

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN EVALUATION OF A UK AID PROGRAMME

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Abstract

Right after partition, Pakistan had to face a lot of socio-economic problems, as the industrial infrastructure was almost non-existent and education facilities were scarce. The meagre resources available to the state were not enough to facilitate a sustained economic growth and development. Resultantly, Pakistan had to rely on foreign aids, loans and grants in various fields of social development process. Education is the backbone of development for any country, but unfortunately it could not get its due share of focus, neither in the form of substantial and requisite share in GDP nor in the policy priorities of successive governments. Pakistan has been seeking foreign aid and assistance to achieve 100% literacy rate and an internationally accepted standard in education. Efforts have been made, both from within the country and by international aid agencies, to uplift education sector of Pakistan. One key aspect in this regard is to spread awareness about education and demand an increase in education spending. UK aid through DFID initiated a special 'Transforming Education in Pakistan (TEP)' programme in order to raise awareness among parents and community for increasing demands to politicians to enhance education spending and provide quality education in Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the TEP programme of DFID, using qualitative research approach, based on document analysis. The study revealed that most of the objectives of TEP were achieved; however, a few are still to be accomplished.

Key words: Transforming Education in Pakistan (TEP), Development, Document Analysis, Evaluation, UK aid

Introduction

Education has been the topmost priority of the developed countries. More than anything else, they owe their socio-economic development and technological advancement to education, as they realized the importance of education long ago and took concrete measures to strengthen their education systems. However, in Pakistan, the standard and status of education is far from ideal. Issues like access, quality, equity, huge dropout, and gender parity has been infesting education system in Pakistan for the past seven decades. Low economic growth, budget deficit and a host of other economic problems force the Government of Pakistan to spend less percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education. The recent government figures of percentage

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share of GDP spending on education is 2.2% for the fiscal year 2017-18.¹ This GDP allocation is far less, as compared to allocation made in the developed countries. Education related expenditure in rupees was 699.2 billion for the fiscal year 2017. That expenditure was further categorized as current expenditure and development expenditure. For the year 2017, out of 699.2 billion rupees, 596.9 billion accounts for current expenditures and 102.3 billion accounts for development expenditure.²

It is evident from the budget allocations that education spending of Pakistan is too low to provide universal access to education and improve its quality. With a population of 207,774,520 out of which 132,189,531 is rural population,³ this budget allocation does not justify and ensure equity and equality. In the adult literacy report published by Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) (2014-15) the national literacy rate of Pakistan was 57%, with a 68% for male and 45% for female. For the provinces, it reported literacy rate of 60%, 58%, 47%, and 38% in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan, respectively.³ Along with these constraints, there are serious challenges of gross enrolment and net enrolment rate issues that the education system of Pakistan is coping with. Gross enrolment ratio at the primary level (age six to 10 years) for overall Pakistan was 92%, while the net enrolment rate at primary level was reportedly 68% at National level.⁴

Survival rate to grade five was reported to be 67% for the year 2016-17. The effective transition rate from primary grade to middle grade was recorded 84% in 2016-17 and that for middle grade to secondary level was reported to be 91% for the year 2016-17.⁵ Alongside enhancing students' enrolment and their successful promotion and transition to the desired levels, ensuring quality of education has also been a real challenge for the education system of Pakistan since beginning. Issues like huge number of out of school children, inadequate facilities and poor infrastructure are haunting our education system. For example, there were 22.84 million out of school children in Pakistan according to the census report. Further, this report informed about the out of school children by levels. At primary school age there were 5.06 million, and at the middle, secondary, and higher secondary levels there were 6.51 million, 4.97 million, and 6.29 million out of school children, respectively.⁶ In all these levels, it has been reported that the number of out of school girls were more than boys. This also highlights the challenge of gender parity.

These indicators of the education system of Pakistan are not very optimistic. They indicate the need of continuous effort and reforms. There have been numerous policies and plans on education, all setting high targets to achieve, but many of them have not yet been accomplished. This picture of the education system of Pakistan demands foreign assistance and grants as the domestic resources are not enough to deal with these challenges. There have been many multi-lateral and bi-lateral organizations working in Pakistan. UK aid stands out of them, because of its direct relevance and interest in the school education sector. UK aid is most relevant, when it comes to reforms in the school education of Pakistan. UK aid, through its Department for International Development (DFID), provides aid assistance to the developing countries. The main purpose of any foreign aid agency or institution is to support social development in developing countries.⁷ Foreign aid agencies, whether multi-lateral or bi-lateral, plan to make interventions successful, irrespective of changing their basic incentive patterns. DFID, a bi-lateral aid organization, has a long history of working in Pakistan. DFID and UK aid have an operational plan 2011-16 for Pakistan, which enlists their specific targets.⁸ This plan has highlighted the targets and aid assistance of DFID for school education in Pakistan on the baseline indicators of the year 2010.

DFID has initiated a full-fledged programme on the transformation of education by the name, Transforming Education in Pakistan (TEP). There are several other programmes being run by DFID to promote school education in Pakistan; however, TEP was selected, because its key objective was to spread awareness and demand politicians to increase spending on education. Moreover, TEP also conforms to and addresses the educational facts and figures discussed by the researchers in the earlier section. Accordingly, researchers intend to see the influence of this programme on the education system of Pakistan.

Research studies on the evaluation of foreign aid in education have developed an argument on the effectiveness and usefulness of foreign aid. Some studies have even discussed the reasons for failure of foreign aid.⁹ USAID was evaluated and some key principles were underlined for evaluating foreign assistance.⁸ Evaluation of UK aid (DFID) has critically reflected on its procedures. Investigation was done about the aid effectiveness and reasons of why foreign aid is speculated even by the local recipients. In the context of

Pakistan, a study was conducted that evaluated one of the programmes of the UK aid that was based on primary level education reforms.¹⁰ In this regard, all the research articles were compiled on foreign aid phenomena and a series of articles and literature in the review of aid evaluation was developed.¹¹ In these articles, the historical and latest trends in aid evaluation studies were explained.¹² Based on these principles and literature available on the aid evaluation, the researchers have conducted the present study to evaluate TEP in terms of its influence on the education sector of Pakistan.

Transforming Education in Pakistan

The Transforming Education in Pakistan programme is a £ 20 million initiative by DFID. This programme is principally a social and political campaign on education that intends to encourage parents to demand and challenge politicians to deliver better quality education. An international development company by the name Development Alternatives International (DAI), previously known as HTSPE, is the fund-partner of DFID for this programme. The purpose of this international supplier/fund-partner is to manage funds for DFID, as DFID always takes the services of an international partners for funds disbursement. This is aligned with the transparency and accountability principles of DFID and UK aid. Initially, the time duration of TEP was from 2011 to 2015, but this was later extended to the year 2018.

Objective of the Research

The main objective of this study was to evaluate TEP to see the influence of the programme on education in Pakistan. The research has specifically explored the operations of TEP and its benefits to the education system of Pakistan. The following research questions were posed to conduct the research:-

- Who were the recipients of TEP?
- How were the recipients selected for TEP?
- What specific interventions were initiated by TEP?
- How was TEP monitored and evaluated?
- What role had TEP played in influencing the educational outcomes of Pakistan?

Methodology

Using a qualitative approach, an evaluative case study research design was employed to review and analyze TEP in terms of influencing the educational outcomes of Pakistan. This research was carried out, using document analysis method and documents of TEP selected for the purpose, include business case, technical contracts, annual reviews 1-4, and logical framework.¹³ The findings from the document analysis were compared with the official reports of the government of Pakistan to validate them. Researchers have made a conscious effort to uphold the ethical considerations and relied, in good faith, on the monetary values, as presented by TEP on their web resources—the ‘development tracker’, which is referred to as ‘devtracker’— and review reports.

Findings

The findings from the document analysis are given below for each research question.

‘Transforming Education in Pakistan’ Programme

The findings from document analysis revealed that the desired purpose outcome of TEP was: *parents are mobilized to demand, and political leaders are galvanized to deliver a better education for children*. To achieve the purpose, TEP had the following seven intended outcomes:-

1. Getting support from political leaders for reforms in the education sector.
2. Raising the level of political leaders/parliamentarians’ responsiveness to education as an important public welfare issue.
3. Increasing allocations in budget on education by provincial governments.
4. Enhancing parents awareness about the benefits of completing primary education by their children.
5. Increasing awareness in parents to demand higher standards and quality of teaching.
6. Enhancing participation of parents in school governance structures

7. Developing a greater interaction of parents with their parliamentarians to highlight the issue of education.

To achieve these outcomes, following measurable outputs were planned:-

- National, provincial and local governments to actively focus on improving access to and quality of education.
- Practical, cost-effective policy solutions to be communicated to Pakistani political leaders at federal, provincial and district level.
- Civil society to be mobilized to form alliances to demand education reforms.
- Data and evidence on education to be generated and aggregated.
- Campaign strategy to be developed (This additional output was included after the extension of the programme).

The Recipients of TEP

The document analysis found out that there were two broad categories of recipients: (i) international fund recipient and (ii) local recipients. DAI was international fund recipient and *Alif Ailaan* (education declaration), Mir Khalil-Ur-Rehman Foundation (MKRF), and *Idara-Taleem-O-Agahi* were the local recipients.

Selection of the Recipients

The international recipients were selected after the approval of the business case, which is a comprehensive plan for the total duration of the TEP and it included all intended outcomes of the interventions. After that, Official Journal of European Union (OJEU) was followed, which adheres to a rigorous process of selecting, evaluating and awarding tenders and is bound to publish the tenders of the public sector that exceed a certain amount limit.

For the selection of local recipients, TEP invited proposal through 'Request for Applications' (RFA), which is a process of inviting proposal for the planned interventions. The local partners sent proposals to RFA and these proposals went through strict and rigorous scrutiny. The conformity with the objectives, their capacity and capability, technical assistance requirements, and self-

sufficiency were a few factors that were considered in proposal scrutiny and grant allocation process.

Specific Interventions Introduced by TEP

The following interventions introduced by TEP were revealed through the document analysis. *Alif Ailaan's* District Education Rankings Report was an intervention of data generation and maintenance of education. Another intervention of *Alif Ailaan* was the repository that contained video records of all the promises made by politicians belonging to different political parties.¹⁴ *Alif Ailaan* also convened a first national teachers' conference to adopt the charter of knowledge. A considerable number of teacher unions/associations developed the charter to advocate the cause for quality education. *Alif Ailaan* and DFID also worked on political charter on education in Sindh.¹⁵ The major intervention of *Idara-Taleem-O-Agahi's* (ITA) was the Annual Status of Education Report.¹⁶

MKRF managed 'ilm centre' to record complaints of parents and their awareness campaign was right on target via Geo TV channel. MKRF had a two-year national media campaign on education, which aimed to educate parents, so that they could hold politicians and providers accountable for ensuring quality education (January 2012–January 2014). The campaign of MKRF 'zara sochiye' made its mark and complemented *Alif Ailaan's* campaign on media.

MKRF and its campaign *zara sochiye* ended in 2014 and *Idara-Taleem-O-Agahi* grant for ASER ended in 2015. In May 2016, an extension was made in *Alif Ailaan* campaign for two years. Previously this programme was planned till October 2016, but later it was extended till August 31, 2018, in order to continue campaigning till the general elections in 2018. In the extension period, *Alif Ailaan* re-focused on the following five points:-

- **Protect.** The campaign will sustain progress on education reform over the election period and beyond.
- **Promote.** Make the 2018 election an 'Education Election' and make education a vote winner for all political parties.
- **Propel.** Advocate for policy changes that improve the availability and quality of education in Pakistan, and subsequently, contribute to stability in the country.

- **Push.** Push for better government schools. Parents to demand, and governments to supply better government schools. The focus on government schools aims to reduce the multiple divisions in Pakistani society, which can lead to exclusion and a lack of opportunity.
- **Pull.** Establish an alliance of civil society organisations that will amplify the work of the campaign and continue it after 2018.

Monitoring and Evaluation of TEP

As revealed by the document analysis, two instruments were used for the monitoring and evaluation of TEP:-

- A political will tracker, which surveyed 100 politicians annually.
- A bi-annual Parent-Teacher Engagement and Satisfaction survey, which surveyed 2000 parents.

These two instruments were surveyed every year through Ipsos Mori; one of the largest market research organization in UK. The surveys showed an incremental trend in the awareness of this campaign in politicians as well as in parents.

Along with these instruments, TEP had Annual Audit Reviews by international third party evaluation firms. The firms were hired by TEP and the reviews were conducted based on factors like risk management, progress of targets, resource allocation & utilization, market competitiveness, and impact of the interventions.

Influence of TEP on Educational Outcomes in Pakistan

The role played by TEP in supporting education system is evident through the interventions that TEP had introduced and executed to achieve its outputs and outcomes. The results of those interventions are tangible as well as intangible. The tangible results can be seen in terms of community involvement and increased demand for more budgetary allocation for the education sector. Yet, there is a need for continued persistent efforts until they bear fruits. The GDP allocation, the core objective of TEP for which all outcomes and outputs were planned, has not risen above 2.2% of the GDP. It means the most important tangible result TEP has not been achieved.

The intangible result that could be achieved to some extent was that most of the youth became politically aware and they exercised their rights in the general elections, based on the performance and manifestos of political parties on education. Their political awareness could be gauged through the use of and discussions on social media. The awareness of parents enhanced and they fervently demanded quality education from schools.

Discussion

To discuss each outcome of TEP, it is stated that outcome 1, and 2 have been fully achieved as the parliamentarians and politicians are now vocal on the educational problems and issues. Outcome-3 has not been achieved and it seems to take longer than the planned time to eventually raise the education budget. Outcome 4, 5 and 6 seem to be achieved to some extent, as parents demand a high quality of education from schools. Schools have also focused on opening gates for parents through parent-teacher meetings, parent counseling seminars, orientation sessions, and other formal and informal gatherings, which brought in a new school culture in Pakistan, especially in the private sector. However, outcome-7 has not been achieved and a mechanism of parent-parliamentarian engagement needs to be devised. In Pakistan, parents and parliamentarians do not have a forum, where they can communicate and discuss. However, at present, it does not sound practical and the researchers have found no evidence to the effect that TEP has taken any concrete step for this outcome. Researchers realized that there is a need for Involvement of locals in need assessment and planning of the UK aid programmes, as it might help in developing contextual objectives, outcomes and outputs of the programme.

The work of MKRF was evident on television screens and it played a vital role in spreading awareness about setting education as a priority of the government. The *zara sochiye* campaign had television commercials on awareness of early education as well as on the importance of education for political parties. It raised the slogan of '*taleem ko vote do*' (vote for education).¹⁷ The impact of this slogan was such that the political parties were to add education as a priority in their manifestos and political speeches. This also spread awareness among the youth to vote for those political parties in the general elections of 2013 that talked about education. However, to probe into voting trends in the general elections of 2013, to see the influence of this

campaign on the voting patterns and number of population influenced by this social awareness campaign needs a separate study.

As regards the question related to monitoring and evaluation of the TEP, it was revealed that TEP took strict measures to ensure monitoring and evaluation. The same is also in accordance with the literature that monitoring and evaluation is the single key feature of the success of any aid programme. This is the latest trend in the evaluation of all foreign aid that all grants are evaluated on results and outcomes.¹⁷ *Alif Ailaan* also maintained a continuous internal monitoring and evaluation process, which has ensured the timely achievement of targets.

The TEP programme is close to complete now, but it needs to add specific details in the political campaign and social awareness campaigns such as SDGs targets and achievements so far, and the business market it has created to uplift the budget deficit gap. Raising GDP allocation to education requires means, and necessitates sound ideas and concrete steps. A mechanism to ensure increase in budgetary spending is essential, as awareness alone cannot help the cause.

Literature informs two major reasons for international aid failure that are also relevant to this aid programme.¹⁸ These reasons are the lack of incentive from the donors, other than the planned interventions and the chain of aid delivery.¹⁹ Another major hurdle for the success of any international funded programme is the discontinuation of the policies after the change of the government.²⁰ However, in case of TEP no such hindrances have been indicated after the general elections of 2018. Therefore, the TEP programme must continue with the same ambition to achieve its intended outcomes. Thus, the findings of the study concerning the planned outputs and outcomes of TEP showed that the programme have been a success in achieving most of its outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

TEP has helped in spreading the awareness of education to the masses. The political parties have also started talking about education in political gatherings and election slogans. The youth of Pakistan and parents are much aware of the need for quality education and they demand the same from the government and the relevant educational institutions. Though the actual target of raising the percentage spending of the GDP on education is not achieved, yet the efforts of

TEP seem like a building block and a stepping stone in this direction. The extension in TEP was given, based on its success and perceived influence. The influence it is making on the educational outcomes will take some time, as the objectives of the programme are inclined towards spreading awareness. It can be hoped that with the continuation of the TEP, the fruitful results in the educational outcomes of Pakistan as planned will be achieved. The rise in the allocation of GDP percentage to education is also not very far away, provided there is economic stability and prosperity in the country.

The recommendations for TEP programme are to involve more local partners through grants. The interventions and projects from the local partners must continue after the completion of the TEP. This should be considered as a key feature, while allotting grants to the local partners. More media groups should be involved. Means and ways need to be explored by the TEP to enhance the budgetary allocation to education. Unless budget allocation is not raised up to 4% of the GDP, quality, equity, equality, and gender parity in education will not be achieved.

Researchers recommend that various DFID programmes, being executed in Pakistan, may also be evaluated for the viability and utility by local researchers/evaluators. Evaluating the programmes by local researchers and discussing the results and findings in the local context and demographics will make DFID initiatives more effective. It will also help highlight the ground realities and identify the real gaps based on the need assessment.

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