

Recommendations from NEP Consultation Session KP: Peshawar and Mardan

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

NEP 2009 acknowledges ECE as a formal stage for foundational development of a child and states that Provision of ECE shall be attached to primary schools which shall be provided with additional budget, teachers and assistants for this purpose.

The government of KP in its Education Sector Plan also states that the govt. will focus on *“expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable disadvantaged children”* through *“introduction and institutionalization of formal Early Childhood Education (ECE) at primary school level”*.

ASER data shows that despite this commitment, there is only a 46% ECE enrollment in government schools and 54% in private schools. The province is still faced with challenges of inadequate fund allocation, lack of well trained teachers, missing facilities and ill-equipped classrooms as well as inequitable access to ECE facilities.

Participants of the consultation sessions in both Mardan and Peshawar presented the following recommendations:

- ECE should be made mandatory and compulsory and a separate budget should be allocated to this sub-sector
- Introduce the Montessori system in all public schools
- Shift traditional “kachi” and “pakki” classes to play group and KG
- All ECE classrooms must be fully equipped with learning aids, toolkits, and other relevant materials
- Specialized training for ECE teachers, using modern techniques and keeping in mind latest trends and approaches in the field. Further, all teachers should receive in-service trainings
- Teachers must be well equipped to provide first aid emergency treatments and be aware of basic medical safety measures
- Community awareness campaigns are essential so parents and families realize the need and importance of ECE

Primary Education

The NEP 2009 states that all children, boys and girls, shall be brought inside schools by the year 2015. KP has incorporated this goal and in the Education Sector Plan declares *“(1) primary education for all children (boys and girls) as compulsory and free through legal mandate (implementation of 25-A). (2) Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education and achieving gender equality in education by 2015 (3) Develop linkages between all levels of education and curriculum. (4) Improve examination system with re-introduction of uniform centralized examination system at 8th and 5th class levels. (5) Improve school-level monitoring with the help of PTCs. (6) Rationalization at all levels i.e.*

primary, middle, high and higher secondary and (7) Establishing a system of regular and comprehensive classroom assessments in primary schools.”

However, even though there have been improvements, enrollment rates are still not 100%.

The following recommendations were presented by participants of the consultation sessions in both Mardan and Peshawar:

- Establish independent monitoring units for each district to ensure performance is up to par
- Monitor the student teacher ratio and make sure it's not too high
- Address the issue of missing facilities and ensure all schools have access to basics such as electricity, wall, toilets etc
- No political interference in the hiring process of teachers – teachers must be hired only on the basis of merit
- Pre and in-service trainings as well as continuous professional development programs for teachers and administrative staff
- Curriculum must be updated to include necessary units such as ICT/IT classes etc.
- There must also be uniformity in the curriculum, examinations, syllabi and medium of instruction
- Medium of instruction at this level should be a mix of Urdu and English. Regional languages can be introduced as a language subject
- All schools must have well equipped computer labs and students must start learning new technologies at primary level
- More focus on quality rather than quantity
- Schools must not be on rented premises—this is especially a problem in Mardan
- Address the issue of high dropout rates by offering scholarships and improving standards in schools
- The policy and education sector plans must be disseminated far and wide so all stakeholder are well aware of their rights and responsibilities

Secondary Education

Article 37 (b) states that the State of Pakistan shall endeavor *“to remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory **secondary** education within minimum possible period”* and the NEP 2009 states that provision shall be expanded at secondary level, particularly in the rural areas and of schools dedicated for girls. Furthermore, priority shall be given to those locations where the ratio of secondary schools is low.

With regards to secondary education, the KP Education Sector Plan states *“(1) Provide further incentives to increase access and participation of girls in mainstream education through free textbooks, stipends for girls at secondary level, voucher scheme, scholarships, hostel facilities for female teachers etc. and facilitating female teachers transportation to and from school. (2) Separate teaching and management cadres in Elementary and Secondary sector. (3) Rationalization at all levels i.e. primary, middle, high and*

higher secondary. (4) Increase in enrolment (boys and girls) at primary, middle and secondary school level.”

The following recommendations were presented in Peshawar and Mardan:

- Facilities must be updated and all secondary levels must have well equipped and fully functional labs etc.
- Teachers must only be hired on the basis of merit, and they must also be subject specialists
- Career counselors must be present on all campuses at secondary level
- A semester system should be introduced at secondary level of education to ensure proper learning
- Life-skills based education should be made a part of the curriculum

Non-Formal Education and Adult Literacy

The NEP 2009 *literacy rate shall be increased up to 86% by 2015 through up-scaling of ongoing programs of adult literacy and non-formal basic education in the country.* At present, the literacy rate in KP is 52%.

In this regard, the KP Education Sector Plan states *“The Elementary Education Foundation (EEF), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been tasked to help improve literacy by opening non-formal basic schools for left-out and dropout children of primary schools. The current growth rate will be accelerated with the opening of more non-formal basic schools and adult literacy centers.”*

The following recommendations came forth through the consultation sessions:

- Significantly increase the number of literacy programs
- Increase the budget for this sub-sector so there are more schools and facilities for this group as well
- Audio/Visual aids must be made available in all schools to facilitate the learning process
- Well trained and qualified teachers who are fully trained to address the needs to these learners

Technical and Vocational Education Training

The NEP 2009 states that *special measures shall be adopted to ensure inclusion of special persons in mainstream education as well as in literacy and TVE programs.”* And the KP Education Sector Plan also commits to *“developing education in all sectors with emphasis on female education, technical and vocational education in rural areas”*

Recommendations presented are as follows:

- Increase awareness regarding the benefits of TVETs
- Update the curriculum
- Increase the number of training centers available
- Establishment of vocational counseling and job placement section in every institute
- Adopt modern techniques for providing technical education

- Establish well equipped labs and workshops
- Introduce a method of practical assessment during exams
- Proper monitoring and check and balance especially for private tech institutes
- TVET needs to be advanced and based on market needs. Trainings and courses must be in line with industry trends
- Internships need to be made mandatory and be made a party of the curriculum
- Spark a spirit of entrepreneurship and make loans available for skilled people so they can start their own businesses

Special Education

The KP Education Sector Plan currently has no policy actions regarding special education.

During the Peshawar session which was also attended by Mr. Habib Nawaz a visually impaired PhD scholar at the University of Peshawar. Speaking from firsthand experience and on behalf of other students with similar special needs, he presented the following recommendations:

- There must be a ministry wing dedicated specifically to special education. In KP at present, special education falls under the jurisdiction of the Social Welfare Ministry which just isn't equipped or trained to address issues of special education and needs.
- The taboo attached to special needs students' needs to be eliminated, and they must be included in the main stream as well
- Accessibility issues need to be addressed campus wide e.g. wheelchair friendly campuses, books and other learning materials, as well as computer programs/software so they have access to the same information
- A greater budget and more scholarships for special education students
- Introduction of a student exchange and teacher exchange programs so there is more communication and knowledge exchange

Madrassa Education

The NEP 2009 acknowledges that Deeni Madrassas form a component of the private sector, and that this parallel system consists of a curriculum that lies outside the mainstream. The discussions in KP focused on how madrassas can be mainstreamed and monitored.

The following recommendations were gathered:

- All madrassas must be registered with the government
- Independent, third party monitoring systems must be introduced to ensure students aren't being taken advantage of
- Core curriculum should be similar to that of regular schools. Along with Quranic lessons, madrassas must also have other subjects such as science, mathematics and so on
- There must also be a strict hiring process for madrassa teachers. They must also be trained and certified

- Madrassa teacher should get a salary like all other public schools
- Comparative religious studies should also be introduced – so students learn about other religions and realize the peace is a common lesson amongst all religions
- Set a job quota for madrassa students as well. It will act as an incentive and help mainstream
- The government should provide monetary support to madrassas. This will help with monitoring madrassas as well
- External sources of funding should be strictly monitored and be made as transparent as possible