

Recommendations from NEP Consultation Session AJK: Muzaffarabad

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

During the breakout session, this group started its discussion by first talking about what ECE is and what its benefits are. They then moved on to discuss the ideal school environment in which the child can thrive and how parents can be involved in creating better learning environments at home. ECE experts in the group emphasized the importance of activity based learning and the need for well-equipped classrooms.

They presented the following recommendations:

- ECE should also be made free and mandatory
- A formal roadmap should be designed for ECE to ensure goals and targets are being achieved
- Information technology should be incorporated when teaching at ECE levels
- To encourage growth – both physical and mental – teaching should be activity based
- ECE specialists should be involved in the policy making process
- Government officials and parents should be briefed and educated regarding the ECE processes so they are aware of the needs and requirements of the sub-sector
- First aid training is essential for teacher and the government must ensure that teachers are prepared for emergency situation

Primary Education

In AJK in particular, participants focused a lot of teacher training, certifications, and monitoring. They discussed the need for in and pre service trainings and discussed ways in which the concept of rote learning can be replaced with creative and hand-on learning.

Below are the recommendations presented:

- Focus on ensuring school building are fully equipped and functional
- What constitutes as free education needs to be clarified – uniforms, transportation costs, books and stationery costs etc. must also be included in “free education”
- Teachers must be fully qualified and certified and must also receive pre and in-service trainings
- Measures must be taken to ensure corporal punishment is eliminated
- Effective teacher monitoring systems need to be introduced to tackle the issues of teacher absenteeism and ghost teachers
- Creative learning and elimination of rote learning should be ensured
- Student teacher ratio should be monitored and classroom sizes should remain small – approximately 25 students per class
- Different committees should be appointed for keeping an eye on the education and academic system

Secondary Education

This group focused on how education at secondary level can be improved. They also talked about the importance of bridging the gap between primary and secondary education and also ensuring that students graduating from secondary level are fully prepared for the next steps in their educational journey.

Participants pointed out that at the moment there is no proper system of evaluation in place, and no way to hold teachers accountable for their poor performance.

Recommendations presented are as follows:

- All stakeholder must be on board during the policy making process and the final policy must be shared with the masses so they are aware of what their rights are
- Education administrations must pay regular visits to schools within their districts/territory
- An accountability criterion must be defined and implemented. PPPs can prove to be helpful in this regard
- School facilities need to be upgraded
- Financial and other progress reports must be made public for a more transparent system
- SMCs should be mobilized
- Teacher must be hired on the basis of their merit and not personal recommendations

Non-Formal Education (NFE) and Adult Literacy

There was a lot of debate on making people aware of adult literacy opportunities above all else. It was noted that the masses weren't aware of what NFE or adult literacy even is and the group participants pointed out that unless people are aware that such a thing exists, we can't meet our literacy goals.

- Mass community awareness via the media and other means so stakeholders they are fully aware of the different opportunities available
- Use existing facilities /faculty after hours for NFE
- Mobilize the media to create awareness regarding NFE
- NFE should be provided in local/regional languages
- Special attention should be given to ensure women and girls are equally aware of NFE opportunities and are taking advantage of it
- Essential to have monitoring bodies in place to ensure proper funds allocation etc. and a need to strengthen the management capacity

Technical and Vocational Training (TVET)

This group focused its discussion on the importance of practical knowledge so individuals can earn a living. They addressed important questions such as how the government what can be done to create an environment more conducive to learning and make vocational training more practical and relevant. They also talked about the need for more vocational training centers and trained teachers to impart vocational training.

The recommendations are as follows:

- Number of vocational centers are limited and it is not easy for everyone to access them, therefore the number of vocational training centers must be increased
- Vocational facilities need to be created especially for girls who are unable to finish their education/schooling
- A need to create an awareness and a shift in mindsets regarding TVET
- Vocational training should also include IT and computer trainings
- Skilled/qualified teachers and trainer are essential
- Access to first aid in these centers or emergency protocol in case of accidents

Governance and Financing

The group discussed severe lags in implementation of existing rules and policies and attributed the shortcomings of the current state of education in AJK to lack of effective monitoring and evaluation tools. They discussed how school councils can be activated and how public private partnerships can be used to the public sectors advantage.

The recommendations that were presented included:

- Increasing the funds allocated to AJK as the number of schools and the problem of missing facilities is still under addressed.
- Giving the AJK government a greater say/role in the hiring process
- Getting rid of administrative barriers and only hiring on the basis of merit
- There is a need to create child protection services in AJK, a body that can ensure that all children are getting their rights
- The medium of instruction should be a mix of English and Urdu

All teachers should be hired on a contractual basis, and the contract should only be renewed if teacher performance has been up to par. Furthermore, the teacher selection criteria needs to be revised and implemented effectively