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# Pakistan: Target revision in education policy

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# **Education policies in Pakistan: a continuous exercise of target revision**

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## **Introduction**

From the very beginning since independence in 1947 the education policy in Pakistan has remained focused on increasing the access and removing inequities. Numerous policies and plans have been prepared by the government with ambitious targets to achieve universal primary education, lest the success is hard to be found. Currently Pakistan stand among those countries which will fail the targets of MDGs set out for 2015. Just less than half of its population is still illiterate, with rural and female population further disadvantaged. This chapter looks at the current situation of education in Pakistan particularly focusing on access and inequities. It will then take a historical analysis of the official education policies of the Government of Pakistan since 1947 targeted towards increasing access and reducing inequities. The analysis will be divided into two major phases which are then further sub-divided. The two major phases are policies prior to 1990 and policies after 1990. The 1990 marks the worldwide emphasis on education for all, which was significantly apparent in Pakistani education policies and provides a useful historical point for analysing the policies from the perspective of access and equity. The two phases are further sub-divided based on major political developments in the country. The first phase is divided into 1947-1971 and 1971-1990. The second phase is divided into 1990 – mid 2000s and mid-2000s to present. In the later part of the chapter I will explain briefly about some of the projects that have been experimented to uplift educational profile of the country. The concluding discussion will focus on the reasons hampering the achievement of policy objectives, which have eventually made Pakistani education policy making a continuous exercise of target revision.

## **The Context of Pakistan**

Pakistan as a new state came into being in 1947 getting independence from the British Raj and separating from British India at the same time. It was divided into two wings – East and West Pakistan until 1971 when the Eastern wing separated to become Bangladesh. The current Pakistan is divided into four provinces: Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Punjab. Additional parts of the country include: Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Gilgil Baltistan and Azad Kashmir; all these regions are federally administered. Geographically, Pakistan is located at a strategically important location having India and China in east and north-east, Afghanistan and Iran in west and north-west, and Arabian sea in the South. It is in close vicinity to the Central Asian states and Gulf region and an important member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Pakistan has experienced various forms of governments throughout its history, whereby almost half the time since its independence it has been controlled by direct or indirect military control. The current government which came into power through elections in 2008 would probably be the first democratic government that would complete its 5-year tenure.

According to the figures presented in the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2010-11, the estimated population of Pakistan is 177.1 million with an average growth rate of 2.07 per cent. Around 60% of

population is within the range of 15-65 years. The average life expectancy estimated for 2010 is 67.2 years. Pakistan saw significant economic development during 2000 – 2006 but then saw a sharp dip. The GDP growth rate during 2010-11 stands at 2.4% according to Economic Survey of Pakistan 2010-11. The earthquake in 2005 and floods in 2010 along with political manoeuvring and security situation have contributed to the declining GDP growth rate.

### Status of Education in Pakistan

The policies in general are targeted towards the solution of problems (Dror, 1983). The education policies in Pakistan have also been proposed to address various educational problems. Hence it is important to take an account of the basic features of education (focusing mainly on issues of access and equity) to see policy in perspective. Having an understanding of current status of educational indicators will help us understand the policies better which will be discussed afterwards.

The literacy rate of population above 10 years of age is described in the table below (Table 1) with provincial and gender breakups to show a comparative picture. The comparison shows that there are significant inequities in terms of gender across Pakistan, the most deprived are the females of Balochistan province.

Table 1: Literacy rate among population of 10+ years

	Balochistan	KPK	Punjab	Sindh	PAKISTAN
<b>Total</b>	41	50	60	59	58
<b>Male</b>	60	68	70	71	69
<b>Female</b>	19	33	51	46	46

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Measurement Survey (PSLMS) 2010-11

The table below (Table 2) shows the comparative data on net primary enrolment rate over the years, which demonstrates that there is growth in the net enrolment rate over past years but the rate of growth is too slow to meet the targets of EFA by 2015. There is also a notable difference between various provinces and generally females are disadvantaged over male.

Table 2: Net Primary Enrolment Rates (6-10 years) by Sex & Province

	Balochistan	KPK	Punjab	Sindh	PAKISTAN
<b>2004-05</b>	44	57	66	54	60
<i>Male</i>	52	66	69	60	65
<i>Female</i>	33	48	62	47	55
<b>2008-09</b>	54	64	71	64	67
<i>Male</i>	64	74	74	69	72
<i>Female</i>	42	54	68	57	62
<b>2010/11</b>	56	64	70	62	66
<i>Male</i>	68	71	73	68	71
<i>Female</i>	40	56	68	55	61

Source: PSLMS 2008-09 & 2010-11; Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS)

While enrolling children is a serious issue, keeping them in the school has proven to be an even more difficult task in Pakistan and there are continuous dropouts at each level. The difference of

enrolment between primary and middle (ages 11-13) levels will give an idea of this issue. While the net enrolment rate at primary level in 2010-11 was 66%, it was only 35% for the middle level. The table below shows the completion rate of a particular cohort at each level from grade 1 till 10 to show the seriousness of the issue (public schools only). The table (Table 3) shows that only 57% of students who enter in class 1 reach upto class 5<sup>th</sup> and only 27% remain by grade 10<sup>th</sup>. There are several factors contributing to this continuous drop outs among which: parents' lack of interest, their education, lack of conducive learning environment and competent teachers are often cited reasons.

Table 3: Total Enrolment (public sector) by year and class (1999-2000 to 2008-09)

Grade	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Grade 1	2678433 100%	2,765,058	2,687,703	2,833,726	2,765,496	2,961,794	3,259,707	3,301,859	3,360,331	3,057,422
Grade 2	1,927,099	2050364 77%	2,163,886	2,172,693	2,119,625	2,285,173	2,553,646	2,650,980	2,637,982	2,647,889
Grade 3	167,894	1,723,011	1829369 68%	1,889,439	1,950,152	1,991,846	2,141,114	2,245,671	2,296,332	2,332,203
Grade 4	1,527,325	1,521,503	1,587,541	1620725 61%	1,765,947	1,852,468	1,937,863	1,933,777	1,983,215	2,055,789
Grade 5	1,310,117	1,339,103	1,350,576	1,389,036	1534357 57%	1,601,194	1,680,304	1,595,246	1,602,813	1,696,312
Grade 6	1,156,240	1,052,388	1,066,527	1,097,875	1,162,212	1241752 46%	1,375,293	1,382,306	1,330,260	1,293,817
Grade 7	1,013,035	939,827	931,765	945,328	1,007,045	1,041,544	1167188 44%	1,189,590	1,194,636	1,175,678
Grade 8	904,663	855,402	865,630	869,771	908,960	923,261	1,003,355	1044893 39%	1,068,511	1,085,373
Grade 9	752,911	714,402	708,908	706,384	753,891	749,939	800,085	1,017,576	956141 36%	990,064
Grade 10	558,196	535,539	534,523	535,249	586,789	635,655	651,950	555,380	712,479	734243 27%

Source: Education Statistics 2008, AEPAM

The education system has not been able to enroll all the school age going children into the school, despite the constitutional commitment that required provision of free primary education to all children. This commitment has been further enhanced in recent constitutional amendment (18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment), whereby the state should ensure free compulsory education of all children between the ages of 5-16 years.

The education system further carries several inequities in terms of gender, rural-urban and socio-economic class. The table 1 above had already shown the disparities in terms of gender and rural-urban school enrolment showing that females are less likely to be enrolled compared to male and rural population is less likely to enroll in primary compared to urban. The most disadvantaged segment of population is rural female. A serious inequity exists in terms of socio-economic class as well. The table below (Table 4) presents the latest available figures showing the population that has ever attended school. The population is divided into income quintiles, first being the lowest income group.

Table 4: %Population Ever Attended School by Income Class, Urban-Rural Residence and Sex

Income Quintiles	URBAN			RURAL		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
PAKISTAN	81	65	73	65	36	50

<b>1st Quintile</b>	56	40	48	48	20	34
<b>2nd Quintile</b>	67	50	59	60	26	43
<b>3rd Quintile</b>	75	58	67	67	38	52
<b>4th Quintile</b>	84	67	75	74	46	60
<b>5th Quintile</b>	93	81	87	83	58	71

Source: PSLMS 2007-08

The table shows that the educational opportunities in both rural and urban areas are linked to the income class, whereby the higher income group is more likely to have attended the school. A further investigation reveals that the quality of education that is imparted at different socio economic levels is also variable which is demonstrable through the existence of several kinds of schools. The upper class residing in affluent urban areas send their children for high cost private schools offering O and A levels education, the poor segment of the society can only afford to send their children to government schools. The poorest of the poor can only afford to *madrassas* (religious schools) if they send their children for education at all. These differences in educational opportunities are later translated into the differences of opportunities for jobs, salaries and overall quality of life. Observing this trend, some educationists call Pakistani education system as promoting educational apartheid (Rahman, 2004). The table below (Table 5) shows the distribution of enrolment into public and private schools as per income quintiles.

Table 5: Distribution of Gross Primary Enrolment Rates by Public and Private Schools & Income Class

<b>Income Quintiles</b>	<b>URBAN</b>		<b>RURAL</b>	
	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
<b>PAKISTAN</b>	43	55	74	26
<b>1st Quintile</b>	74	24	90	8
<b>2nd Quintile</b>	60	39	85	14
<b>3rd Quintile</b>	51	48	71	27
<b>4th Quintile</b>	35	63	64	35
<b>5th Quintile</b>	21	77	35	64

Source: PSLMS 2007-08

The educational census carried out the Ministry of Education in 2005 shows that around 33% of educational institutions including all levels of education are in private sector and the trend seems to be rising, promoting further privatization of education. The relationship between income differentials and quality of education suggests that rising privatisation of education may in fact grow class differences.

### **Policy Responses to issues of Access and Participation**

The preceding discussion has tried to establish that the Pakistani education system faces serious challenges in terms of ensuring access to all its school going children and that there exist serious inequities in the system in terms of gender, geography and socio-economic class. This section moves to the main segment of the chapter i.e. the historical analysis of the educational policies to see how they dealt with the issues of access and equity. In order to do that this section is divided into two

major sub-sections: policies prior to 1990 and policies after 1990. 1990 signify the important resolution of Education for All under UNESCO, to which Pakistan is a signatory and since 1990 there is a major emphasis on the achievement of EFA targets. Since a major political shift occurred in 1971 (cessation of East Pakistan), the first section is further sub-divided into two phases: Phase-I from independence to separation (1947-1971) and Phase-II from separation till Jomtien (1971-1990). The second section is also sub-divided into two phases, first 1990 – mid 2000s and second from mid-2000s to present.

To understand the educational policy context of Pakistan, we need to refer to three types of policy documents – the official educational policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education; Development Plans prepared by the Planning Commission; and reports of educational conferences, commissions and review groups. Since some of them developed simultaneously, a lack of alignment between them also indicate a lack of harmony among various domains of the government which eventually proves to be a major cause of implementation failure.

Table 6: Education Policies of Pakistan

<b>Development Plans</b>	<b>Education Policies</b>	<b>Reports of Education Conferences/ Commissions/ Reviews</b>
First Five-Year plan 1955-1960	The Education policy 1970	Pakistan Education Conference 1947
Second Five year plan 1960-1965	The education policy 1972-1980	Proceedings of Education Conference 1951; Six-Year National Plan of Education Development 1951-57
Third Five -Year plan 1965-1970	National education policy and implementation plan 1979	Commission on National Education, 1959
Fifth Five -Year plan 1978-1983	National Education policy 1992	White Paper on Education in Pakistan, 2007
Sixth Five-Year plan 1983-1988	National Education policy 1998-2010	
Seventh Five-Year plan 1988-1993	Education Sector Reforms 2000-2005	
Eighth Five-Year plan 1993-1998	National Education Policy 2009	
Ten years perspective development plan (2001-2011)		
Medium Term Development Framework 2005-2010		

## **SECTION I – Policy Developments 1947 - 1990**

### ***Phase I (1947-1971)***

No formal education policy was formulated in the initial years after independence due to some pressing issues like handling the problems of migration, resettlement, violence and building infrastructure. However, as early as November 1947, the first Pakistan Educational Conference was convened to deliberate upon the educational issues. The conference mainly focused on setting

broad educational goals and primarily emphasized on developing moral values as driven by the Islamic ideology in the new generation. Several sub-committees concerning various issues like primary education, university education, and technical education were set up and which also forwarded their recommendations. Although the conference resolved to take initiatives towards ensuring compulsory primary education, the visible emphasis was on vocational, technical and higher education as this was immediately required to develop the almost non-existing infrastructure for the country. In order to ensure equitable treatment to disadvantaged groups the conference proposed establishing separate girls' schools and providing scholarships for tribal students. It recommended surveys to assess the actual state of female education and education in tribal areas. A second education conference was held in 1951 to discuss the six year education development plan. This was followed by a special National Commission set up in 1959. A number of annual development plans were prepared during 1955 to 1970: First Five Year Development Plan (1955-1960), Second Plan (1960-65) and Third Plan (1965-70). The first formal education policy was formulated in 1970 to bring stronger emphasis on educational improvements.

The conferences, commission reports and plans emphasized moral and value development as a major educational goals and reflected an obvious bias in favour of higher and technical education as those were highly required for the nascent state's economic development. The policies and plans also emphasized upon nation building and use of Islamic symbolism to provide that basis. The issue of language also came forth, whereby Urdu was forced as national language which caused language riots in East Pakistan where Banla was the dominant language. Nevertheless, most of these policies agreed upon introducing compulsory education initially up to primary level (grade 5) but gradually until elementary level (grade 8). Although primary education was to be free, the public was asked to share the burden in the form of additional taxes and through other non-formal means e.g. provision of land, labour for schools' construction. It is also evident that most of these policies continued revising their targets for access and participation in primary education enrolment and for the achievement of universal and compulsory primary education. The 1951 education conference set the target for achieving universal primary education in the next twenty years i.e. by 1971; unfortunately a target yet unrealized. The table (Table 7) below show the targets as explicitly set out in different policies and plans for achieving universal primary education. The target get postponed from each plan to the next demonstrating the inability of the government to achieve targets.

Table 7: Targets for UPE as set out in various policies during (1947-71)

<b>Education Plans, Policies and Conferences</b>	<b>Targets for enhancing Access</b>
Education Conference 1951	Universal Primary Education by 1971
Third Five Year Development Plan 1965-70	Universal Primary Education by 1985
National Education Policy 1970	Universal Primary Enrolment by 1980

Policy recommendations to address inequities in primary education were also proposed. For example, in order to improve girls' access and retention a strategy of employing female teachers and establishment of separate girls' schools was consistently being proposed. None of the targets for access and equity in primary education could be achieved during this period instead the targets were continuously revised as seen in the table above.

## **Phase II (1971-90)**

The East Pakistan was separated in 1971 following sever violence to form Bangladesh. The West Pakistan became the Pakistan and it marks shift in the politics and policies of the government. In education two policies were proposed between 1971 and 1990 each by a different government. The first was launched in 1972 covering the period upto 1980 and the second was launched in 1979. During the same period three five year development plans were also launched: the Fifth Five Year Plan (1978-83); Sixth Five Year Plan (1983-88) and Seventh Five Year Plan (1988-93).

This phase is marked by strong policy directions. Initially the 1972 policy under the government of Zulfikar Bhutto launched the nationalization policy under which all public sector schools were nationalized. The policy conceived education as the state's primary responsibility and equal access to all was emphasized. There were also visible shifts in educational policy in favour of primary education. Although the nationalization policy was targeted to improve access for all in an equitable way, it led to deterioration of state schools and quality of education because of the absence of a strong state structure for managing and supporting state education.

In 1977 a military coup ousted the previous government. A new educational policy was presented in 1979 which was to guide the educational planning for more than a decade. The policy had two distinct features: firstly the Islamisation of curriculum and secondly the patronization of indigenous institutions of mosque and *mohallas*. The mosque schools were proposed as a way of increasing access to primary and basic education particularly in disadvantaged and poor communities. The *mohalla* schools were expected to improve girls' access to education. The policy also initiated the provision of non-formal education to promote literacy and decentralisation of educational administration to improve quality.

A survey carried out in 1986 suggests that until that time 21,983 mosque schools were established which were able to enroll 631,465 children (Afzal, 1988, p. 82). Another research study found that mosque schools had a positive impact on girls' access to schooling in rural areas (Anderson & Chaudhry, 1989, p. 23). However, the innovation faced quite a number of problems related to administrative, social and religious environment that hindered the implementation of this strategy and achievement of quality of education (Afzal, 1988, pp. 85-93).

The policy guidelines promoted in 1979 continued to guide educational planning for the whole decade following it. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1978-83) began with a claim to mark 'a fundamental reordering of national priorities in favour of primary education ...' (p. 147). The plan also targeted development of mosque and *mohalla* schools. In addition improvement in curricula, textbooks and proper teachers' training were emphasised to improve quality of education in the light of Islamic Ideology. The Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans (1983-88 & 1988-93) continued to promote the policy of Islamisation and improvement in education as proposed by the 1979 education policy. An additional *Iqra* Surcharge on imports was levied to finance educational development. Despite the government's claim to achieve universal enrolment for boys by 1986/87 and for girls by 1992 the targets could not be achieved within the stipulated time. In fact, the 1992 education policy estimated that at that time the participation rate was 66.3% (p.81) which would be extended to 99.1% by 2000. The utilisation of *Iqra* surcharge for exclusively educational purpose was also questionable (Haq & Haq, 1998).



## **Section II – Policy Developments 1990 - present**

### ***Phase-I (1990 – mid 2000s)***

The 1990s mark a very instable political scene in Pakistan with frequent changes of governments and their policies. The gravity of political problems can be assessed by the fact that between 1988 and 1999 eight prime ministers took the office (including four care-taker prime ministers during interim periods). The continued political fiascos ultimately led to the military coup in 1999. Interestingly, this was also the time during which an increased number of social development projects were launched; most mentionable among them was the Social Action Plan (1992-2002). Since 1999 the government remained relatively stable and there was visible consistency and integration among different government policies till mid-2000s including education sector reforms that began in 2001.

Since 1990 we have had three formal education policies, an action plan for Education Sector Reform (ESR) and various development plans. All of these policies have a visible difference in language compared to their predecessors. For example the concerns for meeting the targets of Education for All as set out in Jomtien and Dakar, gender sensitive provisions, involvement of NGOs, and emphasis on community participation and privatization are some of the prominent themes.

The education policy of 1992 brought basic Education for All into sharp focus and gave it a prime importance compared to other educational sectors. The policy aimed at achieving 99.1% participation rate by 2000. It had a particular focus on improving literacy and for that purpose established National Education and Training Commission (NETCOM) later renamed as Prime Minister Literacy Commission (PMLC) in 1995. The policy focused on improving the situation of females and disadvantaged rural population to improve access and participation equitably through non formal schooling provisions. Several other measures were suggested to improve access, which included improvement of the quality of teaching through teachers' training; provision of mosque schools and availability of more physical facilities and teachers. As a major strategy for improving access, participation and equity the policy invited private sector inclusion, encouraged non-formal means of education provision and endorsed community participation in decision making and educational management.

The Eighth Five Year Plan (1993-8) followed the basic principles and main objectives set out in 1992 educational policy. The plan proposed to increase participation of boys to 95.5% and of girls to 81.6% during the plan period until 1998. The plan proposed decentralisation of educational management to district level for improving the educational governance and efficiently achieving the targets set out in the policy.

Although the Education policy of 1992 was supposed to last until 2002, a new education policy was launched in 1998 with much fervour. The National Education Policy – *Iqra* (meaning: to read) was designed for the period 1998-2010. The 1998 Education Policy mainly continued on the pattern of 1992 policy with its main targets being eradication of illiteracy and achievement of Universal Primary Education and Education for All. The revised targets for participation rate were set to be 90% by 2002 and 105% by 2010 at the same time halving the disparity between females and males by the same time. The major strategies remained similar i.e. non-formal education, community

participation and inclusion of private sector. The government in fact considered promulgating an Act of Compulsory Primary Education by 2004/05 to ensure 100% enrolment at primary level for the relevant age group. However, as have become clear later the targets were not achieved.

After the change of government in 1999, the government launched a programme of reform in different sectors including education. Instead of five-year plans, the government brought out 'Ten Year Perspective Development Plan' (2001-2011) detailing the long term development strategy of the current government. The education section of the plan proposes to increase the participation rate for male to 102% in 2003/4 and for female to 101% in 2011. In order to improve access and participation in equitable way following strategies were suggested (p. 140): Adult literacy campaigns through Special Task Force on Human Development; establishment of non-formal schools; opening and upgradation of new and existing schools. In order to improve qualities following strategies were suggested (p. 140): teachers' training projects, establishment of National Education Assessment System and Education Testing Service, private sector involvement, Community Participation. Improvement in quality was thought out as a way to ultimately improve the access, participation and retention.

Along with a long term strategy the government also initiated the Education Sector Reform (ESR) for 2001-2004 and later revised as 2001/02 – 2005/06 (the first document is referred as ESR 2001 and second as ESR 2001/02 henceforth whenever any distinction is required). The ESR is considered an Action Plan following the 1998-2010 Education Policy launched by the previous government. The ESR has adopted a sector wide approach and conceived education viz. a viz. other relevant sectors like health, poverty reduction, women development, science and technology, political decentralisation and international commitments for achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE), Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thus it proposes to integrate all the educational programmes run under different ministries within the ESR (pp.12-13). The main objectives of ESR were (p.2-7,9): Universal Primary Education, *Madaris* mainstreaming, Improvement of physical and human resources for increasing access, retention and participation; Improvement in curriculum, textbooks and examination; Promotion of public private partnerships and decentralisation of educational administration to district level. The ESR sets out to achieve 100% gross enrolment by 2006 and improving the transition to middle level by increasing middle school enrolment to 55% by the same time.

The decentralization in education was generally seen positively as a first step. Through making district as the hub of educational activities the governance systems was improved. However, confusion prevailed because of unclear roles and responsibilities, overlapping administrative and political authorities and old habits of centralization among officials. On quantitative side doubts were already raised about Pakistan's achievement of EFA targets by 2015 (Bruns, Mingat, & Rakotomalala, 2005, p.178).

We must note that, despite the high targets set, no changes in the national budget for education came about suggesting unrealistic assumptions of the government. Although the government claimed to increase the budget allocation for education sector to 4% of GDP, the actual changes could not take place.

Table 8: Targets for UPE as set out in various policies during (1990-2000s)

<b>Education Plans, Policies and Conferences</b>	<b>Targets for enhancing Access</b>
National Education Policy 1992	Universal Primary Enrolment by 2002
Eighth Five Year Plan (1993-1998)	Participation of Boys to 95.5% and Girls 81.6% by 1998
National Education Policy 1998	Gross Participation Rate to 105% by 2010
Ten Year Perspective Development Plan (2001-2011)	Participation rate for Male 102% by 2003-2004 and for Females 101% by 2011
Education Sector Reforms 2001-2005	Gross Primary Enrolment of 100% by 2006

### ***Phase II (mid-2000 - present)***

The review for formulating a new education policy was started towards the end of 2005. For this purpose an independent National Education Policy Review (NEPR) team consisting of consultants was formed and headed by Mr. Javed Hasan Aly. The team developed a comprehensive review programme consisting of various stages. For the very first time the team initiated the dialogues based on Green Papers on various educational issues, around 22 such papers were created by the team, which generated serious debates and policy proposals from a cross section of governmental and non-governmental organisations across Pakistan. At subsequent stages the roundtables on key themes were convened to generate several policy options. The NEPR team accumulated the huge consultative data into thematic papers and subsequently developed the White Paper towards the end of 2006. The outcome further generated serious debates and as a result a revised White Paper incorporating the comments was developed in February 2007.

The White Paper is considered a quality document which genuinely tried to voice all the educational concerns and proposed viable solutions to the persistent educational problems (Ali, 2009). The extensive consultative process built a favourable response and ownership from various stakeholders of education in Pakistan.

Unfortunately the government of Parvez Musharraf which initiated this process of review came under serious political troubles, which affected the policy process. It was earlier thought that the new policy would come out some time during 2007 but could not be brought out until 2009 due to continued political troubles and change of governments. Finally, the 2009 education policy was approved by the Cabinet in August 2009.

The National Education Policy 2009 is quite different in character to its predecessors. The policies until 1998 were written following the sectoral approach and proposed policy guidelines under the heads of primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, technical education and so on. Unlike this pattern the 2009 education policy took a thematic approach and focused on the thematic areas of access, quality, governance etc.

In terms of broadening the access the policy places greater emphasis on Early Childhood Education and recognize the ECE age from 3-5 years. The Policy notes that the current net primary enrolment rate at the time of publication was 66% and that there was serious danger of missing the target of UPE by 2015. It reaffirmed that 100% enrolment will be achieved by 2015. The policy alters the primary education to 6-10 years of age which was earlier 5-9 years. The policy suggests that enrolment will be increased through creating incentives for enrolment in the form of improving the physical environment of school and provision of food based incentives (p. 28). The policy overall

recognizes that the government lack the resources to improve facilities and provide incentives and thus seek support of private sector and donor agencies.

In terms of equity the policy is cognizant of the fact that despite some developments in overall averages inequities exists both in the form of gender disparity and rural-urban imbalance. The rural girls are the most disadvantaged. Although there are some improvements in the Gender Parity Index at primary level based on GER and NER (0.82 and 0.85) it is still weak, it gets weaker for secondary level further.

### **Projects/initiatives to uplift the profile of access and inequity**

In order to achieve different targets of education the government started conceiving educational projects with particular interest mainly since 1980s and more frequently from 1990s. The projects also served as an instrument to attract international assistance to finance educational development. Below some prominent projects are described presenting their general aims and scope along with commentary on their achievements.

#### ***Girls' Primary Education Project (GPEP 1991-6)***

The project was a national level project with provincial chapters and was funded by the ADB. The main focus of the project was on increasing access for girls' education. The project targeted to improve the community participation for girls' education, develop physical infrastructure of schools, provide more teachers and develop teachers professionally. This would ensure development of both qualitative and quantitative aspects of school and would increase retention of girls during schooling particularly at primary level (Jafri, 1998).

#### ***The Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP 1989-99)***

The Primary Education Development Programme was launched in Sindh and NWFP (former name of KPK). It was mainly financed by the World Bank along with DFID and Norwegian government. The programme had rural female focus in terms of increasing their access to education through innovative strategies of scholarship scheme, nutrition, freed text books and improved physical facilities.

#### ***Social Action Programme (SAP 1992-2002)***

Social Action Programme was a major initiative by the government of Pakistan with assistance from donor agencies to finance social sector development including education. The project was planned for all the provinces and federally administered areas. The major donors for the project were the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the Government of Netherlands and Department for International Development (DFID). The first phase of SAP was planned from 1992 to 1998 which was later extended to 2002 under SAP-II. The major emphasis of the project was on all aspects of education including access, equity and retention and had a positive bias towards girls and rural areas through community participation and decentralized governance. Although SAP was able to have positive impact in terms of increased financial allocation, increased enrolment, improved physical facilities (Federal SAP Secretariat (M&E Unit), 2001) it fell quite short in terms of qualitative achievements like improve governance structures and quality of educational provisions. There was also disparity between government claims and private surveys, whereby, government statistics claimed it to be a successful initiative while private reviews challenging the assertion (Social Policy and Development Centre, 1997, p. 101). Some of the major reasons that impeded the SAP

achievements were: centralization, misuse of discretionary powers, overstaffing, and lack of cross sectoral synergy and un-managed involvement of private sector.

### ***Punjab Middle Schooling Project (PMSP 1994-2000)***

The Punjab Middle Schooling Project focused toward improving the quality of teaching mainly through in-service teachers' training, textbooks and materials development and training of educational managers. The project targeted to improve participation and retention of children specially girls through improving quality of education. The programme is considered successful to some extent in achieving its desired objectives however its real impact on quality is questioned.

### ***USAID sponsored educational projects***

Following the events of 9/11 and Pakistan's involvement in the US led war on terror, Pakistan received good sums of educational funds targeted on various aspects of educational development. The first such programme was ESRA (Education Sector Reforms Assistance) programme, which was launched to support the government to achieve objectives set out under Education Sector Reforms of the Government of Pakistan in selected districts between 2001-2005. Further USAID sponsored programmes include ED-LINKS (Links to Learning: Education Support to Pakistan), which is a five year (2007-2012) project. The total funding support under the programme is around US\$ 90 million. The project aims at improving quality of teaching for in-service teachers along with provision of physical facilities, science and computer labs. Another project titled Pre-STEP (Pre-Service Teachers Education Program) has been in progress from 2008-2013. This programme is supported by a USAID funding of US\$ 75 million. The programme aims to enhance quality of pre service teacher education.

### **Discussion and Conclusion - Reasons hampering the achievement of policy objectives**

It is a sorry state for Pakistan that despite so many policies, plans and donor supported programmes, the overall educational scenario is still quite bleak. A glimpse of current education status has already been shared in the beginning section. The basic targets to achieve universal primary education have been continuously pushed forward and it seems quite likely that the current target of 2015 will also be missed. Reviewing various policies and plans gives a feeling that policy making in Pakistan is a continuous exercise of target revision (see Tables 7 & 8 above). The situation of deprivation persists and inequities prevail. One wonders why this exists persistently.

The National Education Policy 2009 suggests:

'There are two fundamental causes for the weak performance of the education sector: (i) lack of commitment to education – the commitment gap; and (ii) the implementation gap that has thwarted the application of policies. The two gaps are linked in practice: a lack of commitment leads to poor implementation, but the weak implementation presents problem of its own.' (p. 7)

Reflecting on failures of education policies in Pakistan, Ali (2006) lists down the following factors responsible lack of policy implementation: Unclear or ambitious policy goals; Lack of political commitment; Ineffective Governance Structure; Centralisation; Resource constraints; and problems caused by foreign aid. In fact the NEP 2009 is very open and harsh reflecting upon the reasons for policy failures and found corruption at all levels in education a serious basic cause of implementation failure. The policy states:

'Another type of implementation problem surfaces in the corruption that perverts the entire spectrum of the system. Anecdotes abound of education allocations systematically diverted

to personal use at most levels of the allocation chain. Political influence and favouritism are believed to interfere in the allocation of resources to the Districts and schools, in recruitment, training and posting of teachers and school administrators that are not based on merit, in awarding of textbook contracts, and in the conduct of examinations and assessments. The pervasive nature of corruption reflects a deeper malaise where the service to the students and learners is not at the forefront of the thought and behaviour processes in operating the system.' (p. 8)

It is also equally disappointing to see that even the donor funded project which are supposed to be better financed and better technical support have failed to uplift education sector substantially. Warwick, Reimers & McGinn (1992) reflecting on their experience of implementation of various educational innovations in Pakistan points out to four key areas that need to be kept in mind if implementation of innovations need to be made successful: First, explicit attention to culture need to be paid during project design and implementation. Second, innovation needs to be sensitive to the larger organisational structure to which it will eventually become part of. Third, for any innovation that is targeted to change teachers' behaviour, first the teachers' need to understand and buy-in the purpose and need of that innovation e.g. teaching kit. Last, traditional education planning needs to pay serious attention to culture, field implementers, clients and politics.

The fate of most recent education policy in Pakistan i.e. NEP 2009 is already unclear after two years of its approval. In 2011, the government passed the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, which devolves education to the provincial level. As a result the federal education ministry is abolished leaving a serious question of inter-provincial coordination and implementation of policy un-answered. Although there was a symbolic presentation by the Prime Minister along with provincial Chief Ministers declaring NEP 2009 a policy to be followed by the province, anecdotal experience suggest that it is not the case in practice. It seems that Pakistan will face another policy failure in coming years.

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