

Education



Introduction

Pakistan has seen varying shifts in its education laws and policies since Independence. The first ever step taken to recognize the importance of education was an “All-Pakistan Education Conference” convened in 1947, which declared “Universal Primary Education” (UPE) as an imperative.

This was followed by the formation of a Commission on National Education in 1959, which recommended that the education system in Pakistan should pursue quality as an essential objective; and there should be compulsory elementary education for all children. The Commission’s recommendations served as the basis for many of the National Policies on Education which followed.

Constitution Article 25-A, Right to Education

In 2010, Article 25-A, the Right to Education (RTE), was actually inserted into the Constitution chapter on fundamental rights, as part of the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment (18th CA, 2010).

Article 25-A of the Constitution: *“The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law.”*

Thus, Article 25-A is now the State’s enunciated commitment and obligation to provide universal, free, compulsory education to all Pakistani children. However, it remains a huge challenge and an unfulfilled obligation, with an estimated 23 million or so children still out of school – either never enrolled or dropouts from school.

Even after the Right to Education was enshrined as a fundamental human right in the 18th CA, even a cursory review of the education system of Pakistan demonstrates that very little has changed in the public school system in the 8 years following the addition of Article 25-A, RTE, in 2010.

The serious and far-reaching implications of Article 25-A/RTE were not, and still are not, clearly thought through or conceptualized. The

chronic systemic problems of access, infrastructure, financial resources, quality, curricula, textbooks, teachers' recruitment, training and placement, as well as the inequality of opportunity and huge disparities remain endemic.

All this stems from a lack of vision, imagination, cohesion and clarity in successive Education Policies, including the latest one unveiled in 2018 by the newly elected PTI government.

This chapter briefly reviews the above issues. The allocations of the FY2018-19 education budgets for each province are presented. A considerable portion of this chapter discusses the current status of the Education Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4.

In September 2015, all UN members, including Pakistan, gathered at the Sustainable Development Summit to adopt the Agenda 2030. This Agenda comprises a set of 17 SDGs. SDG 4 – Education – is an ambitious goal, with a number of indicators, aiming to ensure inclusive and equitable education, and to promote life-long learning opportunities for all.

The challenges that Pakistan faces in the Education sector are briefly reviewed, followed by a set of recommendations.

National Education Policy Framework 2018

In late 2018, the PTI government launched its National Education Policy Framework 2018 (NEPF) document in outline, announcing that the detailed policy would follow. It is still awaited.

The main focus of the NEPF is on: (1) bringing the officially estimated 22.5 million out-of-school children (OOSC)¹ into school and increasing school completion rates; (2) uniformity of education for all children; (3) improving the quality of education; (4) improving tertiary education and skills training; (5) improving the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) at the federal level; (6) improving governance, management, financial efficiency and infrastructure of the education system; (7) making innovative use of

¹ 22.5 million OOSC is widely considered a conservative estimate.

Technology; and (8) raising awareness through a communication campaign.

The NEPF 2018 has been strongly critiqued for its disproportionate focus on quantitative targets and process-driven management objectives vs. the content and substance of the education being imparted (i.e. curricula and textbooks), or the quality of teaching of that content.

The NEPF focus is evident in the above list of 8 objectives. There is almost a complete omission of any recognition or realization of the vitally important need to change the present curricula and textbooks² in the public school system – and thence also the teachers’ training curricula and pedagogy.

There is silence in the NEPF on the important dimension of the need for rote learning for exam regurgitation to be replaced by teaching children to think, reason, and find out for themselves through inculcating the spirit of inquiry and critical thinking. This will also require teachers to be trained anew, starting with reformulation of the Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) modules.

It is pertinent to inquire of the government as to the utility, relevance, worth and value of putting the estimated 22.5 OOSC into school, and taking steps to achieve the above-listed 8 objectives of the NEPF 2018, if the public sector core policy on curricula and textbooks remains almost the same as it has been since the non-progressive, non-inclusive, non-pluralist, high theocratization era of President General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88).

This is in stark contrast to the relatively more progressive and inclusive education being imparted to privileged children at the elite private

² Despite the huge body of research findings, reports and recommendations on needed changes in curricula content and textbooks materials by education specialists and rights activists on gender issues, as well as issues of ethnic and religious minorities, PWDs, TGIs. Changes are required in religious instruction, ethics, civics, peace education, human rights education, pluralism, diversity. There is an urgent need to rectify the non-implementation of the curriculum item of the National Action Plan (NAP) post-APS/Peshawar 2014.

schools across Pakistan – which only serves to increase the disparities and non-uniformity cited in the NEPF.

Education Financing

Federal Education Budget FY2018-19

The federal budget for FY2018-19 allocated Rs.97.42 billion to Education Affairs and Services,³ as compared to Rs.90.516 billion in FY2017-18 and Rs.90.818 billion in the revised estimates for FY2017-18.⁴

Allocation for Pre-Primary and Primary Education

The federal government allocated Rs.10.12 billion for pre-primary and primary education in FY2018-19, compared to Rs.8.748 billion for FY2017-18.⁵

Allocation for Secondary Education

Rs.12.365 billion was allocated for Secondary Education Affairs and Services for FY2018-19, which was previously Rs.10.798 billion for FY2017-18.⁶

Allocation for Higher Education Commission

Rs.111.23 billion was earmarked for the Higher Education Commission (HEC), including Rs.46.23 billion under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) and Rs.65 billion for the recurrent budget for FY2018-19, as compared to the previous fiscal year budget: Rs.95.8 billion, including Rs.35.6 billion under the PSDP and Rs.60.2 billion for the recurrent budget. Rs.6.362 billion was

³http://www.finance.gov.pk/budget/Budget_in_Brief_2018_19.pdf

⁴<https://propakistani.pk/2018/04/28/education-budget-for-fiscal-year-2018-19-announced/>

⁵<http://www.pakistaneconomist.com/2018/05/14/educational-budget-fiscal-year-2018-19/>

⁶<http://www.pakistaneconomist.com/2018/05/14/educational-budget-fiscal-year-2018-19/>

earmarked for the HEC's new projects, while Rs.39.868 billion was earmarked for the HEC's ongoing projects.⁷

Allocation for Tertiary Education

Rs.71.824 billion was earmarked for Tertiary Education Affairs and Services, as compared to Rs.68.252 billion for FY2017-18.⁸

Provincial Budgets

Punjab Education Budget

A total of Rs.373 billion was allocated for education in Punjab for FY2018-19, out of the total Punjab budget of Rs.2026.51 billion. This means Education was allocated 18.4% of the entire budget.

In comparison, Education was allocated Rs.345 billion (17.51%) in FY2017-18. This means that the incoming PTI government increased the education budget by a mere 0.89% over the previous fiscal year.

The massive school education machinery of Punjab got the major share of the Education budget again this fiscal year, similar to previous years. School education received Rs.332.50 billion, which is 89.14% of the total budgetary allocation for Education in Punjab. Previously, Rs.298 billion (86.37%) had been allocated to school education. The increase amounts to 2.77% more allocation for schools of Punjab.

Higher education got Rs.37.15 billion (9.95%) of the total allocation for education. The previous fiscal year, it received Rs.44.61 billion (12.93%), which is a decrease of 2.98% from the previous fiscal year for the higher education sector.

For FY2018-19, a major change can be observed in the allocation of the development budget. Of the total budget for education, Rs.32.8 billion (8.79%) has been allocated for development. In contrast,

⁷<https://propakistani.pk/2018/04/28/education-budget-for-fiscal-year-2018-19-announced/>

⁸<https://www.techjuice.pk/govt-announced-education-budget-for-fy-2018-19/>

Rs.74.1 billion (21.47%) was allocated in the development head FY2017-18, which is a decrease of 12.68%.

A similar trend of a decrease in development allocations can be seen across the board in various sub-sectors of education in Punjab. School education has been allotted Rs.25 billion (7.51%) of its total allocation in the development budget. For the previous year, however, the allocation was Rs.53.36 billion (17.9%) of the total allocated for schools. This shows a decrease of almost 10.39% in the development budget for schools.

The higher education sub-sector also saw a similar change, with an allocation of Rs.5 billion (13.45%) for development during the current fiscal year. In comparison, the sub-sector was allocated Rs.18.03 billion (40.41%) of the total allocation for education in the previous budget of FY2017-18. That is a reduction of 26.96% for the development programmes of the sub-sector.

The Punjab government aims to complete a total of 906 projects during the current fiscal year. These include providing IT labs in 350 elementary and secondary schools, reconstruction of 700 dilapidated old school buildings, construction of 90 shelter-less schools, provision of missing facilities and security in schools, and training of 23,578 primary and 4,000 higher secondary school teachers across Punjab.

The biggest initiative promised by the Punjab government in the current budget is the establishment of three new “world-class” universities in three corners of the province, i.e. in the northern, central and southern districts. Other initiatives announced in the budget include the establishment of 44 Degree colleges, provision of missing facilities in 33 colleges across the province, completion of the sub-campus of Bahauddin Zikiriya University (BZU, Multan) and awarding of 134,000 scholarships through the Punjab Education Endowment Fund (PEEF).⁹

Sindh Education Budget

The Sindh government allocated 27%, i.e. Rs.208.23 billion of the FY2018-19 budget to the Education sector. This includes funding for

⁹<https://academiamag.com/punjab-education-budget/>

medical education, special education, technical education and higher education. This figure represents an increase of 14.6% over the previous fiscal year budget, which was Rs.181.5 billion.¹⁰

Rs.24.4 billion was allocated to the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in FY2018-19, for 309 ongoing projects, whereas the new education projects have Rs.50 billion earmarked separately as a 'Block Allocation' for new projects for all the education sub-sectors in the ADP of FY2018-19.

Donor financing: 9 public schools under JICA funding, and 22 schools under USAID projects were under construction. 6 high schools and 15 English-medium schools were completed in the districts of Nawabshah/Shahid Benazirabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Thatta, Badin, Sujawal, Jamshoro, Nausheero Feroze, Sanghar, Khairpur, Ghotki, Mirpurkhas, Matiari, Tando Muhammad Khan and Tando Allahyar.

To improve the quality of education, the Government of Sindh took a new initiative titled: “Rehabilitation and Expansion of High Priority 4,560 Schools” (these are schools with higher enrolment). The government planned to carry out major and minor infrastructure repair work and provision of missing facilities, such as boundary walls, washrooms, drinking water, furniture; as well as construction of additional classrooms. This initiative will provide additional space for over 550,000 new students. During FY2018-19, 2,632 primary, elementary and high schools are planned to be brought into the public sector education system across the 29 districts of Sindh.¹¹

Rs.4.9 billion was allocated as a school-specific budget for items like furniture, stationery, and travel.

Rs.1.2 billion was earmarked for Girls' Education Stipends and Rs.1.2 billion for School Management Committees. Around 23 out of 33 schools have been reconstructed, serving 7,000 additional students. Rs.1.2 billion was allocated for scholarships for students securing A-1 grades in the SSC and HSC examinations in Sindh.

¹⁰<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/05/11/sindh-education-health-sectors-to-receive-increased-funding-in-2018-19-budget-report/>

¹¹<https://fdsindh.gov.pk/site/userfiles/Budget%202018-19/Budget%20Speech%20English.pdf>

In Sindh, 1,973 existing government schools have been provided clean drinking water facilities and 2,000 more are in process, through 12 multi-year projects, at an estimated cost of Rs.840 million.

Under the Sindh Basic Education Programme, with partly foreign donor funding, 106 state-of-the-art schools were under construction in 7 districts of Northern Sindh and 5 towns of Karachi.

The ADP allocation for the education sector (for ongoing projects) included Rs.3.2 billion for Boards and Universities, Rs.958.5 million for STEVTA, Rs.200 million for Special Education, Rs.5 billion for college education and Rs.15 billion for School Education. In addition to the Sindh ADP, Rs.3 billion was earmarked as foreign-funded Education sector projects. The rehabilitation and expansion of 4,560 schools is ongoing under 57 multi-year projects at a cost of Rs.8.69 billion.

Between 2016-2018, the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) increased enrolments in the post-primary education sector, from 10,000 to 53,058 students, through a programme which focused on Out of School Adolescents in the age group of 10 to 17 years, and adults in the age group of 18 to 35 years. The SEF also introduced the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) integrated curriculum in the Sindh government schools and the SEF secondary schools.

For College Education, there was an allocation of Rs.5 billion for 48 ongoing multi-year projects, including 11 new degree colleges in the following districts: Hyderabad, Korangi, Malir, Karachi West, Umerkot, Sukkur, Jamshoro, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Sanghar.

A Law College at Sukkur and 5 IBA Community Colleges at Naushehro Feroze, Sukkur, Jacobabad, Dadu and Umerkot districts are planned to be established. Infrastructure re-construction/rehabilitation, missing facilities, and equipment repair and renovation of existing colleges would be carried out in the districts.

For differently-abled children (CWDs), the allocation for Special Education was Rs.1117.25 million, of which Rs.213 million was for development and Rs.904.253 million was for non-development

recurrent expenditures during FY2017-18. For FY2018-19, it was increased to Rs.1241 million.

Major achievements on Special Education in Sindh include:

- i. establishment of an Autism Rehabilitation and Training Centre;
- ii. creation of an audio-visual library in Gulistan-e-Johar, Karachi;
- iii. establishment of Special Education Centres at Taluka (sub-district) level, to meet the requirements of CWDs.¹²

Balochistan Education Budget

The total budget of the Balochistan government for fiscal year 2018-2019 amounted to Rs.352.3 billion, of which Rs.68 billion was allocated for education (6.53%). This was an increase of Rs.23 billion compared to the allocated education budget of Rs.45 billion in FY2017-18.¹³

A five-year Balochistan Education Sector Plan (ESP) was formulated, through which 100 new primary schools for early childhood education are planned to be established, and 100 existing primary schools (up to class 5) are to be upgraded to the middle level (classes 6-8).¹⁴

Rs.55 billion was allocated for the Balochistan Textbook Board for the upgradation, production and supply of textbooks to government primary schools.

To introduce public school students in Balochistan to a new technological environment, the government allocated Rs.500 million for the Chief Minister's Laptop Scheme, for distribution of 10,000 free laptops. The Higher Education Department distributed these laptops,

¹²<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/05/20180511370641/>

¹³ <https://voiceofbalochistan.pk/opinions-and-articles/social-development/development-in-education-sector-of-balochistan/>

¹⁴ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/316771-balochistan-presents-over-rs352-bn-budget>

on merit they claimed, to selected students who were enrolled in educational institutions in Balochistan, at the intermediate, undergraduate, post-graduate and PhD levels. Students from Balochistan currently studying in other provinces (under the provincial quota system) were also eligible to apply for the laptops.

Recently, students from different districts of Balochistan were invited to learn the Chinese language by the instructors of NUML University, under the supervision of the Pakistan Army. This course was fully funded by the Government of Balochistan, including free tuition, accommodation, food, transport and health facilities. The main objective was to prepare young people for the upcoming projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Balochistan.

Subsequently, NUST preparatory classes were also arranged for the first time in Balochistan to help guide and prepare the students to compete for education admissions at the national level.¹⁵

Under the non-development budget, Rs.55 billion was allocated for colleges, which was 10% higher than the previous financial year. Rs.40 million was allocated for the establishment of the Quetta College Directorate and Rs.1.2 billion was allocated for buying land for the establishment of a campus of the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Quetta city.¹⁶

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Budget

The provincial government planned to spend Rs.167.3 billion on Education in FY2018-19. This includes the following breakdown:

- Rs.146.11 billion for Elementary and Secondary Education;
- Rs.18.8 billion for Higher Education;
- Rs.2.42 billion for Technical Education and Manpower (*sic*).

¹⁵<https://voiceofbalochistan.pk/opinions-and-articles/social-development/development-in-education-sector-of-balochistan/>

¹⁶<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/05/15/417806/balochistan-presents-rs352bn-budget-for-fiscal-2018-19/>

The previous fiscal year expenditure on Education was Rs.131 billion, which means an increase of 28%.¹⁷

Having consistently allocated large portions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget for education over the past five years, the overall allocation for education has more than doubled.

According to data from the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education Department, in FY2012-13 the budget allocated for education was Rs.63.69 billion. In FY2017-18, Rs.136.19 billion was allocated for education, which was around 20% of the total budget, in line with the guidelines given by the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report.

The Alif Ailaan report: *“2013-18 - Five Years of Education Reform Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa: wins; losses and challenges for the future”*, hailed the provincial government’s education reforms, noting that they had helped to make the system more responsive. The report found that the provincial government had improved coverage of physical facilities across schools, teachers’ recruitment, increased attendance and instituted new development programmes.¹⁸

The other provinces could benefit from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s above-cited improvements and reforms. However, the status of KP’s curriculum policy and the contents of KP’s textbooks leaves a great deal to be desired, particularly in terms of inculcating progressive, pluralist, diverse and inclusive education; as well as the spirit of inquiry and critical thinking among KP’s public school students. These aspects require attention.

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Education Budget

The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government’s annual budget was Rs.63.64 billion for FY2018-19. It allocated Rs.31.64 billion for recurrent/non-development and Rs.32.26 billion for development expenditures.

¹⁷<https://arynews.tv/en/kp-budget-fy-18-19-education-health-environment/>

¹⁸<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1667132/1-major-allocations-k-p-province-allocate-20-education/>

The Public Sector Development Programme was allocated Rs.7.9 billion, which included Rs.6.59 billion for Education.

The G-B government earmarked specific funds for construction of new school buildings, provision of basic necessary facilities, including drinking water, toilets, boundary walls, provision of furniture/equipment, and upgradation of schools.¹⁹

Overall Observations

While all the above-cited data and statistics on the increased budgetary allocations and earmarks; as well as the ambitious planned projects in the Education sector are impressive and much-needed, it remains to be seen how much of the allocated budgets were actually disbursed and utilized by the Education Departments of the respective provinces and the federal government during the fiscal year.

There is a particular need to monitor and track the development budgets and allocations, since it is well-known that the recurrent expenditures tend to go beyond the planned maximum, thereby requiring funds from elsewhere to make up the shortfalls, if formal supplementary grants are not provided.

It is to be hoped that the overall national and provincial resource constraints during the next fiscal year do not decrease the announced budgetary allocations for the Social Sector, especially Education and Health; and particularly their already very small Development Expenditure allocations vs. the mammoth Recurrent Expenditures.

Once the data on the final allocations vis-à-vis disbursements and utilizations (expenditures) are made available by the federal and provincial governments, after the fiscal year ends, subsequently, an in depth evaluation needs to be carried out, to ascertain which of the above development initiatives, programmes and projects were actually completed; and, further, which ones were successful enough to be scaled up within the province, and also to be replicated by the other provinces.

¹⁹<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1730448/1-g-b-govt-presents-rs63-6b-budget/>

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS)

In 2015, at the end of the 15-year Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda (2000-2015), the UN member States collectively embarked on another ambitious global agenda: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is also known as Agenda 2030, when the Goals, along with their numerous sub-indicators and objectives are intended to be achieved.

SDG 4 pertains to Education: *“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”*

The Incheon Declaration constitutes the commitment of the global education community to achieve this goal by 2030. It is accompanied by the Education 2030 Framework for Action to achieve SDG-4.

In Pakistan, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) works with the provinces to spearhead the achievement of SDG-4. While all the provinces have developed their respective Education Sector Plans (ESPs), there are differing levels of implementation, depending on the degree to which sub-national (provincial, district and local) governments possess the institutional structures, systems and capacity to manage the devolved education functions, finances and human resources, after the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010).

Summary Analysis of the Provincial Education Sector Plans

This section draws on and quotes from the SDG 4 Gap Analysis carried out by UNESCO.²⁰

The provincial Education Sector Plans (ESPs) take as their primary focus the following three main objectives: access, quality and governance, with varying emphasis and focus.

A few provinces are further along with the formulation of their SDG-4 indicators, including strategies related to access, quality and

²⁰ http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

governance. The ESPs of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and ex-FATA (now the newly-merged districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – NMDs/KP) show some degree of alignment, but they need more concerted efforts.

The provincial ESPs cover only primary education, and only public schooling, despite the significant proportion of Pakistani children in private education, currently estimated at over one-third of all children in school.

Other important education sub-sectors, that are included in SDG-4, such as Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET), are guided by separate provincial policies and plans, but are not typically included in the provincial ESPs.

The Punjab ESP was operated in parallel with successive phases of the long-running World Bank-supported Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme (PESRP), along with regular school enrolment campaigns. The objective of this ESP was to implement Article 25-A of the Constitution; improve quality, equity and governance; and explore public-private partnerships.

The Sindh ESP articulated an approach under which access and learning quality are tackled jointly, acknowledging the link between low levels of learning and the province's low enrolment and retention rates. It included strategies on Early Child Education (ECE), Non-Formal Education (NFE), and teaching quality, as well as consolidated education delivery services.

Sindh is supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), under which an annual joint education sector review process was established, to review and revise the ESP and improve its monitoring. This was carried out in partnership with a local education group coordinating at the provincial level, as well as district groups operating locally.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ESP (2015–2020) is a ten-year education programme that includes within its strategic objectives the development of its ESP 2020. The lesson it draws from its problems in achieving the goal of Education For All (EFA), is that there is a need to lay a foundation of strong education governance, access, teachers'

training and capacity building, and provision of school facilities, before significant action can be taken in other areas, such as quality of education, provision of ECE, TVET, Special Education for CWDs (a separate policy-making entity), and adult education.

All these dimensions will be included in the new KP/ESP from 2020 onwards.

The ex-FATA (NMDs/KP) ESP (2015–2020) is still in process. It covers several levels of education, from early childhood to undergraduate education, along the SDGs' same three strands of access, quality and governance, with equity as a cross-cutting theme. It recognizes the merged districts' very special circumstances and proposes appropriate strategies with a decentralized implementation process and a central monitoring mechanism. It includes a separate chapter on insecurity and violence.²¹

In view of the recent merger of ex-FATA with KP during 2018, it is now critically important to carry out an urgent assessment of the (former) "FATA ESP" to make the necessary modifications in order to align it with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's ESP, along with any indicated affirmative actions or quotas for ex-FATA/NMDs students, if required.

The Balochistan ESP (2013–2018) stated that it places a high value on governance and management, as part of its strategic move towards decentralization in a province with low population, residing in small settlements scattered over a vast area. Balochistan's special geography informs many of its education access-related issues, such as upgrading the existing primary schools to offer higher levels of education; and its community-based schooling models. Quality issues were also expressed as a priority area.

As a partner in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Balochistan has been conducting regular joint education sector reviews. It also constituted local and District Education Groups. This structure, which brings together government departments and a wide range of development partners, enables education sector planning to

²¹ http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

be locally responsive and data-driven; and it also provides a foundation for SDG-4 coordination in the future. This is particularly useful at the district level, where institutional structures are often the weakest.

The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) ESP (2015–2030) is a long-term strategy to guide G-B's Education sector policy, planning, programmes and projects. Since it intends to cover the entire period up to the end of the global SDGs, it is far more exhaustive than any other ESP, including the KP equivalent.

The G-B ESP's lack of access to federal development funding through the National Finance Commission (NFC) awards is reflected in its focus on developing its institutions and providing a framework for soliciting external donor support.

SDG 4.1: *“By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.”*

All provinces, with the exception of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), have enacted legislation guaranteeing the right to free and compulsory education up to age 16, in accordance with Article 25-A of the Constitution – Right to Education (RTE).

Under SDG-4.1, the MoFEPT developed the Minimum Standards for Quality Education in 2016, as SPARC reported in a previous report. It also formulated a new National Curriculum in 2017, following a review for quality and relevance.

Balochistan, KP (including former FATA-NMDs/KP), Punjab and Sindh have a Curriculum Implementation Framework in place, or provisions in their Education Sector Plans (ESPs) to establish one.

However, it needs to be stated that independent education curriculum and textbooks researchers and specialists, as well as rights activists, still have a number of reservations about both the KP curriculum and textbooks, which are based on the federal and provincial Education Policies, which themselves need a critical review and revision, especially in light of the National Action Plan (NAP – 2015) and the 2018 election manifestos of the ruling political parties.

Assessing learning outcomes of school teaching is an important aspect of the SDGs. It is necessary to move towards a curriculum-based, rather than textbook-based assessment system, as the latter relies on rote learning.

While external summative assessments by the National Education Assessment System (NEAS) under the MoFEPT, have not historically led to meaningful reform, the summative assessment of 2016–2017 was the first to include a broad range of education providers (including government and the private sector) from all the provinces.²² It is not clear from the MoFEPT information updates, whether any changes or improvements were carried out during 2018, based on the SAHE report's findings and recommendations.

SDG 4.2: *By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality **early childhood development, care and pre-primary education (ECE)** so that they are ready for primary education.*

Universal quality ECE is the foundation for achieving the other SDG-4 indicators and objectives, particularly those related to equity and access (4.5), learning (4.1), literacy and numeracy (4.6) and global citizenship (4.7).

Pakistan's Constitution Article 25-A, the Right to Education (RTE), guarantees the provision of free and compulsory schooling for all children between the ages of 5 and 16, by the state.

However, unfortunately, it does not include pre-primary Early Childhood Education (ECE). Hence, most provinces did not enact legislation mandating universal, compulsory and free ECE (only Sindh is the notable exception in this regard).

Nevertheless, there is a general recognition, among education professionals and specialists, of the need for policies and frameworks to ensure that all children receive quality ECE. There is a need to advocate with the federal and provincial governments (except Sindh)

²²Society for the Advancement of Education (SAHE) (2016). *Assessment systems in Pakistan: Considerations of quality, effectiveness and use*. Available at: <http://www.sahe.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/EM-III-Assessment-systems-in-Pakistan-2016-1.pdf>.

to amend their existing RTE laws and to explicitly include the provision of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in them.

“Punjab, Balochistan and the former FATA (NMDs/KP) have stated their explicit intent to create ECE policy frameworks. Some form of ECE models (including the *katchi* class model) exist in all provinces and areas. However, ECE typically remains unfunded in public schooling, with rudimentary systems for professionalization or teachers’ training in ECE pedagogy, or sometimes they are donor-funded limited pilot projects. There is little consistency as to various ECE models, and minimal understanding – both at the government and at the grassroots community levels – of the need for ECE and what it entails.”²³

“It is thus essential that ECE provision should be included in future ESPs, as an integrated and adequately funded educational offering, acknowledging its unique curriculum, teaching and cross-sectoral coordination requirements, rather than an add-on to primary schooling.”²⁴

SDG 4.3: *By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.*

SDG 4.4: *By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.*

Across the provinces, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and tertiary education are generally excluded from the ESPs, falling instead under the purview of separate higher education entities, such as the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) – and their provincial counterparts.

In 2017, the HEC published its Vision 2025 on tertiary education. Its SDG4-related priorities included commitments to a three-tiered

²³ http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

²⁴ *ibid.*

integrated tertiary education system, research innovation and commercialization, equitable access, and improved curriculum quality.

Balochistan's ESP did not include TVET, but a TEVTA policy is under development. This is an opportunity for Balochistan to provide vocational skills training based on the CPEC needs, but it is limited by capacity issues, geography, and also by limited access for hitherto marginalized groups. The ESP covers tertiary education up to the undergraduate level, and it proposes the introduction of four-year degree courses at two colleges.

The **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** ESP 2020 does not include TVET specifically, which would require cooperation and collaboration with other departments and sectors. Instead, it focuses on building institutions to underpin cooperative efforts in these areas.

The **ex-FATA (NMDs/KP)** ESP does not include TVET, as it falls under the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE). During 2018, the NMDs' higher education section was in transition as the area was recovering from conflict and insecurity, and was embarking on a complex merger, reconstruction, rehabilitation, reform and electoral process. The ESP proposes converting its two-year graduate programmes to four-year programmes; encouraging young women's enrolment; and reconstructing or upgrading the existing infrastructure in these newly merged districts.

The **Punjab** ESP recommended a review of the secondary school curricula to enhance their relevance to the world of work, and to assess why so far the technical streams have not been successful in schools. There is still a need for building linkages with the Higher Education Department and TEVTA, as well as to assess the integration of TVET into mainstream secondary education.

The **Sindh** ESP seeks to revitalize demand-focused vocational education in secondary schooling, in collaboration with TEVTA. It includes paid work-study programmes for children formerly involved in child labour and adults in literacy programmes. Tertiary education is not included in the ESP.

Whilst **Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)**'s ESP proposes an ambitious programme for establishing professional and TVET institutions, G-B's human and financial resources are inadequate and the institutional mechanisms are relatively new. "G-B has identified tourism, forestry and CPEC programmes as opportunities for growth in this area. G-B's mountainous terrain is difficult to access, and renders G-B a strong candidate for distance tertiary education."²⁵

SDG 4.5: *By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.*

Achieving SDG 4.5 is critical for Pakistan, where children are deprived of the right to learn due to many intersecting vulnerabilities, especially girls, children from rural area backgrounds, CWDs, poverty, socio-economic class disparities, child labour, conflict and insecurity, displacement, and so on. A few past efforts to promote access have lacked an equity focus to respond to the multiple forms of marginalization.²⁶

Moreover, the predominant focus on increasing the public sector enrolment rates, has led to inadequate attention being paid to retention rates, especially considering that the girls' dropout rate is much higher than the boys', before completing their full course of education – especially rural girls, as well as CWDs and TGI children.

With severe gender-based inequality in access to and retention in all tiers of education, especially in the rural areas and at lower socio-economic levels, the first implementing strategy ("Identify, monitor and improve girls' and women's access to and participation in education") needs to be a much higher focus area in the federal and provincial ESPs than it is currently. It is covered in some manner in the ESPs, albeit using different approaches, and at different levels of priority focus.

²⁵ http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

²⁶ *ibid.*

Sindh and G-B include addressing gender disparity as a separate priority area in their respective ESPs, with a wide range of approaches.

Balochistan's gender and equity focus is included under "access" issues, and it includes setting up new schools and carrying out community mobilization.

In Punjab, equity issues are dispersed across various strategic themes and gender equity is not an explicitly stated area of focus. This needs to be addressed and rectified in the next review and revision of the Punjab ESP.

Despite its low gender equality ratio in education, the KP ESP does not have a strong gender focus, but school upgradation and cash transfers are included.

The ESP of the ex-FATA NMDs/KP includes, as a strategic objective, reducing the gender gap by 50% through setting up new schools, upgrading existing schools, promoting community mobilization and involvement, and enrolment incentives. There is a need for the NMDs/KP to study best practices and lessons learned regarding enrolment incentives, before hastily incorporating them into the ESP.

At present, no province (nor G-B) monitors girls' marginalization and exclusion from education opportunities in a way that captures the above-cited range of vulnerabilities, and there is no consistent system for ensuring that plans, policies, budgets and curricula are free of gender discrimination, and that they employ a human rights lens for gender equality and gender justice.

Working with the Planning and Finance Departments, it is important to incorporate gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) into the education planning and programming process. This will reduce discrimination against girls, as well as against TGIs and CWDs. It has also been shown to have economic benefits.

SDG 4.6: *By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.*

With low literacy rates in Pakistan, especially amongst women, girls and rural populations, it is very important to reinstate the youth and

adult literacy programmes, women/girls-focused non-formal education (NFE) and continuing education programmes, which made a noticeable impact several decades ago, but which have long since been discontinued.

Traditionally the official focus has been on increasing the percentage of the literate population, without focusing on numeracy or proficiency. SDG-4.6 marks a move towards functional literacy, numeracy and proficiency. This entails a change of approach in evaluating the impact of literacy programmes and in data collection.

There is a range of institutional structures relevant to youth and adult literacy, with a number of them overlapping with formal education and alternative learning programmes (see SDG 4.1). Such programmes are often geared towards young people who are considered “too old” for enrolment in primary education in the formal public school system.

In Punjab, literacy is the domain of a separate Department for Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education. In Balochistan, a Directorate of Literacy and NFE is located in the Department of Social Welfare, not the Education Department. In Sindh, it comes under a joint School Education and Literacy Department. KP and NMDs/KP, as well as G-B, all lack formal institutional entities for NFE and adult literacy altogether.²⁷

SDG 4.7: *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.*

SDG 4.7 relates to emerging concepts in learning that are generally not clearly articulated or included in the current provincial ESPs across Pakistan. It is an important area to be addressed in future revisions of the ESPs, and to be explicitly formulated by revising curricula and

²⁷ http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

textbooks; as well as to be specifically budgeted for, in the forthcoming new ESPs.

No province or area in Pakistan currently includes strategies that will help achieve this objective. Given Pakistan's vulnerability in recent years to militancy, terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism, fulfilling SDG 4.7 must be made a national and provincial priority, across all types of education systems – public schools, madrassas (religious seminaries), non-formal education, philanthropic (not-for-profit) schools, and private for-profit schools.

In 2017, a new curriculum framework was announced, followed in 2018 by the launch of a new National Education Policy Framework, as the foundation for the achievement of the SDG 4, which includes SDG 4.7 objectives.

The National Curriculum Framework 2017 included guidelines on values, including global citizenship. However, it turned out to be a wasted opportunity for the provinces to work with each other and with the relevant sectors, including education, social welfare, women, youth, health, population/RH, minority affairs, sports, culture, IT, environment and climate change, and in partnership with civil society organizations, religious, cultural and ethno-linguistic groups, volunteer organizations, and representatives from marginalized communities, to conceptualize a nationally and provincially relevant vision that could also fulfil Pakistan's international commitments to equality, justice, peace, pluralism, diversity, human rights and sustainable development for all.²⁸

Post-elections 2018, a new National Education Policy Framework 2018 (NEPF) was announced by the incoming PTI government. Unfortunately, it omitted mention of the above SDG 4.7 issues and the serious concerns pertaining to the curricula and textbooks, which seem to have fallen through the cracks. The detailed National Education Policy is awaited.

²⁸ See also:

http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

SDG 4.a: *Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.*

“It is claimed that all the provinces and areas have implemented measures to ensure that schools are safe and free from violence. However, there are no statistics publicly shared on how this has been done. Thus, comprehensive Safe School strategies that adhere to child protection norms, and are both CWD/disability- and gender-sensitive, need to be developed, implemented and publicly posted in each province/area.”²⁹

SDG 4.b: *By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island Developing States, and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.*

SDG 4.b, “which relates to international and domestic scholarship opportunities, falls largely under the purview of the federal HEC. None of the provincial or area ESPs includes strategies that are directly aligned with this target. As such, progress monitoring and achievements are contingent on collaboration between the MoFEPT and HEC, and a shared vision for extending opportunities to marginalized students in the context of limited resources. HEC’s Vision 2025 has identified national priorities to guide international scholarships, including joint programmes that may prevent brain drain. The Vision also includes increased in-country scholarships, loan programmes, tuition waiver and laptop programmes, and fundraising for disadvantaged students.”³⁰

²⁹ http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

³⁰ http://www.unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf

SDG 4.c: *By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and Small Island Developing States.*

“Recruitment policies for new teachers are not a major area of focus in the current ESPs, except in Sindh and former-FATA [NMDs/KP]. Punjab notes a need for improved testing for teachers’ recruitment but does not have specific gender-focused policies for this. In practice, however, the shortage of qualified female teachers is a concern across Pakistan and especially in former-FATA/NMDs/KP and Balochistan. A gender review of teachers’ recruitment across the board would be beneficial. A stronger focus is required on ensuring gender-focused and equitable teachers’ recruitment and management, not just in support of girls’ education, but to create a more gender-balanced and positive workforce.”³¹

“The HEC’s Vision 2025 includes as one of its components, pre-service teachers’ training programmes for 150,000 teachers annually. Pre-service teachers’ training is shifting towards four-year programmes in all provinces/areas, and this partnership with HEC offers an opportunity to ensure that pre-service skills-based training is universal, and to explore in-service courses at international universities. Minimum qualifications for teachers have been outlined, covering all provinces, in the Minimum Standards for Quality Education (2016), and are also outlined in the National Education Policy Framework 2018.”³²

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

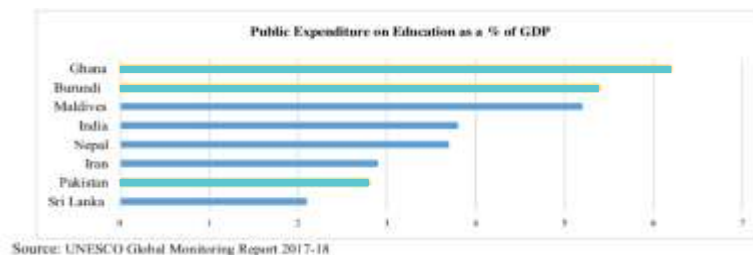
Education Challenges in Pakistan, as per NEPF 2018

The National Education Policy Framework 2018 (NEPF) reiterated some of the above-cited challenges which Pakistan faces in the Education sector. The following are a few selected excerpts and graphics from the NEPF 2018.

Lack of uniform and quality education

According to the National Education Policy Framework 2018 (NEPF), “Pakistan faces significant education challenges in providing uniform and quality education for all children. It systematically performs lower than its South Asian neighbours and countries with similar per capita income. Pakistan’s progress in education indicators has been extremely inadequate over the past decade. With more than half of its adult population unable to read and write, the country lacks a literate and skilled human resource that can contribute in the development of the country.

The graph below shows Pakistan’s low education expenditure as a percentage of GDP in comparison with its South Asian neighbours (Maldives, India, Nepal, Iran and Sri Lanka).”³³



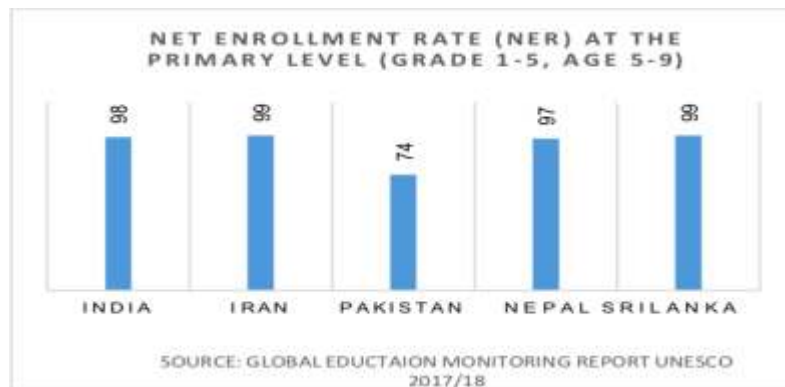
³³ http://asarpakistan.org/document/2018/National_Education_Policy_Framework_2018_Final.pdf

Out of School Children

The NEPF 2018 focuses on out of school children in Pakistan: “The first and foremost education challenge that Pakistan faces is addressing Out of School Children (OOSC) and ensuring that enrolled children complete their education. Pakistan is also amongst the E-9³⁴ countries that have the world’s highest out-of-school population.”

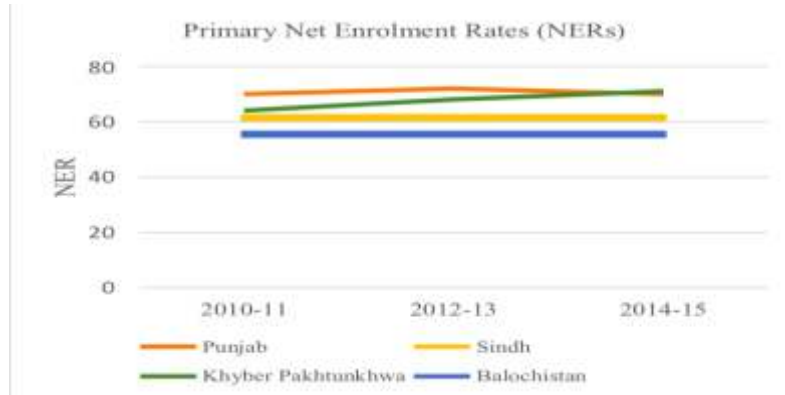
The new PTI government stated in its election manifesto that nearly 22.5 million children are out of school.³⁵

Increase in primary net enrolment rates (NER) across the country have remained static across the years and even show a decrease in some provinces. There is a large gender, economic and geographic disparity in education enrolments across the country. The enrolment data, when disaggregated by geographic areas, is much more alarming for some provinces, as indicated in the tables below. Rural children are the most disadvantaged in all provinces.

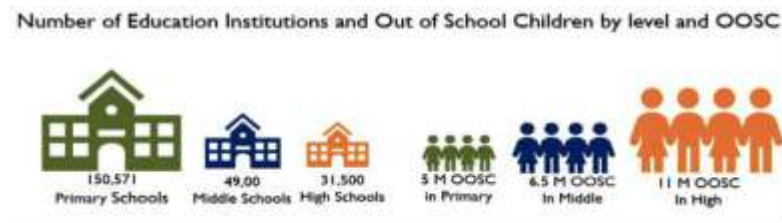


³⁴ “E-9” stands for the following nine countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan, representing over half of the world’s population and 70% of the world’s illiterate adults.

³⁵<https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/11/12/shall-i-feed-my-daughter-or-educate-her/barriers-girls-education-pakistan#>



“Moreover, the OOSC challenge, when disaggregated by grades and levels of education, shows an alarmingly high number of OOSC at the middle level (Grades 6-8) and the higher level (Grades 9-10). This is not surprising, since the number of public sector middle and high schools available across the country is much lower than the number of primary schools.”³⁶



Media reports during 2018 again highlighted the shocking statistics that 44% of Pakistan’s child population is out of school.³⁷

A province-wise breakdown of the data shows that Balochistan has the largest segment of out of school children: 70%.

³⁶ http://aserpakistan.org/document/2018/National_Education_Policy_Framework_2018_Final.pdf

³⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1750876/1-44-children-still-not-schools/>

In the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (ex-FATA), i.e. the Newly-Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 57% children are out of school.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, where the provincial government had claimed to make education a top priority over their previous five-year term, has shown some improvement, but it still has 34% of its children out of school.

Sindh has 55% of its children out of school.

Punjab has 40% of its children out of school.

Gilgit-Baltistan has 47% of its children out of school.

The NEPF 2018 sets out ambitious targets, objectives and planned initiatives. It remains to be seen how many will be implemented and achieved within the remaining 4 years of the government's tenure.

Gender Disparity

According to a research study report by the Human Rights Watch (HRW - 2018), 32% of primary school-age girls are out of school in Pakistan, compared to 21% of boys. By grade 6, 59% girls are out of school, versus 49% boys. Only 13% girls are still in school by grade 9. Both boys and girls are missing out on education in unacceptably high numbers, but girls are the worst affected.

This we have always known. But the continuing inability – or unwillingness – of successive military and civilian governments, parliamentarians and the bureaucracy to change the status quo is a cause for huge concern. It remains to be seen how the new PTI government tackles this intractable challenge.

As shown above, there are high numbers of out-of-school children, and significant gender disparities in education exist across the entire country, but some areas are much worse than others. In Balochistan, which is the province with the lowest percentage of educated women, data provided from 2014-15 showed that 81% women had not completed primary school, compared to 52% men. 75% women had never attended school at all, compared to 40% men.

The same data showed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had higher overall rates of education, but also showed similarly huge gender disparities. Sindh and Punjab had even higher rates of education and showed somewhat lower gender disparities, but gender disparities were still 14% and 21% respectively. These statistics are outdated and it is important to update them on a priority basis, especially for disaggregated planning and budgeting purposes.

Many of the barriers to girls' education are found within the school system itself. Neither the federal nor the respective provincial governments have as yet succeeded in establishing an education system which meets the needs of the country's children, especially its girls.³⁸

However, it is not simply a matter of the supply side issues of lack of access, infrastructure, women teachers, girls' lack of mobility, and so on. On the demand side, it is alarming to note that there are still parents today who consider girls' education to be unimportant and unnecessary, since their daughters will be married "off" very young (as they are considered a "burden"); they will bear and rear many children very soon; and they will be trained only to perform domestic duties. Rural girls are trained in livestock care and agricultural labour too. It is imperative to change such medieval attitudes and retrogressive mindsets.

Lack of effective teachers' training and quality of teaching

The NEPF 2018 also acknowledged the problems of the quality of teaching: "The most important requirement is to address the quality of the 1.9 million teaching personnel across the country. Successive assessments of the education outcomes of Pakistani students have repeatedly shown that children perform far below the required national standards in all provinces and do not achieve even the minimum requirements in mathematics, reading, and writing in Urdu and English language."

³⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/11/12/shall-i-feed-my-daughter-or-educate-her/barriers-girls-education-pakistan#>

This bleak picture is directly linked to the quality of instruction they receive in the classroom from their teachers. There have been several attempts at reforms to improve teachers' recruitment criteria, as well as to provide in-service teachers' training, pre-service teacher's training and refresher training courses; as well as preparation courses. All these attempts have yielded disappointing results regarding improving student learning outcomes in public schools across Pakistan.

The existing teachers' training courses, along with their set curricula and manuals, lack even the minimum requirements of the national and provincial education policies. There is an absence of vision, imagination, cohesion and standardization. Public school pedagogy does not prepare teachers to inculcate either critical thinking or analytical skills in their students, or to encourage the spirit of inquiry, or to promote respect for diversity, pluralism, and human rights for all.

The absence of a system of incentives or rewards for teachers to improve their academic qualifications while in service, acts as a disincentive. There are also a number of administrative problems, especially the placement of teachers, which shows wide variations: some primary schools have fewer than five students per teacher, while others have more than 100. Focusing on students' quality learning environment in the early age group would support their development of lifelong learning skills.³⁹

To counter the problem of teaching quality, all the provinces have initiated different teachers' recruitment mechanisms. However, there is a need to improve the teachers' recruitment criteria overall – for instance, with a focus on the recruitment of teachers with higher academic qualifications and skill sets in Mathematics, Science and English language teaching.

There is a dire need to provide continuous professional training and development support to teachers, in order to manage the current multi-grade teaching system at the primary school level (but this is a harmful practice, which needs to be phased out at the earliest, through increased budgeting and recruitment of primary school teachers); and to improve

³⁹http://asarpakistan.org/document/2018/National_Eductaion_Policy_Framework_2018_Final.pdf

teachers' own comprehension and instruction standards, particularly in foundational Mathematics, Science and English language teaching.

Teachers' education, testing, assessments, and certification need urgent reforms in all the provinces. Teachers' training institutions need to be drastically overhauled and reformed.

A special focus is required on improving the training of teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE).⁴⁰

Teachers need to be trained using the best practices of modern, progressive modes of ECE, in order to make early schooling a happy and wonderful experience for little children, instead of the traditional boring, incomprehensible, regimented and fearful experience, which promotes and exacerbates the high dropout rates during elementary level schooling.

Madrassas (Religious Seminaries)

In 2018, despite the clear provisions of the National Action Plan (NAP: post-APS, Peshawar, 16 December 2014), Madrassas continued to be regulated by their own traditional independent Boards, based on their sect or doctrinal affiliation or support base. They continued operating through their own respective affiliated federations (Wafaaqs), which continued to: prescribe their own curricula and textbooks; establish separate educational standards; conduct their own tests and examinations; and award their own certificates, diplomas and degrees.

The equivalence of the diplomas and degrees awarded by the Wafaaq-ul-Madaaris with the formal public sector education system is set as follows: Tanviah-e-Aama (Matriculation); Tanviah-e-Khaasa (Intermediate); Shahaadat-e-Aaliya (BA/BS degree – on successfully completing three compulsory BA/BS courses of any recognized university); and Shahaadat-e-Aalimiya (MA/MS degree – on successfully completing a compulsory MA/MS course of any recognized university).

⁴⁰ http://asarpakistan.org/document/2018/National_Educaion_Policy_Framework_2018_Final.pdf

The equivalence is certified by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). It is critical to note that the Madrassas, however, ensure that their students do not obtain equivalence certification at the Aama, Khaasa and Aaliya levels, fearing that the equivalence-certified students may leave the Madrassa to get admission for higher studies in the formal education system colleges or universities, thereby depriving the Madrassas of a large number of their students, who are “lost (*sic*) to the formal education system”.

Since 9/11, the term “Madrassa” has come to be linked to the concepts of “extremism” and “terrorism” (*sic*) across the globe. It is widely held perception globally, that Madrassas promote religious extremism, sectarianism, as well as social and political views which lead to terrorism.

It has been repeatedly recommended within Pakistan – and especially under the official NAP – that there is a critical need to change the conventional Madrassa ideology, policy, curriculum and textbooks; as well as their medieval mindsets; and to conceptualize and produce new curricula and textbooks based on a progressive worldview; and also to align them with the formal education system, for the eventual transfer and equivalence certification for their graduating students.

The Madrassa education system fails to provide job opportunities for its graduates, unlike a relatively larger number of their formal school counterparts, which could be another factor in pushing them in the wrong direction in their future occupations.

The number of Madrassas in Pakistan has increased at an exponential rate; in fact, at an astonishing rate. At Independence (1947), Pakistan had between 137 and 245 registered Madrassas. In 1960 there were 401. In 2001 the number had increased to 6,870. In 2013 the number stood at above 50,000 and was still rising. An estimated 1.5 million students are attending these institutions.⁴¹

There are reported incidents of child abuse, including CSA, both in the media and through the LEAs, although it is widely believed that the reported cases are just the tip of a huge iceberg of unreported and

⁴¹Ahmed S, Stroehlein A (2005): Pakistan: Still Schooling Extremists, Washington Post.

unregistered cases. There is a need for better supervision and monitoring of Madrassas' management, with strict rules for zero tolerance of corporal punishment, CSA, child labour, or any form of physical or psychological abuse, violence and insecurity.

The main challenge for Madrassas is how to reform their education system so as to help their students to fit in with the challenges of the modern world; as well as to inculcate in them a broad-minded, pluralist worldview, with respect for diversity and difference, and acceptance of all genders, faiths, creeds, sects, and ideologies. In other words, Madrassa managers, teachers and students must learn to "live and let live" in inter-faith and inter-sect harmony. There is an urgent need for the federal and provincial governments to support and assist them in this daunting task.

Poverty is a major factor in driving parents to send their children to Madrassas, which provide them with their basic minimum needs of free shelter, food, clothing, tuition and books. Hence, in order to resolve the issues of Madrassa children, it is critical to address the causes of the rampant – and increasing – poverty rates on an urgent basis.

To address the issues related to Madrassas, the state authorities need to work cooperatively with their governing Boards for registration procedures and criteria; and to oversee and monitor their curricula, textbooks, teachers' training and co-curricular activities.⁴²

The longstanding and ongoing confrontational stand-off between the state authorities and those Madrassas which are affiliated with a number of religio-political parties and orthodox groups needs to be brought to an end, and the rule of law needs to be enforced.

⁴² <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/assessing-the-need-of-modern-education-in-madrassah-system-a-casestudy-of-madaris-in-lahore-2151-6200-1000286.php?aid=94070&view=mobile>

Recommendations

In conclusion, in view of the above-cited situation analysis, information, data and challenges which the children of Pakistan face in the Education sector, a few key recommendations are presented below:

1. **Data:** There is a need for the federal and provincial governments to regularly share and publish updated Education sector data, disaggregated by province/area, district, rural/urban location, sex, school category, enrolment, retention, dropout, assessment, learning attainment, teachers' training and placements, curriculum reform, textbooks, financial status, management, supervision, monitoring, reporting, and so on.
2. **Laws and Policies:** There is a need for each of the federal and provincial legislatures to commission external evaluations and assessments – by independent, non-government Education experts – of the current status of implementation of the recommendations on Education laws and policies, with reference to Article 25-A, the Right to Education (2010). Both quantitative and qualitative in depth research studies are needed, at least once a decade.
3. **Funding:** In light of the expected objective findings and recommendations of the evaluations (recommended above #2), the provincial education budgets – their financing systems, procedures and formulae – will need extensive revision and reform, starting with the National Finance Commission (NFC) award. The NFC needs to be discussed and agreed upon, with out-of-the-box thinking and sustained political will, i.e. awarding the highest funds to the provinces/areas with the greatest needs, and not on a population ratio basis, e.g. Balochistan, ex-FATA/newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Seraiki/South Punjab's rural districts, and selected districts in rural Sindh (e.g. Tharparkar and others), require and should obtain higher funds than the relatively highly populated provinces and urban districts.

4. Increased **public-private-NGO partnership** and cooperation is required, in order to replicate and scale up best practices and success stories, especially in management, as well as the quality of teaching and its content too.
5. **Curriculum and Textbooks reform:** As discussed above, no amount of increased school access, infrastructure construction and equipment, improved school management, teachers' training, raising enrolment rates, curtailing dropout rates and gender disparities, and so on will amount to much, as long as successive Education laws, policies and programme initiatives fail to address meaningful, substantive and effective curriculum and textbooks reform, along the above recommended lines.

Not cosmetic reform, but a complete revamping is needed. This requires the induction of the relevant experts from the non-government and private sectors into the federal and provincial Curriculum Bureaus and Textbook Boards; along with researchers, academicians; practitioners, authors, illustrators, and education rights activists, including women, ethnic and religious minorities, PWDs, TGIs and so on.

6. The Madrassas need to be aligned with the formal education sector, with extensive, comprehensive systemic and structural reforms, in cooperation with all the stakeholders, as outlined above.
7. Pakistan is a signatory to the SDGs Agenda 2030, along with its prior commitments under the EFA and UPE declarations. Pakistan is a State Party to the UN CRC, CEDAW and ICESCR. All these are legally and morally binding obligations, to which Pakistan must adhere, both in letter and spirit. For instance, child labour can only be eradicated if, as a first step, all school age children are actually present in school full time, as per the Constitution Article 25-A, the Right to Education.⁴³

In conclusion, there is a dire need to declare a new Education Emergency in Pakistan, in order to carry out the above recommendations with concerted focus and with unrelenting energy and resources.

This will require passionate political commitment and genuine bureaucratic will, along with the commensurate wherewithal and resources. It remains to be seen if the governments, the bureaucracy, the legislatures, and the relevant state institutions will rise to face the challenge.

If and when they do, they will find enthusiastic and dedicated partners in the non-government, philanthropic and academic community. The for-profit private sector would thence need to follow and contribute its CSR share too.

Pakistani children deserve nothing less.

⁴³For a more detailed discussion on this, please see chapter 5: Child Labour

