stand in painful postures for hours. Some groups stated that teachers in their schools did not rely on physical forms of violence and often informed the parents of the student who was not performing well in the class. The students added that parental involvement was a more positive and effective means of disciplining a child than resorting to physical violence. The high prevalence of corporal punishment in private schools proves that the perceived notion that physical violence is only employed in government schools is false. In fact, corporal punishment is more likely to be prevalent in private schools where there is no policy or monitoring mechanism to control or curb physical violence.

"We have to do a lot of homework on a daily basis. If we do not do it then our teacher beats us with a stick." (A private school student from Multan)

A number of student groups also complained about insufficient infrastructure in private schools; however, most of the students from private schools complained about the lack of playgrounds in their schools or the absence of libraries and canteens. For instance, one of the students stated that they had to work very hard all day and it would be very refreshing to have a playground with swings in the school where the children can take a short break. Similarly, some groups also stated that they wanted a canteen which served safe and hygienic food to students during lunch break. In this context, they informed that students had to go out of the school and buy unhygienic food from local vendors which often resulted in illnesses. It is interesting to note that in contrast to private educational institutions, most of the groups from government sector schools identified playgrounds as positive features of their schools.

Table 6: Negative Aspects of private schools according to students

Multan: Private Schools		Bahawalpur: Private Schools	
Negative Aspects of Private Schools (Stones)			
Negative Aspect	No. of Groups		
Unclean schools/classrooms	4	Unhygienic toilets	4
Unhygienic toilets	4	Unclean classrooms	4
Broken windows	2	Lack of furniture	2
Damaged doors	1	Absence of playgrounds	2
Damaged school furniture	3	Lack of libraries	2
Fighting and bullying among students	5		
Unruly behavior (poor discipline in classrooms)	3		
Damaging school property	4		
Flooding of classrooms during monsoon	2		
Littering in classrooms	3		
Unpaved backyard	1		
Corporal punishment	4		
Damaging stationery	3		
Eating unsafe food	3		
Poor hygiene practices among students	3		
Wasting food and drinking water	2		
Not wearing school uniform	3		
Wasting time in school/lack of punctuality among students	1		
Absence of canteen	3		
Excessive homework	1		
Unpaved floors in classrooms	1		
Lack of classrooms	1		
Lack of greenery	1		
Poor teaching	2		
Absence of computer lab	1		
Absence of playground	2		
Not observing religious duties	2		

6 Stakeholders Interviews: School Principals

The school information data validates the findings from the parents' focus group discussions, indicating a more teachers in private schools as compared to public schools, better conditions of classrooms, comparatively cleaner than their government counterparts and more facilities in terms of fans, lights and drinking water.

However, it is also obvious from the data including interviews with the institutional stakeholders and public school principals that public schools were short of funds. Amongst the sampled schools in both districts, 26 government schools out of 32 visited had annual budgets of less than Rs. 100,000. On the other hand, amongst the private schools, only eight had less than Rs. 100,000 budgets with a significant numbers of nine with budgets of Rs. 100,000 to 200,000 while the remain were spending more than Rs. 200,000 a year.

(Detailed data about schools infrastructure and budgetary spending is attached in Annexes VII & VIII).

6.1 Governing Structure of Schools

All public sectors schools were governed by a formal and hierarchical governance structure, headed by the Executive District Officer (EDO) Education, supported by District and Area Education Officers (DEO), who coordinated and monitored public schools affairs and reported to the EDO. The EDO reported directly to the District Coordination Officer (DCO). Some public sector principals named the District Coordinating Officer (DCO) as the highest authority in the governing structure of the district education department. Furthermore, the principals stated that they were responsible for reporting directly to the District Education Officer (DEO) and the Area Education Officer (AEO) who made occasional and in some cases regular visits to the schools for monitoring purposes. In addition to the above mentioned, the District Teacher's Educator (DTE) made monthly visits to majority of the public schools included in the research to monitor the performance of teachers. The DTEs check student attendance, conduct tests with students, and check lesson plans prepared by teachers.

In contrast to the public sector, the private schools in the districts did not have a uniform and formal governing structure. For instance, 13 of the private school principals interviewed in Multan reported that they did not report to any authority in the district. Some respondents stated that they had established a committee with other private schools in the area: this committee was responsible for monitoring the member schools. Only three private school principles (interviewed during research) stated that they were reporting to the AEO and had regular contact with the district education department.

6.2 Government Strategies on Primary Education

Principals in government schools revealed a number of policies initiated by the government to improve primary education in the area. The following initiatives were mentioned:

- The ‘Mar Nahin Pyar’ initiative to end corporal punishment;
- The government’s obligation to ensure 100% enrollment in primary schools (in line with Article 25-A of the Constitution);
- Ensuring 90% student attendance in classrooms;
- Promoting students up till grade 5 (without failing) to encourage completion of primary education;
- Teachers’ trainings for instructors whose students do not perform well in examinations;

A number of respondents also criticized the government’s policy of not failing weak students up till the fifth grade. The respondents argued that students who passed through the fifth grade in government schools did not have basic knowledge (expected of a primary school student) as they did not go through formal examinations.

A smaller number of private school principals (as compared with their public counterparts) had knowledge about government policies at the primary level. This was because a large number of these schools run as commercial enterprises and are not monitored for complying with government policies.

6.3 Work related challenges

6.3.1 Public Schools Principals

The work related challenges identified by public school principals’ mainly dealt with infrastructural shortcomings and administrative affairs. With regards to infrastructural problems, the school principals identified shortage of staff, absence of playgrounds, dilapidated building conditions due to lack of development funds, damaged school furniture and lack of space as the major infrastructure related challenges faced by the school administration.

Other problems mentioned by the respondents included absence of clean drinking water, computer rooms, libraries, kid friendly rooms and electricity. The major administrative challenges identified by the respondents dealt with the day to day management of school affairs. More than half of the respondents said that they had to deal with parents who insisted that their children be passed in exams in spite of poor academic performance. . This had an overall deleterious impact on the performance of public sector schools. Furthermore, lack of support staff was also mentioned by a number of principals. Six respondents reported absence of a watchman, which led to theft of school furniture.

The principals from public schools further revealed that the students were having difficulties in coping with the constant changes in school curriculum, making it hard for the teachers to show good results at the end of the year.

There was general consensus amongst the public school principals that SMCs could play an effective role in strengthening the school system however required more hands on supervision and monitoring by the government. A number of respondents in both districts also stated that the SMC funds for the schools were negligible and were not efficiently utilized to keep the school buildings in good working order.

6.3.2 Private Schools Principals

A major issue stressed by 18 out of 32 private schools principals was that of taxation, which they felt should be exempted in case of education institutions. In many cases, respondents said that it was a general misperception that private schools were businesses and in fact most of the time they had difficulties in making ends meet. In many cases parents did not pay the school fee on time which caused major problems in the smooth functioning of schools.

Another common challenge mentioned by several respondents was the high expectations of parents as they were paying for services and wanted the best without understanding the constraints of the school management. More than half of the interviewed private school principals said that they required computer laboratories and libraries and felt that both were essential needs for a well- equipped school. More general issues identified by the respondents were the absence of playgrounds and lack of classrooms to accommodate a large number of students.

Other challenges highlighted by private school principals pertained to the limited infrastructural facilities in their schools. For instance, a number of respondents stated that they needed to expand their school buildings to cater to the large number of students getting admissions; however, they complained of a lack of funds for the purpose.

7 Institutional Stakeholders: The Policy Perspective

There was a general consensus amongst all the institutional level respondents that education was a basic right and there was a growing realization amongst the parents about the importance of education and its positive role in the future of an individual and the nation at large. There was reinforcement of the community level findings in parents' selection of schools for their children. Almost all respondents in both districts that now there were several private schools in every community as a result parents opt for those which are near their homes as physical access was a major consideration. In addition, the poor state of public schools was also pushing parents to enroll their children in low cost private schools.

"In our government schools, there are no facilities. Children continue to sit on floor with no electricity and a dearth of teaches. As a result parents choose private schools instead." (Private sector respondent)

"Parents get attracted to fancy infrastructure with classrooms with colored walls and colored furniture. So they choose private schools which have these facilities." (Government sectors respondent)

While those who could afford private fees and other related expenses, all respondents were of the view that mostly the poor and very poor send their children to public schools and that also until they can manage.

According to all the respondents, education stakeholders included parents, government, school management and teachers, media and civil society organizations.

"For me everyone is a stakeholder in education whether it is the parents, children, schools, government and private organizations". (Government sector respondent)

Although, there is a general perception that public schools work within specific policies of the government, while private schools have their own rules and regulations. However, a government official in Multan reported that even private schools have to observe certain government rules and regulations especially in terms of location and infrastructure, which are not enforced by the concerned authorities. For example, private schools by law are not allowed to function in a residential locality; the building should have certain specifications in order to be accepted as a school.

At the government level, the biggest challenge was lack of funds which were not enough to match the number of schools in the respective districts. According to a government official in Multan, each school had annual funds allocated which are just not enough to even bring about basic improvements.

"We are aware of drinking water issues in many schools of Multan district. But if we start to bore water the cost will exceed the school budget for the next six months." (Government sector respondent)

It was also quite apparent from the interviews data that respondents did not fully endorse government education policies on basis that they were far from the ground reality. In one interview, the respondent felt that policies were formulated in isolation when they should be made in consultation with the teachers and school management who actually know and understand the real situation.

NGOs in both districts were contributing significantly in the education sector. There were many community schools being supported by NGOS as well as partnerships with public schools. The government officials also acknowledged the assistance of NGOs not only in terms of service delivery or support but also in capacity building of local government and school staff.

“We have received some good trainings by some of the NGOs working in Multan. Otherwise, there are very few training opportunities in the government sector although it is something very important.” (Government sector respondent)

8 Conclusion and Recommendations: Way Forward

The study confirms the growing trend of private schooling of primary age children amongst parents living in low and middle income urban and peri-urban localities of Multan and Bahawalpur districts due to multifold reasons uncovered through the findings of this research. In order to get a holistic view of the primary schools in the study districts, the study design included all major stakeholders in both private and public sector schools including parents, school management, children and selected institutional level players.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the study;

- The research is indicative of rapid mushrooming of private schools in low and low middle income urban and peri-urban localities of the study districts as result of a basic supply and demand mechanism which the public sector schools are unable to match; The reasons are;

Access to schools comes across as a major determining factor in parents' decision to select a school for children. Most children walk to school as almost negligible number of schools offer any transportation facilities while private transport is beyond parents' economic means. Private schools are available in nearby vicinities, while public schools are located at designated localities for wider outreach;

A major consideration for parents is the quality of education in the school which is determined by teachers' qualification, attentiveness, and regularity, in addition to school discipline, responsiveness of the management and keeping the parents informed. Public schools in general have inadequate number of teachers and with a high teacher/student ratio, which limits teachers and students interaction and personal attention of teacher to individual students and subsequently with the parents;

Parents wanted a secure and well-guarded learning environment for their children and felt that public schools did not provide that;

Parents were prepared to sacrifice space in terms of smaller classroom and playground sizes but desired functioning facilities like latrines, drinking water, comfortable furniture and learning material inside the school. Public schools in general lacked or had depleted facilities as well as did not have sufficient number of teachers and support staff;

Growing social pressure towards private schooling can also be attributed to increasing enrollment in private education institutions. Children attending public schools were mostly perceived as belonging to poor households which was mostly likely factual as well; While there were indications that private education raised the prestige of the family;

Public schools did not maintain discipline and were generally indifferent towards students' behavioral issues. They were also perceived to be non-responsive towards the parents';

- Primary education is recognized as an important area at the government level with several initiatives introduced to strengthen primary education, however, the enforcement and implementation of these initiatives needs improvement with higher level of engagement by the concerned authorities. Pertinent reasons for lack of performance by the government are:

The district government institutional stakeholders recognized their limitations in terms of improving primary school education in their respective districts but were helpless due to lack of funds;

Education policies were formulated at the provincial level and were usually far from the ground reality, therefore have not been able to show any positive results. Some of the government initiatives/policies like, passing of all children until 5th grade and stop to corporal punishment are perceived as 'push' factors by the district government administration and public schools principals;

Although public schools had standard governance and reporting systems in accordance to provincial government directives, but there were no indications of any need based assessments according to respective requirements of institutions or monitoring and follow-up mechanisms;

Recommendations

As the findings of this study will serve as formative grounds for formulating an advocacy strategy by SPARC to improve the public schools performance in the study districts, the recommendations have been presented according to three main tiers on which the advocacy campaign should focus, which are (1) Policy level including district and provincial governments and civil society organizations (2) Community level to engage the parents and uplift the image of public primary schools; (3) School Management and teachers at the service delivery level;

Policy level

There is a dearth of funds for individual public sector schools in both districts. Therefore, it is important for EDO education office and provincial education department to review, streamline and institute a process of efficient disbursement of school funds at the district level according to the needs of the schools. It is quite evident that majority of the public sector schools have similar drawbacks mostly lack of human resources and poor infrastructure and lack of maintenance funds;

Provincial Education Government Department in consultation with the District Education Department needs to revisit the various policies and assess the reasons for their effective implementation. For example, the end to corporal punishment policy in public schools needs to be monitored as corporal punishment continues in some institutions despite the ban;

Similarly, there is a need to reiterate the 'Education for All' slogan as enshrined in Article 25-A of the constitution not just on paper but also in spirit to address the root causes of children not being enrolled in schools. Government needs to use a realistic and practical approach to address the lack of empathy of particular segment of parents towards the

importance of education. Focus should be on the very poor and marginalized social economic groups;

Although there is a growing consensus regarding female education, additional emphasis needs to be paid in the districts on the importance of educating girls. Community mobilization campaigns should be initiated in this regard;

Government should involve NGOs/CBOs as third party monitors to oversee the operations of public sector schools, especially with regards to teacher attendance in class: spot checking exercises should be initiated. For this purpose, donors and other funding sources should be consulted for potential partnerships;

Schools Managements and Teachers

Public sector schools should be encouraged to raise their own funds by organizing community level events and fund raising drives. The school management from such schools should actively engage with local influential in this regard. The schools should also tap the corporate sector for activity or need based funding like provision of clean drinking water, improvement of playgrounds etc.

It is also suggested that public schools managements should form cluster level groups, not only as partners but also as pressure groups to influence the district government department as well as any other related stakeholder;

Public sector schools should encourage extra-curricular activities (sports and debating competitions) to interact with parents on a more frequent basis. In this regard, bigger events can be organized by cluster level schools.

Public schools management should activate School Management Committees in their areas and involve them in mobilizing local communities in various school improvement activities on a self-help basis not only to counter lack of funds but also to create ownership amongst the parents regarding the school;

Community/Parents

Being the users and thus the most important stakeholders in this regard, there is a continuous need to sensitize the local communities regarding the importance of educating their children with emphasis on equal importance to girls' education and harms of child labor. It needs to be kept in mind that child labor is an issue closely linked to poverty therefore communities and parents have to be provided with options and informed about the values and returns of education;

Public schools should work out a community mobilization approach in their respective localities not only through the School Management Committees (SMCs) but also in others ways like maybe set up weekly or fortnightly booths and organize orientation sessions to encourage parents to enroll their children in public schools;

A social mobilization and awareness campaign should be initiated to discourage the administering of corporal punishment in schools. Apart from effective monitoring by authorities, the prevalence of corporal punishment can be further countered through grassroots community mobilization and by increasing awareness on the issue.

Annex I

Case Studies

(Case 1)

Name:	Muhammad Ehtisham S/O Muhammad Zafar
Age:	10 Years
Class:	3 rd Grade
Previous school:	Government Primary School MuhabatKhaniyal
Present School:	Private Serani Public School Khanqa Sharif
Union Council:	Khanqa Sharif
Reason for changing school:	Victim of corporal punishment

Ehtisham was a student of a Government Primary School in Union Council Khanqah Shareef of District Bahawalpur. He left the school after one year because of an excessive administering of corporal punishment by the teachers to discipline students. According to Ehtisham, physical violence was not only used as a disciplinary tactic but also employed to 'improve' children's academic performance. This was highly problematic as the school staff was rarely interested in teaching the students and spent most of their time in each other's company, regularly missing classes. The use of physical violence was arbitrary and extreme whereby the teachers would regularly cane students who did not perform well in class or were seen as indulging in unruly behavior.

Ehtisham further revealed that sometimes the teachers would hit the back of a child's hand with a thick stick which often resulted in physical injuries. In addition, the teaching staff gave regular homework to the students but never gave their feedback. Ehtisham shared these problems with his mother who consulted his father and uncle. The boy's uncle was sending his children to a private school and was satisfied with the performance of the teaching staff and school results. He advised Ehtisham's parents to enroll him in Serani Public School, a private educational institution in the boy's neighborhood. During the time of research, Ehtisham was enrolled in the above mentioned private school. He was happy with the quality of teaching and complete absence of corporal punishment in his new school.

(Case 2)

Name: Surriya Liaqat D/o Liaqat Ali

Siblings: 1 sister and 3 brothers

Parent's Occupation: Wage Laborers

Suraiya and her siblings were getting educated in a government school but had to re-enroll in a private educational institution due to corporal punishment and disciplinary issues. According to their class teacher, Suraiya and her siblings were responsible for damaging the class attendance register and for scratching the books of their classmates. Suraiya's parents apologized for their children's behavior to the school management but repeated complaints forced them to enroll their children in Ahsan Public School, a private educational institution in the close vicinity of their house.

According to Suraiya's parents, their children are now in much better school and their behavior along with academic performance has improved considerably. They further said that in order to retain students in government schools, the teachers should be more cooperative with parents.

(Case 3)

Name: Shaheena Aslam S/o Muhammad Aslam

Class: 3rd

Siblings: Two sisters and two brothers

Name of present school: Al-Faisal public School Shuja Abad- Multan

Shaheena was a student of a government girls' primary school in Tehsil Shujabad of District Multan. Her father was working as a wage laborer in a brick kiln while her mother was a housewife. Shaheena's parents enrolled her in a government school but regretted their decision because of the poor quality of teaching in the school. Shaheena informed that there was only one teacher in her previous school and she did not take any interest in teaching her students. She further stated that although the teacher came regularly to the school but she only taught Urdu and neglected all other subjects.

Shaheena's parents finally enrolled her in Al- Faisal Public School, a private educational institution near her house. Unlike her previous school, she was required to pay a monthly fee of Rs.300 in her new school. Furthermore, three of her siblings were also enrolled in the same school which increased the family's educational expenditure considerably. However, Shaheena informed that the quality of education in her new school was very high. The teachers interacted with all the students and encouraged them to participate in classroom activities. Furthermore, they paid equal attention to all the subjects and made extensive use of the blackboard which maintained student attention.

Shaheena's mother was suffering from a heart ailment and could not do all the domestic chores herself. This forced one of her sisters to leave her school education whereby she began to

support her mother in household work. The family is having a hard time paying the tuition fee for the private school as Shaheena's father earns a meager income of Rs.9000 per month from his work in the brick kiln. This sometimes forces the girl's mother to do extra work like picking cotton and casual labor to support her children's education.

(Case 4)

Name: Muhammad MujatbaSadiq S/o Muhammad sadiq(late)

Age: 12 years

Brother's occupation: Laborers

School going siblings: 2 sisters

Mujtaba was a student of a government school in Gajohata, district Multan. His father had died in 2010 and his mother was physically disabled. Mujtaba's family was supported by his uncle and brothers, all of who were wage laborers. Mujtaba left the government school because of a number of reasons. He informed that the teachers in his school spent long periods of time in personal discussions and did not pay the required attention to the students' educational needs. He further revealed that the students in the government schools were unruly and were constantly fighting and bullying each other. The teachers also employed corporal punishment on a regular basis which sometimes injured students.

Mujtaba informed that once his teacher beat him up so badly that he did not want to go back to the school. This forced him to get admission in the Superior Science Higher Secondary School, a private educational institution in Shujaabad, Multan. He said that the government school was near his house but now he has to walk a considerable distance to reach his new school. Mujtaba further revealed that he felt destitute in the company of his new classmates as all of them received pocket money from their parents while he had no money to spend.

(Case 5)

Name: Usman ghani S/O Salamat Ali

Age: 11 years

Siblings: 2 sisters and 4 brothers

Usman belongs to a poor family. His father had died and his grandfather was bearing all his educational expenditures. He said that the family did not have enough money to support additional school expenditures and he often went to school without wearing his school uniform, which the family could not afford. Usman stated that things were comparatively better when his father was alive but after his death, the family could barely afford to pay electricity bills.

The situation was further compounded when Usman's grandfather shifted him from a government educational institution to a private school which increased the family's expenditure on education. He had to leave the government school because it was at a considerable distance from his house. Moreover, he was bullied and beaten up by his classmates in the government

school. During the time of research, Usman and his three siblings were studying in a private school situated near his house. The family was paying Rs.800 as tuition fee for all four of the children every month. Usman's mother had started selling her jewellery to support her children's education so that they could have a secure future.

(Case 6)

Name:	Sonia Khalil
Age:	14 years
Siblings:	8 sisters and 1 brother
Name of ex-school:	Government Girls Primary School Khanqah Sharif, Bahawalpur
Name of present school:	Al-falah Public School Khanqahsharif, Bahawalpur
Reason behind leaving school:	Teachers did not teach properly and students had to do school work.

Sonia was a student of the Government Girls Primary School in KhanqahShareef, Bahawalpur. She was extremely dissatisfied with her school as the teachers did not teach properly and often employed children to clean classrooms and perform other tasks which were the responsibility of the school support staff. Furthermore, students were given a passing mark even if they did not write a single word on the examination sheet: This was done to satisfy government monitoring teams who demanded good results from all the students. Sometimes the class teacher would ask the students to do her household work. For instance, the teacher in Sonia's school sent some students to her house to pick cotton. The girl complained about this to her mother who took the matter to the teacher herself; however, no concrete steps were taken and similar tasks were given to the students again.

Finally, Sonia's parents decided to enroll her in a private school. During the time of research, Sonia was a student of the Al-Falah Public School, a private educational institution situated near her house. She said that she did not have to do school maintenance chores and anymore and she received sufficient attention from all her teachers who were committed towards providing quality education to all their students. However, Sonia did report that one of her teachers was very strict and regularly hit the students with a stick if they failed to do well in exams. Three of her sisters are also studying in the same school.

(Case 7)

Name:	Aqsa D/oAbdulgajeed
Age:	12 years
Siblings:	Five sisters and two brothers
Name of ex-school:	Government Primary School Fareed Abad, AhmedpurSharqia,
Name of present school:	Ali Hasan Public School, AhmedpurSharqia
Reason for leaving school:	Accessibility issues, poor teaching quality

Aqsa was a student of the Government Primary School Fareedabad in AhmedpurSharqia, Bahawalpur. Her parents were concerned about her safety as she had to travel three kilometers on foot to reach her school: there was no paved road or a bus service to facilitate students who were enrolled in the school. Some fathers who had time would drop their girls to school on a bicycle and pick them up later in the afternoon.

Apart from the accessibility issues, the quality of teaching in Aqsa's previous school was substandard. In this context, the teachers resorted to using physical violence to discipline children or to improve their academic performance. One of the female teachers in the school was especially notorious for beating young girls with a stick, if they did not learn their daily lessons or failed to complete their homework. One day Aqsa complained to her mother that she did not want to go to school because her teacher was not interested in teaching the class: the teacher would often read her personal books during class, totally ignoring the educational needs of her students.

This became a major cause of concern for Aqsa's parents who decided to enroll her in a private school. The Ali Hassan Public School is also at a considerable distance from Aqsa's house but the school offers transport services to the students (Aqsa's parents were paying a monthly van fare of Rs.1,000 as transport fare). Aqsa is very happy in her new school. She stated that her teachers in the private school are very polite and never employ corporal punishment. She further revealed that her teachers came regularly to the school, gave homework and provided their valuable feedback on the student's performance.

(Case 8)

Name:	Zeshanhaider S/o Asif hussain
Age:	9 years
Class:	Three
Siblings:	One brother and two sisters
Name of ex-school:	Government Primary School Sukhail, Bahawalpur
Name of present school:	Aiqan Public School Sukhail, Bahawalpur

Zeeshan was a student of the Government High School-Sukhail in District Bahawalpur. Zeeshan had to contend with a number of problems during his time in the government school. For instance, the school was at a distance from the boy's house and he had to make considerable effort to reach there on time. Furthermore, the teachers constantly neglected the children in their classes and did not give them any homework. In addition to this, corporal punishment was rampant and the teachers were notorious for fining students on minor mistakes and taking their pocket money.

Zeeshan complained about these issues to his parents who immediately decided to change his school. The boy was then enrolled in Aiqaan Public School, a private educational institution which was in the close vicinity of his house. Zeeshan's parents realized the poor educational quality of the boy's former school when their son failed the entrance exam of the private school and was made to enroll as a third grade student (the boy was studying in the 4th grade in the government school). Zeeshan holds the teachers from the government school responsible for his lackluster academic performance and blames them for wasting one year of his schooling. He further informed that he was very happy in his new school where he received sufficient attention from his teachers. Moreover, the teachers abstained from employing physical violence to 'discipline' children or 'improve' their academic performance; instead, they informed a child's parents if he was not doing well in class. Zeeshan stated that in spite of the absence of corporal punishment, the classes were held in a composed and disciplined environment. The good quality of education in the boy's new school was evident from the school result whereby almost all of the students passed their primary classes with good grades.

(Case 9)

Name:	Sharjeel Asif
Age:	7 years
Class	One
Union Council:	Sukhail
Name of previous school:	Government High school Sukhail, Bahawalpur
Name of present school:	Aiqan Public School Sukhail, Bahawalpur

The reason of leaving the school: Lack of teacher attention

(The information for the following case study has been taken from the mother of the student. During the time of research, the boy had gone to visit his uncle in another village.)

Sharjeel was enrolled in Government High School, Sukhail (District Bahawalpur); a public educational institution that offered education from primary to higher levels. During the time of enrollment, Sharjeel could read and write basic alphabets and numbers due to homeschooling by his mother. Sharjeel's parents realized their mistake of enrolling their son in a government school after some time. Their son would often return home during the lunch break, complaining that there was no teacher to take the class. After two months, Sharjeel's mother came to know that her son had forgotten to read and write. This was largely due to the negligence of the boy's school teachers who did not take regular classes or gave homework to the students. Furthermore, the teachers never gave their feedback on children's homework (the teachers rarely gave homework to the students in the first place).

Sharjeel's mother realized the negative impacts of government schooling on Sharjeel's education and immediately enrolled him in Aiqaan Public School, a private educational institution in the vicinity of the boy's house. The boy's mother revealed that the family was extremely satisfied with the quality of education in the private school. She stated that all the teachers in Aiqaan Public School were highly competent and gave individual attention to all students in the class. She further stated that her son's academic performance had improved significantly after shifting to a private school and that she was confident that Sharjeel would complete his primary education with good results.

(Case 10)

Name: Muhammad Waseem S/o Muhammad Imtiaz

Age: 14 Years

Siblings: 7 sisters and 3 brothers

Class: 8th

Name of previous school: Government Primary Girls School Bahawalpur

Name of current school: Fine Public School Bahawalpur

Waseem was studying in a government primary school situated in the immediate vicinity of his house in District Bahawalpur. Waseem comes from a low income household. During the time of research, Waseem's father was working as a tailor while his mother was engaged as domestic help in high income households of her neighborhood. Waseem was not satisfied with the government school where he was studying because of two main reasons. Firstly, the school lacked support staff and the school administration engaged students in cleaning the school classrooms and toilets: the students were also required to fetch water from a distant source as there was no running water supply in the school building. Secondly, the teaching staff in the school regularly administered corporal punishment to 'discipline' children or 'improve' their academic performance. Waseem informed that most of his classmates had bruises on their bodies due to being hit with sticks on a regular basis, sometimes without a solid reason. The female students in Waseem's school were also punished regularly and made to do school maintenance.

Waseem further stated that although the teachers in his former school gave homework to the students, they never checked it or gave their feedback. There were security issues with the school also as the school watchman rarely showed up for duty. Then Waseem's parents enrolled him and his seven siblings in a private educational institution (Fine Public School, Bahawalpur). Consistent with school policy, four of Waseem's seven siblings are not paying school fee (the school exempts or reduces school fee for parents who enroll more than one of their children in Fine Public School). Waseem is very happy in his new school where the teachers' pay more attention to his educational needs, pay for his text books (if needed), and refrain from administering corporal punishment.

(Case 11)

Name:	Sawaira D/O Muhammad Imtiaz
Age:	12 years
Class:	7 th Grade
Name of previous school:	Government Girls Primary School Bahawalpur
Name of present school:	Fine Public School Bahawalpur
The reason of leaving the school:	Lack of teacher attention, excessive use of corporal punishment and employment of students for the performance of daily tasks related to school maintenance.

Sawaira was studying in a Government Primary School in the close vicinity of her house in District Bahawalpur. She was not happy as the teaching staff in her school did not give the required attention to the students. Furthermore, corporal punishment was regularly administered whereby the teachers would hit girl children on their legs and hands with a stick. Sawaira revealed that she was a good student but the teachers in her school did not forgive even minor mistakes made by the students and regularly employed physical violence against them: Most of Sawaira's classmates had bruises on their hands and legs.

The school was understaffed (there were only two teachers in the school) and was totally devoid of support staff. In this regard, the school administration often forced students to work as gardeners and sweepers. Parents often complained about this to the school administration but to no avail. Sawaira's parents wanted to shift her to a private school but only after completion of her primary education as they did not have enough money to pay the tuition fee of the girl and her siblings (who were studying in the same public school). Sawaira's father was a tailor and her mother worked as domestic help in the high income households of her neighborhood.

By the time Sawaira completed her primary education, her parents had enough savings to support her and her sibling's education in Fine Public School (a private educational institution). Now Sawaira and her five siblings (two brothers and 3 sisters) are studying in a private school. Her new school is not cheap (unlike the government school) as her parents have to pay Rs. 150 as tuition fee for each of their children; however, the school administration has exempted two of Sawaira's siblings from paying tuition fee. This exemption is part of the school policy whereby a fee exemption or deduction is offered to parents who enroll more than one of their children in the school. Sawaira is very happy in her new school as the teachers in the private school do not administer corporal punishment and give the required attention to all the students in the class.

Annex I

School Infrastructure

Basic School Information

Region	Respondent Type	Total No. of Class Rooms	Type of Building	Condition of Class rooms	No. of latrines	Facilities available (Electricity, Fans, Drinking water etc)	Cleanliness in Schools
Multan	Principal of Private Schools	1 class room= 0 2 class rooms= 0 3 class rooms= 0 4 class rooms= 1 5 class rooms= 3 6 class rooms= 1 7 class rooms= 3 8 class rooms= 2 9+class rooms= 7	Pakka= 15 Katcha= 0 Under construction= 1	Good= 12 Not satisfactory= 3 Bad= 0	1 latrine= 1 2 latrines= 7 3 latrine= 6 4 latrine= 0 5 latrines= 2	Available= 15 Not available= 1	Clean= 8 Very clean= 6 Not clean= 1
	Principal of Public schools	1 class room= 0 2 class room= 2 3 class room= 4 4 class rooms= 2 5 class rooms= 3 6 class rooms= 1 7 class rooms= 2 8 class rooms= 0 9+class rooms= 3	Pakka= 15 Katcha= 0 Under construction= 2	Good= 8 Not satisfactory= 9 Bad= 0	1 latrine= 0 2 latrine= 9 3 latrine= 1 4 latrine= 6 5 latrines= 1	Available= 10 Not available= 7	Clean= 11 Very clean= 4 Not clean= 2
Bahawalpur	Principal of Private Schools	1 class room= 0 2 class room= 0 3 class room= 1 4 class rooms= 5 5 class rooms= 2 6 class rooms= 3 7 class rooms= 2 8 class rooms= 1 9+class rooms= 2	Pakka= 15 Katcha= 0 Mix = 1 Under construction= 0	Good= 10 Not satisfactory= 6 Bad= 0	1 latrine= 2 2 latrine= 10 3 latrine= 13 4 latrine= 11 5 latrines= 0	Available= 15 Not available= 0	Clean= 11 Very clean= 2 Not clean= 30
	Principals of public Schools	1 class room= 0 2 class room= 5 3 class room= 3 4 class rooms= 1 5 class rooms= 0 6 class rooms= 2 7 class rooms= 2 8 class rooms= 1 9+class rooms= 0	Pakka= 9 Katcha= 1 Mix= 2 Under construction= 2	Good= 6 Not satisfactory= 8 Bad= 0	1 latrine= 1 2 latrine= 9 3 latrine= 0 4 latrine= 3 5 laterines= 0 6 laterines= 1	Available= 11 Not available= 3	Clean= 10 Very clean= 1 Not clean= 3

Annex II

Schools Funds and Actual expenditures

Region	Respondent Type	Total No. of Students	Total No. of Teachers	New Enrollment	Drop outs during the year	Annual Budget	Annual Expenses
Multan	Principal of Private Schools	Less than 50=2	0-5=3	No admission=3	Increased=7	Less than 100,000= 2	Less than 100,000= 2
		51-100=3	6-10=11	0-10=4	Decreased=10	100,000 -200,000= 4	100,000 -200,000=3
		101-150=3	11-15=1	11-20=0		200,000 – 300,000= 2	200,000 – 300,000= 1
		151-200=4	16-20=2	21-30=4		300,000 -400,000=1	300,000 -400,000= 1
		200-250=3		31-40=2		400,000 – 500,000=2	400,000 – 500,000= 2
		251-300=1		41-50=1		500,000 – 600,000= 2	500,000 – 600,000= 3
		301-350=0		51=60=1		600,000 – 700,000= 0	700,000 – 800,000= 1
		351-400=1		61-70=1		700,000 – 800,000=2	
	Principal of Public schools	Less than 50=0	0-5=5	No admission=2	Increased=2	Less than 100,000=15	Less than 100,000= 15
		51-100=1	6-10=6	0-10=0	Decreased=8	100,000 -200,000= 1	100,000 -200,000=1
		101-150=3	11-15=0	11-20=0	No drop outs=1	200,000 – 300,000=0	200,000 – 300,000=0
		151-200=5	16-20=2	21-30=1		300,000 -400,000=0	300,000 -400,000=0
		2001-250=0	21-25=1	31-40=2		400,000 – 500,000=0	400,000 – 500,000=0
		251-300=4		41-50=2		500,000 – 600,000= 0	500,000 – 600,000= 0
		301-350=0		51=60=1		600,000 – 700,000=0	600,000 – 700,000=0
351-400=1			61-70=0		700,000 – 800,000=0	700,000 – 800,000=0	
Bahawalpur	Principal of Private Schools	Less than 50=2	0-5=9	No admission=0	Increased=7	Less than 100,000=6	Less than 100,000=8
		51-100=7	6-10=6	0-10=3	Decreased=6	100,000 -200,000=5	100,000 -200,000=1
		101-150=5	11-15=1	11-20=4	No drop outs=3	200,000 – 300,000=1	200,000 – 300,000=3
		151-200=0	16-20=0	21-30=3		300,000 -400,000=2	300,000 -400,000=1
		2001-250=0		31-40=2		400,000 – 500,000=	400,000 – 500,000=
		251-300=1		41-50=0		500,000 – 600,000= 2	500,000 – 600,000= 3
		301-350=0		51=60=1		600,000 – 700,000=	600,000 – 700,000=
		351-400=1		61-70=2		700,000 – 800,000=	700,000 – 800,000=
	Principals of public Schools	Less than 50=5	0-5= 13	No admission=0	Increased=3	Less than 100,000= 11	Less than 100,000=13
		51-100=4	6-10=3	0-10=4	Decreased= 12	100,000 -200,000=2	100,000 -200,000=1
		101-150=1	11-15=1	11-20=3		200,000 – 300,000=	200,000 – 300,000=
		151-200=1	16-20=0	21-30=1		300,000 -400,000=	300,000 -400,000=
		2001-250=2		31-40=4		400,000 – 500,000=	400,000 – 500,000=
		251-300=2		41-50=2		500,000 – 600,000=	500,000 – 600,000=
		301-350=0		51=60=1		600,000 – 700,000=	600,000 – 700,000=
351-400=0		61-70=0		700,000 – 800,000=	700,000 – 800,000=		

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