

**Title: Challenges Of Governance in Pakistan: Social Development in Pakistan and Analysis  
of Education Policies at School Level (2008-22)**

**Supervisor:**

**Assistant professor Ahmad Sabat.**

**Researcher:**

**Muhammad Iqbal**

**Roll No. MPPWS-23-11**

**Session 2023-2025**

**M.Phil. in Pakistan Studies**



**Supervisor:**

**Department of Pakistan Studies**

**Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan**

## THESIS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

It is certified that contents and form of thesis submitted by **Muhammad Iqbal** on "Primary Education System & Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Multan District (2000-2013)" has been found satisfactory. I hereby declare that I have read this thesis, and, in my opinion, this thesis is sufficient in terms of scope and quality for the award of degree of M. Phil Pakistan Studies.

**Ahmad Sabat**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Department of Pakistan Studies**  
**Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan**

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis titled “**Social Development in Pakistan and Analysis of Education Policies at School Level (2008–2022)**” is my original work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. All sources of information used in this study have been properly acknowledged through appropriate references.

I further declare that this research has been carried out under the guidance of my supervisor and complies with the academic and ethical standards prescribed by the concerned department and the university. Any views, findings, interpretations, or conclusions expressed in this thesis are solely those of the researcher.

This declaration is made in good faith and with full responsibility for the content of the study.

**Muhammad Iqbal**

**MPhil (Pakistan Studies)**

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Almighty Allah for granting me the strength, patience, and guidance to complete this research successfully. This thesis would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many individuals and institutions.

I am deeply thankful to my supervisor, whose invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement greatly contributed to the completion of this study. Their academic insight and commitment helped shape this research and improved its quality at every stage. I also extend my appreciation to the faculty members of the department for their support, academic input, and encouragement throughout my studies.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of educational institutions, government departments, and organizations whose reports, policy documents, and data sources were essential for this research. Their publicly available resources provided a strong foundation for analysis and discussion.

My heartfelt thanks go to my family, whose unwavering support, patience, and prayers sustained me throughout this academic journey. I am especially grateful for their motivation and understanding during challenging times.

Finally, I extend my appreciation to my friends and colleagues who offered encouragement, constructive discussions, and moral support during the research process. To all those who contributed directly or indirectly to this study, I am truly grateful.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**AEPAM** – Academy of Educational Planning and Management

**ASER** – Annual Status of Education Report

**BISP** – Benazir Income Support Programme

**CDG** – City District Government

**EMIS** – Education Management Information System

**GDP** – Gross Domestic Product

**GER** – Gross Enrollment Rate

**GPI** – Gender Parity Index

**KP** – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

**MDGs** – Millennium Development Goals

**NEP** – National Education Policy

**NER** – Net Enrollment Rate

**SDGs** – Sustainable Development Goals

**SNC** – Single National Curriculum

**UNESCO** – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between school-level education policies and social development in Punjab, Pakistan, during the period 2008–2022. Education is widely recognized as a key driver of social development, influencing literacy, enrollment, gender equality, human capital formation, and social inclusion. Following the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010, education governance in Pakistan was devolved to provincial governments, granting Punjab greater autonomy in designing and implementing education reforms. This research analyzes how these policies were implemented at the school level and assesses their impact on selected social development indicators.

The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach based on secondary data obtained from government reports, policy documents, and publications of national and international organizations. Key education policies examined include the National Education Policy 2009, decentralization reforms, curriculum changes such as the Single National Curriculum, gender-focused initiatives, and governance and monitoring mechanisms. Social development indicators analyzed include literacy rates, enrollment, gender parity, retention and dropout rates, teacher availability, infrastructure, early childhood education, and inclusion of marginalized groups.

The findings indicate that Punjab made significant progress in improving access to education, expanding infrastructure, enhancing monitoring systems, and reducing gender gaps in enrollment. However, challenges related to education quality, regional disparities, teacher capacity, centralized governance, and socio-cultural barriers limited the overall effectiveness of policy implementation. The study concludes that while education policies in Punjab contributed positively to social development, their full potential remains unrealized. Strengthening teaching quality, decentralizing decision-making, promoting inclusion, and focusing on learning outcomes are essential for ensuring education serves as a sustainable driver of social development in Punjab.

## Table of Contents

Declaration.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
List of Abbreviations.....	5
Abstract.....	6
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 Background of Social Development in Pakistan.....	10
1.2 Education as a Driver of Social Development.....	13
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	16
1.4 Research Questions.....	17
1.5 Research Objectives.....	18
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	18
1.7 Research Methodology Overview.....	19
1.7.1 Qualitative Component.....	19
1.7.2 Quantitative Component.....	19
1.7.3 Time Frame of the Study.....	19
1.8 Scope and Delimitations.....	20
1.9 Theoretical framework.....	20
1.9 Organization of the Thesis.....	23
1.10 Definition of Key Terms.....	24
1.11 Ethical Considerations.....	24
1.12 Limitations of the Study.....	25
1.13 Literature Review.....	26

CHAPTER 2 – EDUCATION POLICIES IN PAKISTAN (2008–2022).....	34
2.1 Introduction.....	34
2.2 National Education Policy 2009 .....	35
2.3 Decentralization and the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010) .....	37
2.4 Curriculum Reforms and the Single National Curriculum (SNC).....	40
2.5 Gender-Focused Education Policies .....	43
CHAPTER 3 – SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION INDICATORS.....	49
3.1 Introduction.....	49
3.2 Literacy Rate.....	50
3.3 Enrollment Rate .....	54
3.4 Gender Parity Index (GPI).....	57
3.5 Retention and Dropout Rates.....	61
3.6 Quality of Education .....	65
3.7 Teacher Availability and Training.....	69
3.8 Access to Early Childhood Education.....	73
3.9 School Infrastructure and Resources .....	74
3.10 Inclusion of Marginalized Groups .....	78
3.11 Health and Nutrition Programs in Schools.....	81
3.12 Use of Technology in Education.....	84
3.13 Summary of Social Development and Education Indicators .....	88
CHAPTER 4 – POLICY IMPLEMENTATION & CHALLENGES	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	95
4.2 Education Policy Implementation in Punjab.....	96
4.3 Key Challenges in Policy Implementation .....	100

4.4 Governance, Coordination, and Capacity Constraints .....	102
4.5 Social and Cultural Barriers .....	105
4.6 Conclusion .....	107
CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS .....	111
5.1 Introduction.....	111
5.2 Conclusions.....	111
5.3 Recommendations.....	113

ScholarlyPen

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Social Development in Pakistan

Social development is a multidimensional process aimed at ensuring that the overall quality of life of people and communities is improved through increasing their access to education, health care, equal employment opportunities, social protection, gender equality and inclusive governance. It transcends the economic growth to focus on human well-being, social justice and fair resource allocation. Social development has been one of the key issues of policy in developing countries like Pakistan because of the structural imbalances, large number of populations, political instability and unequal access to basic services. The background of social development in Pakistan is vital because it can help assess how the education policies can influence social outcomes (Khan et al., 2022).

The country began its independence in the year 1947, but ever since, Pakistan has had constant problems constructing a robust social development framework. The country also received poor institutional frameworks, illiteracy, poor health facilities and poverty, which were rife at the time of independence. The initial development policies were based on economic growth and industrialization at the cost of investment in the social sector. Due to this, education, health, and social welfare were not given much consideration in national planning and thus the human development indicators saw slow progress in the initial decades of nation-building (Abbas et al., 2025).

Social development in Pakistan has largely been caused by population growth. The population of the country is rapidly growing, and it has exerted a lot of stress on education systems, health services, homes and employment opportunities. Having a high number of young people in the population, the schooling and social provision needs have always been higher than the ability of the state to provide them in an appropriate way. This population pressure has led to congested schools, shortages of teachers and poor infrastructure, especially in the rural and undeveloped areas (Abbas et al., 2025).

Economic instability has also contributed largely in determining the results of social development. The economic crises at certain intervals, budget deficits and recourse to foreign loans have limited

government expenditure in social sectors. Even though economic growth varies with time all through the decades, social sector distributions have been relatively low as opposed to defense and payment of debts. This has restricted the capacity of the government to grow and enhance social services thereby halting the growth in education, health and poverty alleviation (Naz et al., 2025).

The study of education has been one of the pillars of social development in Pakistan. It is considered an important instrument of human capital development, reduction of poverty, social mobility, and political involvement. Nevertheless, there have always been systemic issues in the education system of Pakistan such as low attendance, high dropout rates, gender gap, and inadequate learning results (Shoaib, Ali, et al., 2025). These problems have directly affected social development because they had restricted people from accessing job opportunities and engaging effectively in society.

Pakistan is still plagued with gender inequality as a challenge to social development. The culture, poverty and lack of access to learning institutions have disfavored education of girls especially in schools. Despite these developments in terms of gaining more female enrolment over the years, the disparities in the literacy levels of both men and women continue to be evident particularly in the rural regions (Ashraf, 2023). The social consequences of gender differences in education are more general since the educational level of women is strictly connected with the increase of their health rates, lower fertility, and more economic activity.

The social development picture in Pakistan is also complicated by the regional inequality. There are considerable disparities between urban and rural regions and provinces on education, health services and infrastructure facilities (Shoaib et al., 2024). The cities tend to have better schools, trained educators, and educational facilities, whereas rural and isolated regions have to deal with poor facilities and lack of state control. Such imbalances have resulted in lack of equal social developmental outcomes and endless poverty and marginalization.

Social development has not always been made due to political instability and governance issues. The change of government, changing priorities of policies and lack of institutional coordination have increased policy discontinuity and ineffective implementation (Shoaib, Rasool, et al., 2025). Social development programs such as education reforms have been cut short or reorganized before realizing their desired results. Also, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and poor accountability

systems have eroded the confidence of many people and lowered the effectiveness of the social programs.

The education factor in social development gained even greater significance in the policy discourse of Pakistan in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The rise in the global focus on human development, as well as the international initiatives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), made Pakistan a country focusing on education and social inclusion (AN, 2024). These international systems emphasize the need to recognize primary education as universal, gender equality, and high quality learning as important elements of social development.

Although there have been such policy commitments, there has been uneven progress in social development. The level of literacy has been increasing slowly, yet the results of learning and the quality of education remain below the regional averages (Kousar et al., 2023). Numerous children, especially those in the underprivileged groups, are out of school or do not even get basic education. This has curtailed the transformative power of education as a source of social development.

Social protection schemes like cash transfer programs and special poverty alleviation schemes have helped in social development by aiding the vulnerable populations. Nevertheless, these programs have been mostly carried out without education policies and so they have minimized their effects in the long term (Rafiq, 2024). Greater alignment of education and social protection would also increase the outcome of social development, in terms of both access and school retention.

The years preceding 2008 signified the shift in Pakistan in terms of social development. The heightened awareness of the relationship between education and social development, as well as the need to enhance better governance, preconditioned serious reforms in policies (Kamran & Bano, 2025). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the social development strategies was still hampered by structural issues, resource limitation, and implementation gap.

The general social development background of Pakistan is greatly characterized by a multidimensional interaction of demographic crunches, economic limitations, and governance issues and social disparities (Rafiq et al., 2024). Education is placed in a central stage of this landscape where it provides opportunities as well as challenges in promoting social development.

This historical and contextual context can give a critical background to the analysis of the education policies through the school level and evaluation of its contribution to the social developmental outcomes during the 2008-2022 period.

## **1.2 Education as a Driver of Social Development**

It is a known fact that education is one of the most effective forces in social development. It is at the center in defining individual capacities, social values, and institutional effectiveness contributing to the magnitude of development of societies. Education does not just enhance economic growth, but also serves to enhance social cohesion, equity, democratic participation as well as quality of life (Ishfaq et al., 2024). In developing nations like Pakistan where social disparities and structural problems still prevail, education and especially education at the school level is a very vital tool of facilitating an inclusive and sustainable social development.

Essentially, education is an enrichment of human capital as it instills knowledge, skills and competency necessary to engage in productive activities in society. Educated and literate people have greater access to job opportunities, technological change, and economic productivity. In Pakistan, where a significant portion of the population relies on low-skilled work, better school education is necessary to create poverty and underemployment break cycles (A. Ahmad et al., 2023). Education helps people to get out of subsistence livelihoods, and this promotes social mobility hence the minimization of income inequality.

Education is essential in ensuring social inclusion and equity other than attaching economic value. By making education and development equal, school education can be used to reduce the variations in terms of gender, region, and social economic background (A. Ahmad et al., 2023). The history in Pakistan is that, access to quality education has always been biased with minority groups greatly hampered. The development and enhancement of school education can be a way of incorporating the disadvantaged groups into the mainstream of social and economic life, which will enforce social cohesion and decrease exclusion.

Education too is one of the tools of promoting gender equality, which is one of the essential elements of social development. Girl education has been found to bring about significant social impacts such as better maternal and child health, reduced fertility rates, higher household earnings, and better female engagement in decision-making activities (Aslam et al., 2022). In Pakistan, women have been less empowered socially and economically due to gender inequalities mostly at

the school level. The development of policies that give priority to the education of girls also directly lead to the development of a wider society (through the creation of healthier, fairer and more resilient societies).

The other notable aspect of education in the development of society is its contribution to health and well-being. Education enhances the capacity of individuals to access and use health services, to have healthier lifestyles and make informed choices in terms of nutrition, hygiene and family planning. Poor health outcomes, particularly in women and children, are very much related to low levels of education in Pakistan (Akram et al., 2024). Through enhancement of school education, especially in underserved communities, the state can indirectly enhance the indicators of public health and minimize social weaknesses.

Civic engagement and democratic participation also help in sustainable social development, and this is also supported by education. School education develops critical thinking, social consciousness, and awareness of the rights and duties. Educated citizens will tend to take part in activities in the community, take part in the democratic processes and hold institutions accountable (Ha et al., 2023). Education can be used to transform Pakistan where democratic institutions have not been embraced easily, and the people can embrace active citizenship, social responsibility and the rule of law.

In the society level, education helps in the development of social capital the networks, norms and trust that make it easy to cooperate in societies. Schools act as social institutions where a person with different backgrounds can get to interact, exchange values and get to know each other. The socially diverse scene in Pakistan is a situation where school education can assist in closing the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural gaps, which will aid in integrating the nation and ensuring social harmony (Lashari et al., 2025). The content of curricula, the teaching practices and the school setting all have a role in determining how education can be used to enhance social cohesion.

The quality of education is an important measure in the effects of the same to social development. It is not just the numbers of people being enrolled that hinder the potential gains of education by not guaranteeing meaningful learning outcomes. In Pakistan, the issues facing education include poor teacher training, curriculum, overpopulated classrooms, and poor evaluation systems (Saud & Ashfaq, 2022). Unless such issues are addressed the education reforms might not yield the social and developmental results they are meant to bring. Good education is critical in building problem-

solving capabilities, moral principles and flexibility characteristics that form the foundation of societal development.

Education is also an important factor in the intergenerational social mobility. When parents are educated, they will have more chances of investing in their education and health, and a virtuous circle of development (Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2024). In Pakistan, where poverty is mostly a generational disease, building up on the school level can break this cycle by widening the chances of the children of the disadvantaged backgrounds. Social development plans which lay emphasis on education are therefore long term and compounding.

Amidst the globalization and technological transformation, education has grown to be more significant in social development. Basic education is essential in terms of accessing information, digital technology, and future flexibility in the labor markets. In the case of Pakistan, it is necessary to enhance the level of education in schools as a means of equipping the future generation to engage in globalized economy without undermining the social stability. Through education people can cope with change in society and hence the chances of marginalization and social unrest are diminished.

The role of public policy is very essential in the contribution of education to the social development. Efficient education policies should grant equal access, quality education, topical curriculum, and favorable learning conditions. In Pakistan, policy activities to increase school education are manifested with the perception of the social significance of education. Nevertheless, difficulties with implementation, coordination and governance have usually hampered policy performance. It is necessary to align education policies with other social development goals to make them as effective as possible.

Education has the effect of applying values, attitudes, and behaviors at the school level, thus influencing the social development of a person at an early age. Schools are not schools of learning only, but they are also socialization centers. They affect standards of tolerance, teamwork, discipline, and diversity respect. Some of the social problems that could be solved in Pakistan through the promotion of inclusive and values-based education include extremism, intolerance, and social fragmentation.

In Pakistan, education is a main agent of social growth, which impacts on economic prospects, social equity, health, government, and social integration. It has an enormous influence, especially at school level where core competencies and principles are developed. Although Pakistan has realized quality education as an element of its development agenda, the issues surrounding its access, quality, and implementation have limited its influence on society (Zaib, 2022). The conception of education as a social development factor can offer a framework of critical analysis of education policies on the school level and their efficacy in enhancing inclusive and sustainable social development in the time of the study.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Social development has been a thorn in the flesh of Pakistan since decades of a policy intervention with education being a major area of concern. It is a well-known fact that education is one of the main impetuses of social development as it can affect literacy rates, access to job prospects, sex equality, political engagement, and the quality of life. Pakistan is no exception, where governments over the years have come up with various education policies and reform programs that have the mentioned aim of enhancing social development results (Ahmad et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the anticipated changes in the important social indicators at school level have not been achieved in totality and this casts doubt on the effectiveness of these policies.

Pakistan had several significant education reforms between 2008 and 2022, such as; the National Education Policy 2009, provincial education sector plans pursuant to the 18th Constitutional Amendment and introduction of the Single National Curriculum. These reforms were meant to provide access to education, increase quality, decrease gender and regional differences, and lead to social cohesion. Nevertheless, Pakistan is still struggling with low literacy rates, high rates of dropouts, low learning outcomes, and vast disparities in urban and rural settings, and also, provinces (Tabassum et al., 2025). These long-standing issues hint at the lack of correspondence between the policy intentions and the real results at the school level.

Among the main issues is the fact that the gap between policy making and implementing is such. Even though the education policies of Pakistan have ambitious objectives, they are not usually implemented due to the weak institutional capacity, insufficient funding, governance problem, and inconsistent monitoring systems. The restructuring of the education system following the 18 th Amendment, which resulted in the decentralization of education governance only made policy

implementation even more complicated since different provinces had different abilities to develop, fund, and carry out effective school-level reforms (Shoaib, Ahmed, et al., 2025). Consequently, education policies have had a disproportionate social development across localities and groups of people.

Moreover, the policies in education have failed to sufficiently capture the qualitative elements of education, including training of the teachers, relevance of the curriculums and learning conditions that are essential in ensuring significant social growth (Villela & Paredes, 2022). The persistence of the focus on access, in the absence of similar advances in quality, has restricted the potential of school education to promote the development of critical thinking, social inclusion, and upward social mobility. Therefore, even in terms of the policy reforms during the 2008-2022, education does not completely translate into permanent gain of social development.

Considering these issues, systematic examination of education policies on the school level and their effect on social development in Pakistan is necessary. The paper attempts to fill this gap by investigating the performance of education policies that were put into effect in the period between 2008 and 2022 and determining their role in influencing key social development indicators (Asif et al., 2022). It is important to the analysis of why education reforms have been ineffective and to provide the future policy choices that can be made to attain inclusive and sustainable social development.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What were the major education policies implemented at the school level in Pakistan between 2008 and 2022?
2. How have these policies influenced key social development indicators?
3. What challenges hindered effective policy implementation?
4. To what extent have education reforms contributed to social development outcomes in Pakistan?

## 1.5 Research Objectives

- To analyze education policies at the school level in Pakistan (2008–2022)
- To examine trends in social development indicators linked to education
- To assess policy effectiveness and implementation challenges
- To propose evidence-based recommendations for future education reforms

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

The study has high academic, policy, and social implications because it considers the connection between the education policies at the school level and social development in Pakistan between the year 2008 and 2022. It is commonly recognized that education is a primary source of social development; nonetheless, little has been done in terms of the empirical evaluation of the relation between education policy and the possible resultant effects of such a policy on the process of social development in Pakistan (Alam et al., 2024). By concentrating on this critical stage of policy reform, the study can be used to instill a better insight into how education plays a crucial role in the development of society in the context of a developing country.

Academically, the research contributes to the body of research on education policy analysis and social development by giving a time-bound assessment, covering all the school-level reforms in Pakistan. It also fills a gap in the literature by providing policy objectives with real indicators of social development including literacy levels, school attendance, gender equality, and attendance. The results can provide a good resource to scholars and students who study education economics, development studies, public policy, and social sciences and have the South Asian context in mind.

Regarding policy implications, this study offers informed findings that could assist policymakers, education planners, and government agencies to evaluate the success of the education reforms in the past. The study presents useful lessons by determining strengths, weaknesses and gaps in policies implemented at schools, which can be used to design and implement suitable policies in the future. The analysis will be able to help provincial and federal governments to develop more coherent, inclusive, and outcome-focused strategies on education which will be more responsive to social development objectives.

The study is also important socially because it brings forward the large implications of education policy on social equity, gender inclusion and human development. The knowledge of how the policies of education influence social development may be utilized by the stakeholders in education, development organizations, and civil society to persuade the government to make reforms that will provide equitable access to quality education (Shuja et al., 2022). Finally, the proposed study will contribute to the creation of an education system that does not only help to enhance schooling results, but it also will play a positive role in inclusive and sustainable social development in Pakistan.

## **1.7 Research Methodology Overview**

This proposal will be designed as mixed-method research to investigate the connection between education policies in schools and social development in Pakistan between the years 2008 and 2022. The mixed-method design provides the possibility to understand the policy intentions in a broad way and the measurable outcomes, which may increase the validity and reliability of the results.

### **1.7.1 Qualitative Component**

The qualitative element will be the profound study of the education policy reports, governmental reports, and official reform frames presented during the chosen time. Major documents are the National Education Policy (2009), provincial education strategies, established after the 18 th Constitutional Amendment and the Single National Curriculum. Thematic analysis is done on the text of policies to discover goals, implementation mechanisms, and desired social outcomes.

### **1.7.2 Quantitative Component**

The quantitative aspect of it is based on the secondary sources, which relate to education indicators and social development. Reliable national and international data is gathered to provide information on literacy levels, education enrollment, dropout rates, gender equality, and spending on education in the community. The analysis of statistical trends is used to evaluate the changes in time and the development of correlations between policy intervention and the outcomes of social development.

### **1.7.3 Time Frame of the Study**

The research spans between the year 2008 and 2022 which was also a period of major policy changes, change in political dispensations and the restructuring of education governance in

Pakistan. It is during this period when it is possible to assess policy effectiveness in a longitudinal manner.

## **1.8 Scope and Delimitations**

This paper will only be discussing school-level education policies in Pakistan, and that is the primary, middle, and secondary level of education between 2008 and 2022. The focus on the significance of school education lies in the fact that it is the foundation of the social development outcomes, including literacy, social inclusion, gender equality, and long-term human capital formation. The higher education, technical education and vocational training policies are carefully avoided so that analytical clarity is achieved and a specific evaluation of school level reforms is obtained.

The geographical scope of the study is all the provinces of Pakistan such as Punjab, and Islamabad Capital Territory, where policy data exists. Although the research takes a national approach, region-specific case studies are very in-depth because of some limitations concerning data availability, consistency, and comparability among different provinces. Consequently, the study will mainly be based on the aggregated national and provincial level data instead of localized school or district-level inquiries.

The social development degree in this study is limited to the indicators, which are directly associated with the outcomes of education, including the literacy rates, school attendance, gender equality, attendance, and simple indicators of education quality. Other areas of social development like health outcomes, employment, and income levels are not given any attention unless there is a direct and clear connection between education policies.

Such limitations enable the study to be focused, reliable, and relevant and offer a clear and manageable framework of analyzing the effects of education policies in social development in Pakistan.

## **1.9 Theoretical framework**

This paper is based on the Human Capital Theory that offers an explanatory description of the role of education in social development and is easily accepted by majority. Human Capital Theory considers education to be an investment that increases the knowledge, skills and abilities of people

that result to increased productivity, increased income and increased social goodwill. In this view, education is not just a social service, but a developmental instrument of a country and its social growth.

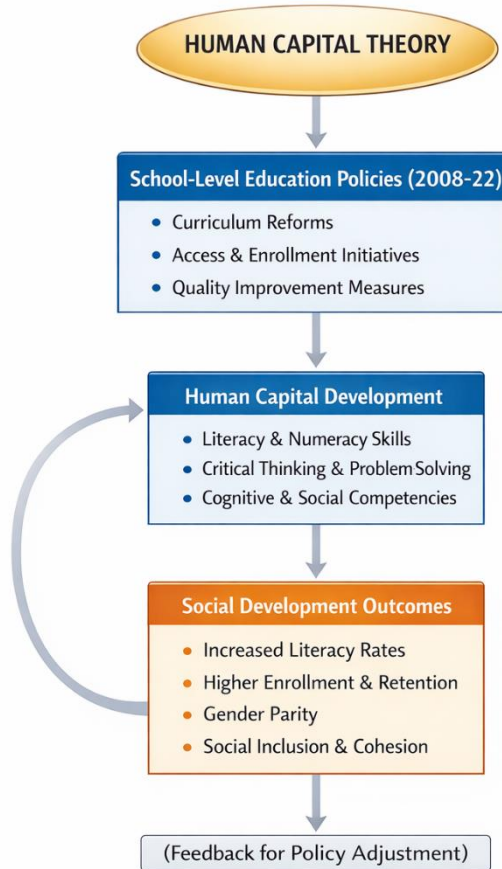
In the school level, Human Capital Theory outlines the significance of the basic education in the development of basic skills like literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking. These competencies can allow people to engage well in economic, social, and civic life. The situation in the Pakistani context with such a high percentage of the population comprising young individuals and a disproportionate school education level, the investments into school education become especially significant to enhance the quality of social development indicators in the long term.

Human Capital Theory suggests that advancement in education enhances social development through alleviation of poverty, creation of job opportunities and social mobility. Educated people are more prone to finding good jobs, making their health and social choices and becoming good members of their society. On the social level, mass investment in education promotes the capacity of the institution, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

This theoretical framework is especially applicable to the current paper because it enables one to examine how the policy of education at the level of schools followed in 2008-2022 has added to the social development indicators in Pakistan. Curriculum reforms, access expansion programs and quality improvement investments are considered to be human capital investments. Findings of social development such as literacy rates, enrollment, gender parity and retention are considered returns on such investment.

Using Human Capital Theory, the paper will explore the issues on whether education policies have been successful in increasing human capital and producing quantifiable social development benefits. The theory is also useful in explaining reasons why the social returns of investment in education might be constrained by weaknesses in policy implementation, resource allocation, or the quality of education. All in all, the Human Capital Theory is a proper and logical approach to comprehend the connection between the education policies implemented in Pakistan at the school level and social development.

## Theoretical Framework: School-Level Education Policies Policies and Social Development in Pakistan



### Theoretical Framework (Human Capital Theory)

#### Framework Description

##### 1. Independent Variable (Input)

- **School-Level Education Policies (2008–2022)**
  - Curriculum reforms (e.g., Single National Curriculum)
  - Access expansion initiatives (e.g., increased enrollment, scholarships)
  - Teacher training and quality improvement programs

- Gender inclusion measures

## 2. Mediating Mechanism

### ○ Human Capital Development

- Literacy and numeracy skills
- Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities
- Social and ethical awareness

## 3. Dependent Variable (Outcome)

### ○ Social Development Indicators

- Literacy rate
- School enrollment and retention
- Gender parity in education
- Improved socio-economic participation

### Flow/Process

- Education policies → Investment in human capital → Enhanced skills and knowledge → Positive social development outcomes

The Human Capital Theory says that educational policies at the school level are investments that lead to the formation of human capital. The social benefits associated with the accumulation of skills, knowledge, and capabilities among students are measurable, and these benefits are improved literacy levels, enhanced gender equality, and enhanced social mobility. The effectiveness of this process can be lower with the ineffective policy implementation or bad-quality education.

## 1.9 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One presents the problem, objectives and methodology of research. Chapter Two is a review of the pertinent literature. The third chapter compares the policies on education. Chapter Four displays quantitative data analysis. Chapter Five

talks about the implementation issues and Chapter six is a conclusion where the study is recommended.

## **1.10 Definition of Key Terms**

### **Social Development**

A multidimensional process involving improvements in education, health, income distribution, gender equality, and social inclusion that enhance overall quality of life (UNDP, 2020).

### **Education Policy**

A set of government decisions, plans, and actions designed to guide the development and functioning of the education system at various levels.

### **School-Level Education**

Formal education provided at primary, middle, and secondary stages, typically for children aged 5–16 years.

### **Literacy Rate**

The percentage of the population aged 10 years and above who can read and write with understanding.

### **Gender Parity Index (GPI)**

A ratio that compares female to male participation rates in education.

## **1.11 Ethical Considerations**

The ethics applied in this study are in line with the set standards of ethical standards in order to achieve academic integrity, transparency and responsible use of information. The research is based solely on the secondary data collected in the form of publicly available and credible sources, such as official government publications, policy documents, statistical reports and data published by well-known international organizations. No human subjects were directly engaged in the research process since no primary data were collected so there was no informed consent, confidentiality, or harm of the human subjects in the research process.

To uphold ethical rigor, the sources of data to be used in the study are thoroughly assessed in terms of credibility, accuracy and relevance. The study does not use questionable or prejudiced sources to guarantee the validity of the results and conclusions. Any restrictions or discrepancies of the data is admitted openly so that no information may be misinterpreted or used.

Correct referencing of the academic practices is used in the study. All the references are referenced appropriately as per the APA 7 th Edition forms and therefore all the original authors and institutions are given due credit. This would ensure that it protects against plagiarism and scholarly honesty. Moreover, the information is objectively displayed and interpreted without distortion or some selective reporting that would justify the conclusion that has been made previously.

Through these ethics, the study will be credible, ethically sound and appropriate to be used in academic and policy-oriented research, as well as have a positive impact on the overall presentation of education policy and social development in Pakistan.

### **1.12 Limitations of the Study**

The fact that this study is scholarly and logically structured does not allow eliminating some limitations that have to be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study is purely based on secondary data, which restricts the possibility of control over the methods of data collection, accuracy and completeness. The inconsistency of various government departments and international organizations in terms of data quality, standards of reporting and coverage of time may compromise the consistency of the analysis.

Second, the research concentrates only on school-level education policies without considering higher education and technical or vocational education. As much as this delimitation permits the clarity of analysis, it limits the overall input of the education sector in the development of the society in Pakistan. Interactions between different levels of education usually affect the outcomes of social development and this is not all that is represented in this research.

Third, the analysis is performed on a national and provincial level and there is very little use of district and school level data. Owing to that, there might be a mismatch in local differences in policy implementation, resource distribution, and educational outcomes. Also, contextual information might be limited by the lack of the availability of data on specific regions, and in-depth studies of those regions could not be employed.

Fourth, social development is a multidimensional and broad concept. This paper will only look at those indicators that are directly related to education outcomes, including literacy, enrollment and gender parity. Other aspects like health, employment and income are touched on casually.

Lastly, the research encompasses the years 2008-2022 and recent changes in the policy or reforms after 2022 are not involved. These are limitations that need to be taken into consideration whenever generalizing the results or implementing the results to another policy situation in the future.

### **1.13 Literature Review**

In his article, Khan (2010) reflects upon the realization of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 and the consequences of the realization on primary and secondary education in Pakistan. The paper brings out the focus of the policy on universal enrollment, modernization of the curriculum, and teacher training programs. As noted by Khan, the NEP was set on the path of lessening the regional and gender inequalities however the real execution in the provinces was very different. Cities, which had more infrastructure and resources distribution, had significant improvement, and rural schools still suffered a lack of trained educators, textbooks, and learning resources. The study highlights that policy intentions alone could not result in social development outcomes, and therefore there was a need to have continuous monitoring and contextual interventions to facilitate the gap between policy formulations and practices.

Hussain (2012) discusses how education governance has been decentralized after the implementation of the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment. This paper posits that the decentralisation of power between the federal and provincial governments had provided opportunities and difficulties to education at the school level. Those provinces that had higher administrative power like Punjab and Sindh could implement reforms more efficiently and the turnaround in enrollment and literacy levels was achieved. On the other hand, the policy implementation of weaker institutional frameworks in the provinces as in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could not cope with policy implementation and had uneven results. According to Hussain, fiscal independence, capacity-building processes and local accountability systems became key determinants of the success of decentralized education policies.

Ali (2015), explores the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) and the effect that it may have on educational equity in Pakistan. The paper highlights that the SNC aimed to

harmonize learning content among the provinces to minimize the quality and access disparities. Ali observes that even though the policy was meant to enhance inclusiveness, several issues such as lack of teacher training, inaccessible textbooks as well as opposition in the region called the region curtailed its success. The study shows the contradiction between the design of the policies in a centralized manner and implementation at the provincial level, and the argument is since in the absence of the appropriate support structure, the ambitious reforms may fail to deliver the desired social developmental results.

Raza (2018) gives an account of the gender differences in school education and how it affects social advancement. The research reveals that even with the policy-initiatives encouraging the enrollment and ensuing retention of girls, cultural practices, safety, and socio-economic constraints still play a negative part in ensuring that female education is achieved especially in the rural regions. Raza states that female participation needs improvement with the help of gender-based interventions, including scholarship programs, schools for girls only, and community involvement activities. The study highlights the societal consequences of the education of girls, which are reduced fertility rates, better maternal health, and increased economics, which has led to the assertion that school-level policies play a critical role in social development.

Ahmed (2020) focuses on the importance of community behavior and local government on the construction of school-level education performance in Pakistan. The paper points out the role of community involvement based on parent-teacher associations and local education committees in improving accountability, resource distribution, and supervision in the execution of policies. According to Ahmed, schools with the participation of the community reported greater enrolment, dropout and learning performance compared to those that did not. The study highlights the fact that the effectiveness of policy is not only pegged into the central or provincial directives, but also on the grassroot participation, which may be used to accommodate the interventions to meet the local requirements and make the social development goals more attained.

Ahmed (2020) focuses on the importance of community behavior and local government on the construction of school-level education performance in Pakistan. The paper points out the role of community involvement based on parent-teacher associations and local education committees in improving accountability, resource distribution, and supervision in the execution of policies. According to Ahmed, schools with the participation of the community reported greater enrolment,

dropout and learning performance compared to those that did not. The study highlights the fact that the effectiveness of policy is not only pegged on the central or provincial directives, but also on the grassroots participation, which may be used to accommodate the interventions to meet the local requirements and make the social development goals more attained.

Rizvi (2019) examines the trend in public spending on education and how it affects equity and quality of education in schools. As it is explained in the work by Rizvi, despite the growth in public expenditures on education in 2008-2017, the funds were distributed unevenly in terms of their focus on recurrent expenses instead of the quality improvement programs. The paper has noted that the performance in standardized learning testing in the provinces that had higher per student expenditure was higher and there was a positive relationship between funding and performance. Rizvi contends that continued underinvestment in training of teachers, curriculum development and school management systems derail policy effectiveness. The study highlights the necessity of strategic financing reforms to make sure that budgetary commitments can be reflected in the real social development indicators.

Saeed (2017) investigates the role of teacher quality and teacher development in determining the outcome of school education in Pakistan. The research indicates that although policy efforts exist on teacher qualification standards, reality has been patchy and uneven in offering real chances of professional development. According to Saeed, educators in the rural and underserved regions are usually deprived of the opportunities to receive continuous training, access to the latest pedagogical instruments, and systems of performance feedback. The study concludes that the schools that had organized in service training programs had better student achievement and reduced dropout rates. Saeed concludes that to achieve the social benefits of the education policies, it is important to strengthen the teacher education and accountability systems.

Shah (2016) evaluates the conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs on the school enrollment and retention in Pakistan. The research narrows down on government-initiated programs that use monetary support to low-income families in order to send their children to school. According to the findings of Shah, it is revealed that the CCT programs had a great impact on the enrollment on primary education, especially among girls. Nonetheless, the research study also notes that schooling retention after the first grades also proved to be a challenge because of indirect expenses of education and socio-cultural factors. Shah concludes that cash transfer programs can be effective

as a means of lowering the initial access barriers but there is need to complement such policy initiatives with improvements in the quality of schools and community level awareness campaigns to maintain long term continued participation and lead to overall social development outcomes.

Iqbal (2018) discusses the efficacy of the monitoring and evaluation systems applied to the school education policies in Pakistan. The research points out crucial gaps in the tracking of the education programs after implementation, which it is observed that policy success is hardly followed against agreed-upon standards. Iqbal highlights that both provincial and federal data collection systems are isolated, which results in inconsistency in reporting the main indicators of learning outcomes and school performance. Consequently, the policymakers do not have trustworthy evidence to help them streamline their strategies or to distribute resources efficiently. The study contends that strong assessment systems are needed to ensure that policy intentions are translated into quantifiable social developmental outcomes, especially in cases where implementation issues differ across regions.

In their work, Nawaz (2020) addresses the issue of the role played by the concept of private schooling within the educational environment of Pakistan and its effects on equity and social progress. The paper concludes that the growth of the private schools has been very rapid particularly in the urban and peri urban centers, in which the private schools in most cases perform better compared to the public schools in the basic learning outcome. Nawaz, however, mentions that this expansion has also increased socio economic disparities with the poorer families, mostly being stagnated in underfunded state supported schools with less resources. The study points to the fact that policies that target education access without taking into consideration the quality disparities can lead to unwanted inequality. Nawaz concludes that inclusive policy frameworks should consider the role of the private sector but provide sufficient support to the state schools in a manner that would bring equity and quality objectives together.

The study by Zafar (2019) examines parental education and socio-cultural attitudes on the participation of children in schooling in Pakistan. The research indicates that educational levels of parents play a major role in enrolling their children to school and keeping them in school with the educated parents showing more propensity to attend school and academics in the long term. Zafar also provides the identification of the cultural norms and local beliefs that do not promote the education of girls in some rural and conservative societies, and the social factors have the power

to erode well intentioned policy interventions. The study points out the necessity of policies that include families and communities in the promotion of the value of education imply that the policy measures can only succeed in predetermined social results when socio cultural barriers are mitigated.

Hasan (2021) dwells on the digital learning programs that were introduced on the school level due to new challenges, including the COVID 19 pandemic. The paper explains the impact of technology mediation education being a major policy reaction to schooling disturbances, and online courses and distance learning tools were implemented in the provinces. Although these efforts contributed to continuity, according to Hasan there are notable differences in the access to digital infrastructure, especially among students with a rural and low background. The study notes that digital policy with the purpose of educational resilience may unintentionally increase the current social disparities in case equitable access is not part of the agenda. Hasan claims that to have sustainable introduction of technology in school education, there must be a need and provision of infrastructure, training of teachers and a community group to make sure that there are positive impacts to social development.

Mahmood (2017) examines the correlation between the early childhood education (ECE) programs and the long-term social outcomes in Pakistan. The research claims that the process of learning at an early age plays a significant role in future academic and social adjustments. Mahmood concludes that high primary school readiness, retention and development of cognitive skills are recorded in areas with well-established ECE systems than in areas where early learning is overlooked. The study indicates that policies that incorporate ECE in the official school setting might impact the general quality of education and equity in an extensive way. Mahmood goes further to conclude that early schooling investment will provide the foundation to long term social development through the establishment of good human capital at an early age.

## References

1. Lashari, A., Shah, W. A., & Memon, T. (2025). 'Are we equal citizens?': A critical discourse analysis (CDA) of language textbooks and minority faith learners' insights in Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 45(4), 1212-1229.
2. Li, X., Lu, Y., Lou, F., Feng, M., & Zhang, B. (2023). Research on Goals and Indicators of Mid-to-Long-Term Economic and Social Development. In *The New Journey of China's Economic and Social Development* (pp. 105-127). Springer.
3. Lupak, R., Mizyuk, B., Zaychenko, V., Kuniyska-Iliash, M., & Vasyltsiv, T. (2022). Migration processes and socio-economic development: interactions and regulatory policy.
4. Mahmood, A., Huang, X., & Rehman, N. (2025). The role of teachers and administrators in supporting the adaptation of students with special needs in mainstream high schools. *Quality Education for all*, 2(1), 35-54.
5. Maqbool, S., Zafeer, H. M. I., Zeng, P., Mohammad, T., Khassawneh, O., & Wu, L. (2023). The role of diverse leadership styles in teaching to sustain academic excellence at secondary level. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1096151.
6. Mumtaz, M., Mohamed, N. D., Haseeb, A., & Ansari, S. H. (2022). Online education amid COVID-19 crisis: Issues and challenges at higher education level in Pakistan. *IJERI: International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*(18), 240-259.
7. Naz, S., Ishaq, S. M., Iqbal, M. Z., & Abbas, M. (2025). A Study on the Dynamic Impact of Instructional Leadership on Enhancing Elementary School Performance in Baluchistan. *Leadership and Organizational Insights*, 1(2), 28-46.
8. Papadakis, N. (2022). Social Indicators, Employment, Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning. *Higher Education and Research in the European Union: Mobility Schemes, Social Rights and Youth Policies*, 213.
9. Parveen, K., Phuc, T. Q. B., Alghamdi, A. A., Kumar, T., Aslam, S., Shafiq, M., & Saleem, A. (2024). The contribution of quality management practices to student performance: Mediated by school culture. *Heliyon*, 10(15).
10. Rachmad, Y. E. (2022). Innovation in Education Theory. In: Amiens Cathédrale Éditions Internationales.

11. Rafiq, S. (2024). Investigating the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary education in higher education settings. *Journal of Social Research Development (JSRD)*, 5(1), 14-14.
12. Rafiq, S., Iqbal, S., & Afzal, A. (2024). The impact of digital tools and online learning platforms on higher education learning outcomes. *Al-Mahdi research journal (MRJ)*, 5(4), 359-369.
13. Ragheb, G., El-Wahab, M. A., & Ragheb, R. A. (2022). Sustainable Indicators Framework for Strategic Urban Development: A Case Study of Abu Teeg City in Assiut, Egypt. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & Planning*, 17(1).
14. RAMEZANPOUR, N. G., FALLAH, H. N., ABDOLLAHZADEH, G., & Sharifi, Z. (2022). Assessing the provinces' level of development in terms of educational, health and migration indicators.
15. Robertson, S. L. (2022). Guardians of the future: International organisations, anticipatory governance and education. *Global Society*, 36(2), 188-205.
16. Roshan, R., Hamid, S., Kumar, R., Hamdani, U., Naqvi, S., & Adeel, U. (2025). Utilizing the CFIR framework for mapping the facilitators and barriers of implementing teachers led school mental health programs—a scoping review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 60(3), 535-548.
17. Saud, M., & Ashfaq, A. (2022). NGOs schools are promoting education for sustainable development in rural areas. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 20(5), 682-694.
18. Sharma, U., & Subban, P. (2023). Utilizing a global social justice lens to explore indicators of inclusive education. In *International encyclopedia of education* (pp. 104-114). Elsevier.
19. Shoaib, M., Ahmed, R., & Iqbal, S. (2025). Female acceptability in STEM higher education in Pakistan: The interplay of careerist femininity, job oriented, and family orientation. *Journal for Current Sign*, 3(3), 181-202.
20. Shoaib, M., Ali, S. R., & Kausar, N. (2025). Gender disparity on teaching materials, communication, institutional support, and learning achievements of the students in higher education in Pakistan. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(7), 169-183.
21. Shoaib, M., Batool, F., Kausar, N., & Abdullah, F. (2025). RESEARCH ON LEARNING MODALITIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY OF GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP (2001–2023). *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(8), 1083-1101.

22. Shoaib, M., Rasool, S., Kalsoom, A., & Ali, S. R. (2025). Exploring Gender-Based Dissimilarities in Educational Outcomes at the Tertiary Level: A Review of Existing Literature. *Policy Research Journal*, 3(7), 287-302.
23. Shoaib, M., Shehzadi, K., & Abbas, Z. (2024). Inclusivity, Teacher Competency, and Learning Environment at Higher Education: Empirical Evidences. *Pakistan JL Analysis & Wisdom*, 3, 244.
24. Shuja, A., Ali, A., Khan, S. S. A., Burki, S. B., & Bilal, S. (2022). Perspectives on the factors affecting students' dropout rate during COVID-19: A case study from Pakistan. *Sage Open*, 12(2), 21582440221097378.
25. Siddique, M., Ahmed, M., Feroz, M., Shoukat, W., & Jabeen, S. (2022). Attitude Towards Learning Chemistry: A Case Of Secondary School Students In Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(12).
26. Siren, N. H., Abd Majid, M., & binti Abdullah, S. A. Y. (2024). REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTING INDICATORS FOR PROFESSIONAL DAIE. Dakwah Seminar 2024 (MASJIDs 2024),
27. Tabassum, U., Qiang, X., Abbas, J., Amjad, A. I., & Al-Sulaiti, K. I. (2025). Students' help-seeking mediates the relationship between happiness and self-strength: a comparative study on Chinese and Pakistani adolescents. *Kybernetes*, 54(7), 3957-3976.
28. Veidemane, A. (2022). Education for sustainable development in higher education rankings: Challenges and opportunities for developing internationally comparable indicators. *Sustainability*, 14(9), 5102.
29. Villela, R., & Paredes, J. J. (2022). Empirical analysis on public expenditure for education, human capital and economic growth: evidence from Honduras. *Economies*, 10(10), 241.
30. Zaib, K. (2022). The Role Of Mother Tongue In Learning English At The Intermediate Level (A Case Study of Government Degree College Batkhela, District Malakand). *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, 8(2), 248-253.

## CHAPTER 2 – EDUCATION POLICIES IN PAKISTAN (2008–2022)

### 2.1 Introduction

The 2008-2022 is a crucial era in the history of the education system in Pakistan which is defined by the policy reforms to enhance access, quality and equity of the school level. Social development has always held education as one of the pillars and it equips economic growth, social cohesion and democratic participation with the knowledge, skills and values to participate in economic growth. Policy of education in schools in Pakistan is of paramount importance in determining the social future of the country with a young population and unresolved regional and gender inequalities (Chen et al., 2023).

This is the period when significant initiatives aimed at overcoming historic flaws in the education sphere were implemented. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 provided the platform to reform the curriculum, teacher training, and accessibility, and other policies have aimed at enhancing enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes (Siddique et al., 2022). The 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment 2010 structural change in that the education governance was decentralized to provide the provincial body more responsibility to implement the policies and allocate resources. Although the objective of decentralization was to make provincial governments more accountable and responsive, it also demonstrated sharp differences in provincial capacity and infrastructure that influenced the effectiveness of policies in different regions.

Besides the structural changes, the era was characterized by focused attempts to enhance gender equality, the development of early childhood learning, and use technology in learning processes. Scholarships to girls, conditional cash transfer, and digital education programs represented the efforts of the government to focus on inclusive and modernized education (Parveen et al., 2024). Regardless of these initiatives, the implementation of the policies, poor funding, social-cultural barriers and differences in the quality of teachers remained the obstacles to the influence of the reforms on the outcomes of social development.

The chapter will give an all-encompassing overview of educational policies in schools in Pakistan since 2008 until 2022. It examines the aims, structure and enforcement of key policies, pointing out the successes as well as failures (Shoaib, Batool, et al., 2025). The chapter attempts to

comprehend the role of education policy in social development by analyzing such reforms and determining what factors have informed the success of school level interventions.

## **2.2 National Education Policy 2009**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 is a pioneer effort to streamline and transform the education sector in Pakistan especially at the school level that encompasses the early childhood, primary, middle and secondary education in Pakistan. The policy was adopted in 2009 to tackle the historical issue of access, quality, equity, and governance that had weakened the education development of the country. It was developed based on both national interests and international obligations and the importance of education as the main catalyst of social development and building of human capital.

Fundamentally, NEP 2009 had high targets in the education sector. These were attainments of free and universal primary education in a set period, extending access to free education through to secondary schools, increasing literacy levels and also increasing the education expenditure to a high percentage of the national GDP. The policy also highlighted the importance of modernizing the curriculum, training teachers and enhancing inclusiveness among all the children, girls and those children who belong to the marginalized communities (Ghosh et al., 2022). The education in the early childhood was officially accepted as the essential part, which was supposed to equip children to the primary school and provide them with enhanced results in higher grades.

The policy has specially considered the problem of equity and inclusivity. It acknowledged the extensive differences in educational access and quality between regions, social-economic classes and sexes. Specific measures were suggested to overcome these differences such as special programs of girls, children in rural communities, and those belonging to disadvantaged backgrounds. NEP 2009 placed much emphasis on governance reforms, suggesting more robust planning, supervision, monitoring as well as evaluation systems in ensuring that policy goals were converted into practical outcomes (Mumtaz et al., 2022). The policy was also concerned with financial sustainability, effective use of resources, and capacity building at provincial and district levels towards effecting reforms.

Another major aspect of NEP 2009 was curriculum reform. The policy was meant to create a coherent and standardized curriculum framework of both the public and private schools to limit

the inequalities of learning quality. It also focused on the need to incorporate the modern subjects in the curriculum of traditional schools and religion institutions so that students would not only learn the modern knowledge, but also the basic skills (Javaid et al., 2024). Much attention was paid to teacher development when the minimum qualification requirements, certification standards and continuous professional development programs aimed to enhance the quality of teaching and the learning outcomes.

NEP 2009 was also comprehensively designed but there were several implementation challenges. The fact that education was chronically underfunded was among the major barriers as it reduced the capacity of federal and provincial governments to achieve ambitious goals. Weaknesses in the institutions and disintegrated governance structures also contributed to poor execution, especially in the rural and underserved regions. Moreover, the socio-cultural issue, like the opposition to girls' education in some areas, made the goal of universal enrollment and retention even more challenging (Ahmed et al., 2022). Political instability and frequent changes of the government interrupted the continuity of the policy implementation, forming gaps between the designed reform and the real performance.

Progressive aspects were also brought in by the policy to improve social inclusion and equity. Programs were aimed to decrease the gender gap, increase access to education among the marginalized groups, and encourage the community to get involved in the running of the schools. This forward-looking strategy to develop human capital at the very beginning with the introduction of early childhood education and the standardization of the curriculum in all provinces was also an indicator of the intention to create a source of long-term social development and build the capital of the state. The teacher training programs and professional development programs were meant to boost the level of instruction as well as the measures of school infrastructure and resource allocation were meant to provide a more favorable learning environment.

However, the ambitious nature of the goals of the policy was not fully achieved despite its strengths. It had failed to achieve many of its targets including universal primary enrollment, high levels of literacy and implementation of standardized curriculum. The strategy of depending on higher financial investments without any proper plans to be sustained curbed the success of reforms (D. N. Ahmad et al., 2023). The policy design versus implementation indicated the significance of ensuring that administrative capacity, monitoring mechanisms as well as

community participation are adequate to ensure that desired results are attained through comprehensive policy formulation.

However, NEP 2009 has had an everlasting effect on the education environment in Pakistan. It was the main model according to which further reforms took place, and the language on access, quality, equity and governance in school education was formed. Its vision still shapes the debates on standardizing the curriculum, teacher education, gender equality, early childhood education, and non-discriminative policies (D. N. Ahmad et al., 2023). The lessons gained through the difficulty of its implementation highlights the importance of joint actions of federal and provincial governments, an investment in education, and effective accountability and community engagement structures.

The National Education Policy 2009 was a radical and wide-reaching effort in changing the way school-level education is delivered in Pakistan. Although the policy did not achieve all its goals due to implementation issues and resource constraints, the policy established significant targets in relation to access, quality, and equity. It has a focus on governance reforms, standardization of the curriculum, teacher training and inclusive education which indicates that it has a clear insight on the multifaceted factors that influence education outcomes. NEP 2009 is still a pillar to the future policy change and offers useful information on the connection between education reform and social development in Pakistan.

### **2.3 Decentralization and the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010)**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 is a historic move to reorganize and modernize the education system in Pakistan and especially at the school level which incorporates early childhood, primary, middle, and secondary education. The policy was adopted in 2009 in a bid to tackle the historical issues of access, quality, equity and governance that had impeded development of the educational sector in the country. Its development was connected both to the national priorities and global obligations, since it stressed education as a cornerstone of social development and formation of human capital.

In essence, NEP 2009 was ambitious in its objectives in the education sector. These were the realization of universal and free primary education by a set period, increase of free education at the secondary level, increase of literacy levels, and allocation of education to a considerable

percentage of national GDP. It was also clear in the policy to modernize the curricula, enhance teacher training, and inclusive education of all children including girls and children of the marginalized groups (Jabeen et al., 2022). Early childhood education was officially adopted as an important element, which was expected to prepare children to enter primary schooling and achieve higher learning results on subsequent grades.

The policy was especially sensitive to the matters of equity and inclusiveness. It realized that there were vast disparities in educational access and quality in relation to regions, socio-economic classes, and genders. Specific measures were suggested to deal with these inequalities, such as special programs that deal with girls, children in rural areas, and poor backgrounds. NEP 2009 also emphasized the need of governance reforms in which they suggested the use of more robust planning, supervision, monitoring and evaluation systems to make certain that policy goals were brought to tangible achievements (Mahmood et al., 2025). Another aspect of the policy was that it had to be financially viable, effective in utilizing resources and that it had to create provincial and district-level capacity to effectively institute reforms.

Another main characteristic of NEP 2009 was curriculum reform. The policy was to have a consistent and uniform curriculum across both the public and the private schools so as to minimize the inequalities in the quality of learning. It also gave priority to the incorporation of current subjects in the curriculums of traditional schools and religious schools so that the students would gain not only modern knowledge but also the essential foundation skills (Kamran et al., 2023). Much emphasis was given to teacher development and minimum qualification requirements, certification standards and continuous professional development programs were to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes.

NEP 2009 had a few implementation problems despite being an all-encompassing design. Among the main barriers was the fact that education was consistently underfunded, and so the federal and provincial governments could not achieve high goals. Weaknesses of the institutions and the disintegrated system of governance were another obstacle to execution, especially in rural and underserved regions (Ahmad & Sheikh, 2022). Also, there were socio-cultural obstacles like opposition towards educating girls in some areas which made the process of ensuring universal enrolment and retention even harder. The political instability and the limitations of political

changes posed problems with the continuity of the policy implementation, introducing a gap between the projected reforms and real achievements.

The policy also brought up progressive policies to improve social inclusion and equity. There were programs created to eliminate differences in gender, create educational opportunities to marginalized groups, and work on the community involvement in the work of schools (Deng & Wang, 2023). The introduction of early childhood education and the harmonization of the curricula between the provinces were also the manifestations of the forward-looking policy, as the human capital was being formed at a tender age, and the social development in the long perspective in place. Professional development programs and teacher training programs were to be able to enhance the quality of instruction on the other hand school infrastructure and resource allocation measures were meant to establish a learning environment that is more conducive.

The policy, even with its merits, could not achieve its ambitious objectives fully. High literacy rates, implementation of standardized curriculum, and universal primary enrollment among many others were not met. Dependence on greater investment of financial resources without proper plans on how to fund the reforms was a limitation on the success of the reforms (Roshan et al., 2025). The disconnect between policy development and execution demonstrated the need to not only develop well-developed policies but also to be able to provide adequate administrative resources, surveillance mechanisms, and community participation in attaining the desired results.

However, the NEP 2009 has left a long-term effect in the education sector in Pakistan. It was used as the main skeleton of the further reforms, as it conditioned the discussion of the concepts of access, quality, equity, and governance in school education. Its vision still shapes the discussion of curriculum standardization, teacher development, gender parity, the early childhood education, and the inclusive policies. The experiences of its application problems highlight that there is a need to have concerted action between the federal and provincial governments, continued investment in education, and effective accountability and community participation mechanisms.

The National Education Policy 2009 was a radical and yet holistic effort to reform the school-level education system of Pakistan. Although its implementation was not successful because of the challenges faced and limitations of resources, the policy established significant goals of access, quality, and equity. Its focus on governance reforms, standardization of the curriculum, training of teachers, and inclusive education are an indicator of its apparent perception of the multi complexity

of factors influencing education outcomes. NEP 2009 is a foundation to further policy formulation, and it also gives some important insights into the correlation between education reform and social development in Pakistan.

## **2.4 Curriculum Reforms and the Single National Curriculum (SNC)**

In Pakistan, the education policy has given special attention to curriculum reforms especially in the period of 2008-2022. Curriculum reform was necessitated by the high levels of inequality in terms of quality, content, and learning outcomes across regions, types of schools and socio-economic groups. The curriculum of Pakistan had over the years developed in a diffused fashion, as provincial and federal authorities tended to take completely different paths and that their counterparts in the private schools had entirely different syllabi. Such discrepancies were causing unequal experiences in education, which influenced the readiness of students to higher education, to work, and to be engaged in society. With the understanding of the significance of curriculum coherence in realizing educational equity and social development, the government came up with several reforms that culminated into the Single National Curriculum (SNC).

The SNC was perceived as a single structure, which would afford all children in Pakistan, no matter the province, language or type of school, an equal standard of education. The policy was meant to close the divide between the public and private schools, lessen regional differences, and make sure that all the students learned the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to develop personally and in society. This curriculum focused on competency learning, early literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, creativity, and ethical and social knowledge (Roshan et al., 2025). Moreover, it attempted to combine modern topics like science, technology, and information literacy with traditional knowledge and moral education, which is a holistic approach to education.

Among the social forces that inspired the SNC was the desire to deal with inequality in education. Traditionally, children in the best of the private schools were exposed to high-quality education, learning materials and exposure to the world knowledge requirements, whereas their counterparts in the undermatched public schools worked with old textbooks, lack of teaching aids, and poorly trained teachers. Such inequalities were especially high in rural and marginalized regions (Ahmed et al., 2023). The SNC was created in such a way so that all students in all the regions were allowed to access the same learning materials and standards and thus fostered a feeling of national coherence and equal opportunity.

The SNC was developed in collaboration with federal and provincial governments, curriculum specialists, scholars and teachers. It involved reviews of the existing curricula on a huge scale, reviews of world best practices, and engagement with stakeholders to align the contents with the national identity, as well as the global standards. Special attention was paid to early learning levels and age-oriented syllabi was prepared to be used by early childhood students, students attending primary and middle schools (Maqbool et al., 2023). It focused on literacy, numeracy, problem solving and social-emotional learning to equip children with future academic success.

The SNC focused on values-based education besides the academic content. Curriculum aimed to create civic responsibility, moral sensibility and tolerance of diversity which was part of a larger vision of education as social bond and growth. The lessons were developed in a way that they foster critical thinking, collaboration and ethical decision-making process to ensure that students give back to society (Akram et al., 2022). Religious education was incorporated in a manner that did not supersede in the general education on morality and civic education but instead provided the moral depth to all students in addition to academic knowledge basis.

Teacher training was found to be a serious element of SNC application. The curriculum reform understood that bringing about a standardized syllabus could not make any significant impacts when teachers were not well trained in offering the curriculum. The professional development programs, workshops, and instructional guides were formulated so that the teachers could be informed as to the new learning goals, instructional practices and assessment techniques. The focus was made on the interactive and student-centered methods of teaching, such as project-based learning, group work, and continuous assessment, to be rid of the rote-based memorization and get to the training of critical thinking and application-based learning.

Although the vision of the SNC was ambitious, the SNC implementation had major challenges. The magnitude of the reform that covered millions of students in provinces- presented logistic, administrative, and financial challenges. Provinces were required to modify the available textbooks, teaching resources and evaluation systems to fit the new curriculum and this demanded a lot of resources and coordination. The training of teachers was challenging especially in the rural and underserved regions, where there were inadequate trained people and facilities. There was some opposition in other quarters and especially in the case of the private schools and provincial governments who were worried about the practicability and effects of standardization.

The other difficulty was regional, and linguistic variety. As a multi-lingual nation with diverse cultural backgrounds, Pakistan was said to have different cultural settings and some stakeholders believed that the same curriculum could destroy the language, culture and educational independence (Aziz et al., 2022). It was a delicate balancing act to ensure that the SNC was regionalized in terms of language and setting and at the same time adhered to the national standards. The policy also needed to take care of disparities in school facilities, the quality of teachers and student readiness, which were very different in the urban centers and remote districts.

The government established monitoring and evaluation to facilitate implementation. There were standardized tests designed, regular analysis of curriculum and teacher testing to track progress and identify compliance with SNC goals (Abid et al., 2023). The provinces were expected to submit reports on enrollment, learning outcomes and resources used so that adjustments and improvement could be made continuously. Parent teacher association and local education committees were promoted to facilitate community involvement and the considerations of the local needs in implementing the national curriculum were met.

It is likely that the influence of the SNC on the development of society will be enormous. The curriculum attempts to minimize educational disparities by standardizing content and learning outcomes and enhancing literacy and numeracy as well as the capacity of students to think critically and uphold civic values. Better learning results in the school are probably to benefit the society in long run through increased enrollment and retention rates, gender equity in education, improved employability, and social cohesion. The fact that the SNC focuses on values-based education, ethics and civic responsibility also adds to the connection between education reform and social development.

It should be noted, however, that the SNC is not an isolated ecosystem of education. It relies on the complementary measures that are essential, such as the development of capacities of teachers, the improvement of infrastructure, learning resources availability, and monitoring. Provincial and district policy coherence is needed to make sure that the curriculum is provided effectively and fairly. The SNC might risk exacerbating the disparity between well-resourced and under-resourced schools without sufficient support and long-term investment; therefore, its social equity goals will be compromised.

The adoption of the Single National Curriculum as curriculum reform is a significant move in the attempts of the Pakistani population to standardize education, enhance quality, and encourage equity. The SNC eliminates the historical differences in the quality of learning offered to all the students between provinces, urban and rural schools, and between the public and the private schools. It is holistic in nature incorporating academic knowledge, skills development and ethical values and ensuring that education is in line with the larger social development objectives. Although implementing issues persist such as training of teachers, infrastructure and diversity in the region, the SNC offers an effective platform to enhance education in schools and facilitate the long-term human and social growth in Pakistan.

## **2.5 Gender-Focused Education Policies**

Gender equity in education has been a key issue in Pakistan especially in the school level where the differences between boys and girls have been deeply experienced in the past. In 2008 to 2022 the education policies started to fill these gaps, as it became understood that the equitable access to education is not only the basic human right but an essential contributor to the social development. The policies that were initiated in this era were gender-oriented aimed at increasing enrollment, retention, learning outputs, teacher engagement, resources and social-cultural obstacles that reduce access to education among girls.

The situation in Pakistan historically was that girls had several obstacles to obtaining quality education. In rural and underdeveloped societies, cultural orientation, safety and family obligations usually limit the access of girls to education especially in school. Infra structural facilities in schools such as absence of separate sanitation and safe transport also deterred students to attend school. The government responded by selecting specific policies to raise the number of female enrolment and female retention, such as building girls-only schools, offering scholarships, conditional cash transfers, and community awareness. These programs were meant to lower both economic and social challenges to education of girls.

The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) educational grants and scholarships was one of the biggest initiatives of this time and this offered benefits to families to send girls to school. These programs succeeded in persuading families to focus more on the education of girls, especially in the low-income districts by providing monetary assistance in case of enrolment and attendance. Campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of educating girls accompanied conditional

cash transfers to break the traditional male-female gender norms and demand that the communities should educate their girls.

Policy to gender equity was also facilitated by teacher-related policies. The rise in the number of female teachers was a strategic move to stimulate the involvement of girls because parents were more ready to send out daughters to schools that had women teachers. Recruitment policies and professional development programs focused on training of female teachers, especially in the rural and remote regions. The qualified female teachers were not only bringing more students to enroll and stay longer but also provided models to the students, giving them dreams and breaking traditional cultural boundaries.

Policy to gender equity was also facilitated by teacher-related policies. The rise in the number of female teachers was a strategic move to stimulate the involvement of girls because parents were more ready to send out daughters to schools that had women teachers. Recruitment policies and professional development programs focused on training of female teachers, especially in the rural and remote regions. The qualified female teachers were not only bringing more students to enroll and stay longer but also provided models to the students, giving them dreams and breaking traditional cultural boundaries.

Reform of infrastructure and learning environment was also significant. The policies required separate sanitation facilities among girls, safe means of transportation in certain areas and enhancement in the safety and accessibility of classrooms. There was also an attempt to have gender- and inclusion-sensitive and inclusive learning materials, textbooks and resources, which catered to the quality of education and equity. These structural reforms were supposed to be accompanied by community participation and campaigns to make sure that families realized the importance of educating their daughters.

Even with these targeted policies there were problems that remained. The socio-cultural resistance particularly in rural and conservative regions remained as a constraining factor to the participation of girl child. The adolescent girls had low attainment rates as they were married off at an early age, had to take care of their children and have economic strains. Regional inequalities were still there, where the urban areas had better scores as compared to rural or marginalized areas. Also, the provincial authority and the local communities were not always coordinated, which influenced the implementation performance.

Altogether, the policies of gender-based education in 2008-2022 showed considerable concern with the issue of schooling inequalities. Although the expansion was not balanced, the provision of scholarships, recruitment of women as teachers, and development of infrastructure and sensitizing the community helped in boosting the enrolment and retention of girls. These policies highlighted the realization that facilitating gender equity in education is not only a question of access, but this is a holistic approach to identify structural, socio-cultural, and institutional obstacles. These policies by addressing gender gaps at school brought about the overall social development outcomes such as female empowerment, social inclusion and economic inclusion.

ScholarlyPen

## References

1. Kamran, M., Siddiqui, S., & Adil, M. S. (2023). Breaking barriers: The influence of teachers' attitudes on inclusive education for students with mild learning disabilities (MLDs). *Education Sciences, 13*(6), 606.
2. Khan, F., Noor, S., Rehman, Z. U., & Rahman, G. (2022). Does Schooling Contribute to Economic Growth? A Comparative Study in Pakistan and Afghanistan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS), 42*(3).
3. Kousar, S., Ahmed, F., Afzal, M., & Segovia, J. E. (2023). Is government spending in the education and health sector necessary for human capital development? *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 10*(1), 1-11.
4. Lashari, A., Shah, W. A., & Memon, T. (2025). 'Are we equal citizens?': A critical discourse analysis (CDA) of language textbooks and minority faith learners' insights in Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 45*(4), 1212-1229.
5. Mahmood, A., Huang, X., & Rehman, N. (2025). The role of teachers and administrators in supporting the adaptation of students with special needs in mainstream high schools. *Quality Education for all, 2*(1), 35-54.
6. Maqbool, S., Zafeer, H. M. I., Zeng, P., Mohammad, T., Khassawneh, O., & Wu, L. (2023). The role of diverse leadership styles in teaching to sustain academic excellence at secondary level. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1096151.
7. Mumtaz, M., Mohamed, N. D., Haseeb, A., & Ansari, S. H. (2022). Online education amid COVID-19 crisis: Issues and challenges at higher education level in Pakistan. *IJERI: International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*(18), 240-259.
8. Naz, S., Ishaq, S. M., Iqbal, M. Z., & Abbas, M. (2025). A Study on the Dynamic Impact of Instructional Leadership on Enhancing Elementary School Performance in Baluchistan. *Leadership and Organizational Insights, 1*(2), 28-46.
9. Parveen, K., Phuc, T. Q. B., Alghamdi, A. A., Kumar, T., Aslam, S., Shafiq, M., & Saleem, A. (2024). The contribution of quality management practices to student performance: Mediated by school culture. *Heliyon, 10*(15).
10. Rafiq, S. (2024). Investigating the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary education in higher education settings. *Journal of Social Research Development (JSRD), 5*(1), 14-14.

11. Rafiq, S., Iqbal, S., & Afzal, A. (2024). The impact of digital tools and online learning platforms on higher education learning outcomes. *Al-Mahdi research journal (MRJ)*, 5(4), 359-369.
12. Roshan, R., Hamid, S., Kumar, R., Hamdani, U., Naqvi, S., & Adeel, U. (2025). Utilizing the CFIR framework for mapping the facilitators and barriers of implementing teachers led school mental health programs—a scoping review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 60(3), 535-548.
13. Saud, M., & Ashfaq, A. (2022). NGOs schools are promoting education for sustainable development in rural areas. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 20(5), 682-694.
14. Shoaib, M., Ahmed, R., & Iqbal, S. (2025). Female acceptability in STEM higher education in Pakistan: The interplay of careerist femininity, job oriented, and family orientation. *Journal for Current Sign*, 3(3), 181-202.
15. Shoaib, M., Ali, S. R., & Kausar, N. (2025). Gender disparity on teaching materials, communication, institutional support, and learning achievements of the students in higher education in Pakistan. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(7), 169-183.
16. Shoaib, M., Batool, F., Kausar, N., & Abdullah, F. (2025). RESEARCH ON LEARNING MODALITIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY OF GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP (2001–2023). *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(8), 1083-1101.
17. Shoaib, M., Rasool, S., Kalsoom, A., & Ali, S. R. (2025). Exploring Gender-Based Dissimilarities in Educational Outcomes at the Tertiary Level: A Review of Existing Literature. *Policy Research Journal*, 3(7), 287-302.
18. Shoaib, M., Shehzadi, K., & Abbas, Z. (2024). Inclusivity, Teacher Competency, and Learning Environment at Higher Education: Empirical Evidences. *Pakistan JL Analysis & Wisdom*, 3, 244.
19. Shuja, A., Ali, A., Khan, S. S. A., Burki, S. B., & Bilal, S. (2022). Perspectives on the factors affecting students' dropout rate during COVID-19: A case study from Pakistan. *Sage Open*, 12(2), 21582440221097378.
20. Siddique, M., Ahmed, M., Feroz, M., Shoukat, W., & Jabeen, S. (2022). Attitude Towards Learning Chemistry: A Case Of Secondary School Students In Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(12).

21. Tabassum, U., Qiang, X., Abbas, J., Amjad, A. I., & Al-Sulaiti, K. I. (2025). Students' help-seeking mediates the relationship between happiness and self-strength: a comparative study on Chinese and Pakistani adolescents. *Kybernetes*, 54(7), 3957-3976.
22. Villela, R., & Paredes, J. J. (2022). Empirical analysis on public expenditure for education, human capital and economic growth: evidence from Honduras. *Economies*, 10(10), 241.
23. Zaib, K. (2022). The Role Of Mother Tongue In Learning English At The Intermediate Level (A Case Study of Government Degree College Batkhela, District Malakand). *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, 8(2), 248-253.

ScholarlyPen

## CHAPTER 3 – SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION INDICATORS

### 3.1 Introduction

Social development involves the processes and results that promote the well, equality, and abilities of members of society. It is multidimensional, which comprises education, health, gender equality, social inclusion, and institutional capacity improvements (Li, 2025). Education has been firmly established in developing nations like Pakistan as a foundation of social development because it provides people with knowledge, skills, and values to be economically productive, active and conscious citizens as well as social cohesion. Pre-school education, especially at school level, is critical towards the formation of cognitive, social and ethical basis of young learners, and this has an impact on long-term societal behavior (Garces et al., 2023).

In 2008-2022, Pakistan adopted a set of education policies to enhance access, quality, and equity on the school level. These policies were focused on important social development aspects such as raising the rate of literacy, enhancing enrollment and retention, reducing gender gaps, enhancing the quality of teachers as well as improving school infrastructure (Li et al., 2023). There were also curriculum reforms, gender-specific programs as well as community involvement programs that were aimed at ensuring education had a part of the wider social development. Regardless of such efforts, issues like unequal implementation, geographical imbalances, socio-cultural issues, and scarcity of resources still influenced the results, which is why the systematic analysis of education indicators was necessary to learn about the effectiveness of the policy.

The chapter analyzes the correlation between the policies of school-level education and social development outcomes in Pakistan. It targets indicators that are measurable, i.e. literacy rates, enrollment/retention rates, gender parity, teacher availability and training, school infrastructure, and early childhood education (Rachmad, 2022a). Through the indicators, the chapter gives a global picture of how education policies have influenced social development, areas of improvement, and areas of gaps. This discussion provides a baseline under which the effectiveness of the education reforms in Pakistan and how they will help in ensuring equitable and sustainable social development can be assessed.

### 3.2 Literacy Rate

Among the most basic measures of social development is literacy. It manifests itself in how individuals can read, write and participate in society effectively leading to personal empowerment, economic productivity and participation in civic activities. Within the Pakistani context, literacy is an issue that has in the past been prominent considering the socio-economic differences, gender inequality, territorial factors, as well as the unequal access to quality education. There were several education policies, such as the National Education Policy 2009, decentralization under 18 the Constitutional Amendment, curriculum reform, and gender-oriented initiatives, that focused on how to increase the literacy rates, especially at the primary and secondary level of education.

The literacy rate in Pakistan has steadily increased in the past 20 years although it is still below the world average. Based on available data, the national literacy rate grew by about 54 per cent in 2008 to about 62 per cent by the year 2022. Although this is an improvement, there are still disparities in the different provinces, genders, and rural-urban populace (Kausar et al., 2025). The literacy levels in urban areas always perform well compared to rural areas and the overall male literacy levels are high as compared to female literacy levels in most areas. These disparities reveal that even though the education policies have led to overall gains, issues to do with access and quality remain a challenge towards the equitable development of literacy.

#### Trends in National Literacy Rate (2008–2022)

The table below illustrates Pakistan's national literacy rate trends over the period, highlighting incremental improvements.

Year	National Literacy Rate (%)	Male Literacy Rate (%)	Female Literacy Rate (%)
2008	54	63	45
2010	55	64	46
2012	56	65	47
2014	57	66	48
2016	59	68	50

2018	60	69	51
2020	61	70	52
2022	62	71	53

This table indicates that there has been a continuous rise in literacy during the 14 years period and the literacy level of men is always higher compared to that of women. The fact that there was incremental growth indicates that there have been positive impacts on policies that address access, enrollment, and retention. Specific initiatives like girls' scholarships and female teacher hiring helped to reduce the gender gap, although there were still some problems (Ragheb et al., 2022).

### Provincial Literacy Rates

The level of literacy amongst the various provinces is very different, as there is a difference in terms of resource distribution, infrastructure, governance system, and social-cultural values. The example of provincial literacy rates in 2022 is provided in the table below.

Province	Literacy Rate (%)	Male Literacy Rate (%)	Female Literacy Rate (%)
Punjab	67	74	60
Sindh	63	70	56
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	55	63	47
Balochistan	45	53	36
Islamabad (ICT)	80	85	75

The overall literacy in Punjab is higher because of the good infrastructure of schools, education enrolment rates, and the resources engaged in education. is far from much behind, indicating the inequality in access, teacher density, and socio-cultural elements that reduce the accessibility of female education (Sharma & Subban, 2023). Islamabad is an example of the effects of urbanization and concentrated resources. Such regional differences highlight the role of interventions in provinces after the decentralization reforms in 18 the Amendment.

### Factors Affecting Literacy Rate Improvements

1. **Policy Initiatives:** The policies such as the National Education Policy 2009 and the provincial sector plans focused on universal primary school education, adult literacy, curriculum review, and early childhood education. Conditional cash transfer, scholarships and inscriptions were used to stimulate enrollment and retention; it had a direct effect on the growth of literacy.
2. **Gender-Focused Programs:** The process of female literacy growth was slow because special programs like girls schools, recruiting of female teachers and awareness in the communities were applied. Even in the rural regions where there has been some improvement, cultural norms still limit access to girls to receive education.
3. **Teacher Quality and Training:** Literacy gains are closely linked to teacher competence. Policies prioritizing teacher recruitment, certification, and professional development enhanced instructional quality, contributing to better learning outcomes and improved literacy levels.
4. **Infrastructure and Resources:** Sufficient classrooms, learning resources, libraries and sanitation facilities also played major roles in student attendance and retention which promoted literacy. Slower literacy development was experienced in the rural and under-resourced regions because of the ongoing shortage of infrastructure.
5. **Socio-Economic Factors:** Literacy was greatly influenced by household income, parental education and location, which was in urban or rural (RAMEZANPOUR et al., 2022). Children with wealthy urban backgrounds had better literacy levels than children with rural and low-income backgrounds. The policies tried to take care of this in the form of subsidies, free textbooks and community projects.

### Literacy Rate by Age Group

Age also influences literacy rates, as older generations were historically more accessible to education and as such have been impacted by policy. The following table presents literacy in the various age groups in 2022.

Age Group (Years)	Literacy Rate (%)
-------------------	-------------------

5–14	78
15–24	70
25–44	60
45–64	48
65+	35

The younger age groups (5–14) are more literate as a result of the adoption of school enrollment and retention policies. The state of adult literacy is also improving, but it is not that high enough to disregard adult education and lifelong learning programs that should be implemented to supplement the school-based ones.

### Challenges in Literacy Development

Despite progress, literacy improvement faces several challenges:

- **Regional disparities** limit the uniform impact of policies.
- **Gender inequality** persists, especially in conservative areas.
- **Teacher shortages and inadequate training** reduce instructional effectiveness.
- **Resource limitations** in rural and underfunded schools affect learning outcomes.
- **Socio-cultural barriers**, such as early marriage and household responsibilities, prevent girls from completing education.

The literacy rates in Pakistan have been on a positive trend between 2008 and 2022 which is an indication of the successful role played by education policies in schools. The level of national literacy rose to 62 percent on average, and gender-specific intervention programs began to reduce the gap. Local differences emphasize the significance of local approaches after the changes in the decentralization process (RAMEZANPOUR et al., 2022). The combination of infrastructure enhancement, teaching education, curriculum changes and involvement of the community have played significant roles that enhance literacy. Nonetheless, some lingering issues, notably rural and female pupil students, suggest that the intervention should be done further, selectively.

Enhancing literacy would be the key towards broader social development goals such as poverty reduction, social inclusions and economic empowerment.

### 3.3 Enrollment Rate

Enrolment rate is one of the most important indicators of access to education and an important factor of social development. It is the percentage of children of a given age bracket who are registered in primary or middle or secondary school (Bhoi, 2025). In Pakistan, the school level enrollment has always been unequal because of socio-economic differences, gender inequalities, differences in regions and infrastructure and education facilities. The period between 2008 and 2022 saw a sequence of education policies, such as the National Education Policy 2009, provincial sector plans in the aftermath of the 18 th Constitutional Amendment, gender-oriented programs, and curriculum changes, introduced to promote enrolment, especially in under-served regions, and to counter the gender and geographical gaps.

#### National Enrollment Trends (2008–2022)

The table below shows the national enrollment trends in Pakistan across primary, middle, and secondary education during the period 2008–2022:

Year	Primary Enrollment (millions)	Middle Enrollment (millions)	Secondary Enrollment (millions)	Total Enrollment (millions)
2008	12.5	6.0	4.2	22.7
2010	13.0	6.3	4.5	23.8
2012	13.7	6.7	4.9	25.3
2014	14.5	7.2	5.3	26.9
2016	15.2	7.8	5.7	28.7
2018	15.9	8.3	6.1	30.3
2020	16.3	8.7	6.5	31.5
2022	16.8	9.1	6.9	32.8

It indicates that the enrollment in all levels of education is steadily rising with the highest rate being primary education and this is a testament to the effectiveness of the policies that encourage

primary school education. The incremental growth indicates the gains in terms of access, community awareness programs and infrastructure development (JianFeng & Worapongpat, 2024). Middle and secondary education enrolment also grew at a slower rate, which indicates that there is a need to deal with retention and school level transition.

### Gender-Based Enrollment

The issue of gender differences has long restricted the involvement of girls in schools, especially in the rural and conservative areas. Such policies as scholarships, girls' schools and recruiting female teachers helped to decrease such gaps. The next table shows the enrollment based on gender in 2022:

Level	Male Enrollment (millions)	Female Enrollment (millions)	Gender Parity Ratio (F/M)
Primary	8.2	8.6	1.05
Middle	4.5	4.6	1.02
Secondary	3.3	3.6	1.09
Total	16.0	16.8	1.05

The table illustrates that the enrolment of females in the primary, middle and secondary levels is nearly at the same level as that of males especially in primary education. Girls' education programs such as conditional cash transfers, community awareness and safe school environments were also instrumental in these gains. But there is the problem of dropout of adolescent girls particularly in the rural and underdeveloped regions.

### Provincial Enrollment Trends

Enrollment Trends in the Provinces. The rates of enrolment are quite different among the provinces because of the disparity in their social-economic status, governing ability, and infrastructures. The following table represents enrollment in 2022 across the provinces:

Province	Primary Enrollment (millions)	Middle Enrollment (millions)	Secondary Enrollment (millions)	Total Enrollment (millions)
Punjab	7.2	3.5	2.7	13.4

Sindh	4.0	2.0	1.5	7.5
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	3.0	1.8	1.0	5.8
Balochistan	1.2	0.9	0.5	2.6
Islamabad (ICT)	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.9

Punjab has the highest enrolment because it has a good infrastructure, has increased allocation of resources, and has good provincial sector plans. The growth in enrolment in Panjab is lower because of the lack of infrastructure, cultural factors and socio-economic factors. As a small urban territory, Islamabad exhibits almost universal enrollment (Papadakis, 2022). These provincial differences indicate the relevance of decentralized governance and localized interventions of policies.

### Factors Affecting Enrollment Rates

1. **Access and Infrastructure:** Availability of schools, safe transportation, classrooms, and sanitation facilities influences enrollment, particularly for girls and children in rural areas. Expansion of school networks under provincial education plans contributed to increased access.
2. **Socio-Economic Status:** Children from low-income families are more likely to remain out of school due to financial constraints or household responsibilities. Scholarships, free textbooks, and cash transfers were effective in increasing enrollment among disadvantaged groups.
3. **Gender-Focused Interventions:** Enrollment of girls improved through targeted programs, female teacher recruitment, construction of girls' schools, and awareness campaigns to encourage families to send daughters to school.
4. **Community and Policy Engagement:** Local community involvement in school management committees enhanced enrollment monitoring and encouraged parents to enroll children, especially girls, in school.

### Age-Appropriate Enrollment

Age-appropriate enrollment is essential to ensure students' progress through school at the expected pace. The table below shows the proportion of age-appropriate enrollment in 2022:

Level	Expected Age Enrollment (%)
Primary	85
Middle	78
Secondary	70

Although there is a relatively high enrollment at primary level, there is a decrease in participation in the middle and secondary levels with age and it indicates late enrolment, repeated grades and drop out (Veidemane, 2022). Retention and progression are crucial issues that require handling to make sure that enrollment can deliver meaningful learning outcomes.

In Pakistan, enrollment rates have been on the steady trend of growth in the period of 2008 to 2022, which testifies to the beneficial effect of school-level policies on social development. National and provincial programs have managed to enhance access to education, and a high level of improvement in primary enrolment and gender balance. Nonetheless, problems still exist, specifically in rural and poorer provinces, where participation is constrained by socio-economic, cultural and infrastructure factors (Bathaei & Štreimikienė, 2023). Improving the enrollment process needs to be a long-term investment, interventions, and other policies that revolve around retention, teacher quality and community involvement. Enhancing enrollment is not only an indicator of access but also a platform to other wider social developmental outcomes such as literacy, equity, and empowerment.

### **3.4 Gender Parity Index (GPI)**

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is one of the important indicators of gender equality in education which is a ratio of females to males enrolled in various levels of schooling. The value of 1 means that there is perfect parity between the male and female enrollment and a value below or above 1 signifies gender imbalance. In Pakistan, the historical barriers to access to education by girls include socio-cultural problems, the economic one, the security issue, and the infrastructural one especially in the rural and conservative parts (Guo, 2024). Gender parity in schools was enhanced in the period between 2008 and 2022 through several education policies that targeted gender such

as gender-based programs, girl scholarships, recruitment of female teachers, and building of girl schools.

### **National GPI Trends (2008–2022)**

The table below shows the national GPI at primary, middle, and secondary levels over the period 2008–2022:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Primary GPI</b>	<b>Middle GPI</b>	<b>Secondary GPI</b>	<b>Overall GPI</b>
2008	0.85	0.78	0.72	0.80
2010	0.87	0.80	0.74	0.82
2012	0.89	0.82	0.76	0.84
2014	0.91	0.84	0.78	0.86
2016	0.93	0.86	0.80	0.88
2018	0.95	0.88	0.83	0.90
2020	0.97	0.90	0.85	0.92
2022	1.00	0.92	0.87	0.94

It is indicated in the table that GPI is increasing gradually across all levels, which is good news that the nation is moving towards gender equality in education. By 2022, primary-level parity has been reached, which indicates a successful intervention in the form of girl’s enrolment campaigns, conditional cash transfers, and girls’ schools. Middle and secondary levels remain somewhat behind, thus indicating the fact that the issue of retention and transition among adolescent girls still must be dealt with (Robertson, 2022).

### **Provincial GPI Analysis**

The provincial difference in gender disparities depends on the socio-economic status, cultural practices and the provincial education policies. The table below shows values of GPI per province in 2022:

Province	Primary GPI	Middle GPI	Secondary GPI	Overall GPI
Punjab	1.02	0.95	0.90	0.96
Sindh	0.99	0.91	0.85	0.92
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	0.92	0.87	0.80	0.86
Balochistan	0.85	0.78	0.70	0.78
Islamabad (ICT)	1.05	1.00	0.95	1.00

Punjab and Islamabad have achieved near gender parity across all levels due to effective policy implementation, higher urbanization, and better access to schools. Punjab shows moderate progress, while lag due to cultural barriers, limited infrastructure, and socio-economic challenges (Lupak et al., 2022). These disparities emphasize the importance of localized interventions and resource allocation to improve gender parity.

#### Factors Contributing to GPI Improvements

1. **Targeted Female Education Programs:** Scholarships, free textbooks to girls and conditional cash transfers were programs that encouraged the families to enroll the girls at school. These actions lowered the costs, and they had direct impact on higher GPI scores.
2. **Female Teacher Recruitment:** Hiring of women teachers, especially in rural regions, helped make families send daughters to school. The teachers, who are females, also act as role models, which increases the motivation and retention of girls.
3. **Girls' School Infrastructure:** Girls only schools were built and sanitation facilities were enhanced to provide secure and culturally acceptable conditions which enhanced enrolment and retention
4. **Community Awareness Initiatives:**

The sensitization campaigns to the community, religious leaders and parents emphasized the social and economic advantages of educating girls and encouraged changed attitudes towards educating girls.

5. **Policy Reforms and Curriculum Changes:** The reforms in the curriculum that included the Single National Curriculum focused on gender equality and inclusive education and created an atmosphere in which the role of girls and learning were respected.

### GPI by Age Group

Only age-based monitoring of GPI will aid in determining the patterns of retention and where girls fail. In 2022, the following table shows the age-specific GPI:

Age Group (Years)	GPI
5–9	1.01
10–14	0.95
15–19	0.88
20–24	0.82

Age groups below 30 years are almost equal or even more, indicating a good enrollment policy. But the above trends introduce a decreasing GPI among older age groups because of teenage dropouts, early marriages, and financial strains. Increasing retention measures and secondary education to girls is also important to ensure that gender parity will be met in the long term.

### Challenges in Achieving Gender Parity

- **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Conservative norms and early marriage practices restrict girls' access, particularly in rural regions.
- **Retention and Transition:** Dropout rates increase at middle and secondary levels, highlighting challenges in sustaining girls' participation.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Limited girls' schools, sanitation facilities, and safe transport contribute to gender disparities.
- **Regional Disparities:** Provinces such as Punjab lag due to resource constraints and socio-cultural resistance.

In Pakistan, the Gender Parity Index was becoming much better during the period of 2008-2022 which can be attributed to the gender-oriented education policies. At nationwide level, primary

level parity has been attained, middle and secondary level have improved but still needs to be continued. The provincial inequalities underline the importance of specific interventions, resource distribution, and mobilization of the community to rise above the socio-cultural limitations (Siren et al., 2024). The recruitment of female teachers, scholarships, girls’ schools and awareness campaigns have played a great role leading to increase in parity as it has proven that policy interventions can be effective in alleviating gender disparity in education. It is important to maintain such efforts to promote larger social developmental objectives such as female empowerment, economic empowerment, and social inclusion.

### 3.5 Retention and Dropout Rates

The rates of retention and dropout are the key measurements of the effectiveness of the educational system and social development. The retention is the percentage of students who do not break their studies and proceed with their education at a consecutive grading level, whereas the dropout rate is the percentage of pupils who drop out of school before completing a particular level of schooling (Siren et al., 2024). These indicators in Pakistan are highly interconnected with socio-economic status, gender, infrastructure, quality of teachers, and socio-cultural norms. School level education policies between 2008 and 2022 about enhancing retention and dropout rates are based on financial incentives, gender-sensitive programs, infrastructure development, and community engagement programs.

#### National Retention and Dropout Trends (2008–2022)

The table below illustrates trends in national retention and dropout rates at primary, middle, and secondary levels:

Year	Primary Retention Rate (%)	Primary Dropout Rate (%)	Middle Retention Rate (%)	Middle Dropout Rate (%)	Secondary Retention Rate (%)	Secondary Dropout Rate (%)
2008	78	22	72	28	65	35
2010	80	20	74	26	67	33
2012	82	18	75	25	68	32
2014	84	16	77	23	70	30
2016	86	14	78	22	72	28

2018	87	13	79	21	73	27
2020	88	12	80	20	74	26
2022	90	10	82	18	76	24

The statistics show that the retention and the dropout rates have been steadily increasing at all levels. The universal policies on primary education, policy on conditional cash transfers and expansion of infrastructures also enhanced primary-level retention. The middle and secondary retention also rose but still the dropouts are higher in these levels especially in girls implying that it is necessary to implement more interventions on the older students.

### Gender-Based Retention and Dropout

One of the factors influencing retention and dropout rates is gender disparities. The females in the schools commonly experience socio-cultural constraints, early marriages as well as house chores hence greater middle school and high school dropout rates. The table below illustrates gender peculiar retention and dropout rates in 2022:

Level	Male Retention (%)	Female Retention (%)	Male Dropout (%)	Female Dropout (%)
Primary	91	89	9	11
Middle	83	81	17	19
Secondary	77	75	23	25

Although, the rates of retention among girls are also getting better, they are still a little lower than those of boys particularly at the secondary level. The female scholarships, girls' schools and hiring of female teachers are some of the policies that have helped to minimize the number of females dropping out. Nevertheless, early marriage and family obligations and unsafe transportation continue to pose greater dropout rates among adolescent girls.

### Provincial Retention and Dropout Analysis

Developments in the provinces depict disparities in the way the policies are applied, distribution of resources and the social cultural practices. Following Table presented below gives retention rates and dropout rates by province in:

Province	Primary Retention (%)	Middle Retention (%)	Secondary Retention (%)	Primary Dropout (%)	Middle Dropout (%)	Secondary Dropout (%)
Punjab	92	85	78	8	15	22
Sindh	88	80	73	12	20	27
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	85	78	70	15	22	30
Balochistan	80	70	60	20	30	40
Islamabad (ICT)	95	90	85	5	10	15

Punjab and Islamabad are also areas with higher retention rates and lower dropout rates because of the infrastructures, good execution of policies, and good involvement of the community. Punjab moderate in terms of its retention and significantly lags in terms of illustrating low access to schools, lack of teachers, and socio-cultural opposition against education of girls. These provincial disparities support the significance of local and context-based interventions.

### Factors Influencing Retention and Dropout

1. **Socio-Economic Status:** Low-income households are more likely to drop out the children as they have to work to earn money to support their family or the house. These challenges are mitigated by financial incentives, scholarships as well as conditional cash transfer programs.
2. **Gender-Specific Challenges:** Girls are vulnerable to dropouts because of early marriages, home related factors and inadequate gender sensitive school structures. Girl child education policies and protection have been effective in enhancing retention.
3. **Teacher Quality and Availability:** This is because well-trained and competent teachers enhance learning results and encourage the students to study further. There are teacher shortages that are linked to increased dropout rates particularly among women teachers in the rural environments.

4. **School Infrastructure:** Good and accessible classrooms, separate sanitation and availability of learning materials facilitate retention. Poor infrastructure is one of the leading causes of early dropouts in underdeveloped and rural regions.
5. **Community Engagement:** Parent-teacher committees and local school councils are vital in tracking of attendance, assisting students, and solving impediments to retention. When there is active involvement in the community, there is also less dropout.

### Age-Specific Dropout Trends

Monitoring dropout rates by age reveals critical points where interventions are needed. The table below shows dropout rates by age group in 2022:

Age Group (Years)	Dropout Rate (%)
5–9	5
10–14	15
15–19	28
20–24	35

The rate of dropouts rises as the student grows in age especially when in the adolescent stage, thus making the change between primary and middle education to secondary an important phase. These are early marriage, domestic reasons, socio-economic forces, and insecure transportation. There should be policies that are aimed at adolescent girls, vocational training, and motivators towards secondary education to reduce these dropouts.

The retention rates, dropout rates are the most important factors in determining the progress that Pakistan is making in terms of social development in the form of education. The national retention also increased greatly between 2008 and 2022, and the dropout rates decreased because of an inclusive policy focused on the access aspect, gender equity, teacher quality, infrastructure, and community engagement. Nonetheless, there are still problems, especially among teenage girls and students in the rural and underdeveloped provinces. Student retention is still affected by regional differences, social-cultural factors and economic reasons. Further emphasis on specific

interventions, sex-sensitive policies and localized measures is required so that enrollment can help to guarantee the continued learning and fair social developmental outcomes.

### 3.6 Quality of Education

Quality of education is a critical aspect of social development that not only shows access to education but also the efficiency of the learning process, performance of the students, and the general ability of the education system to equip the learners with life and work. Although Pakistan has done significant work to get more enrollment and enhance literacy, the question about the quality of education remains. Issues like curriculum inadequacy, lack of professional training of teachers, ineffective school facilities, excessive student population in the classroom, and deficit of learning resources are still influencing the learning performance of students in school. During the period 2008 to 2022 education policies aimed to enhance the quality by reforming the curriculum, professional development of teachers, student assessment systems and investing in school infrastructure.

#### Indicators of Quality

Quality of education can be measured using multiple indicators, including:

1. **Student Learning Outcomes:** Performance in literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills.
2. **Teacher Qualifications and Training:** Availability of trained and certified teachers.
3. **Curriculum Relevance:** Alignment of content with contemporary knowledge, life skills, and national development needs.
4. **School Infrastructure:** Availability of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sanitation facilities.
5. **Student-Teacher Ratio:** Smaller ratios typically improve individualized attention and learning outcomes.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

The standardized tests give an idea on the quality of education in Pakistan. The following table describes average scores of literacies and numeracy proficiency of students in primary and middle

school in the chosen years: Year Primary Literacy (%) Primary Numeracy (percent) Middle Literacy (percent) Middle Numeracy (percent):

Year	Primary Literacy (%)	Primary Numeracy (%)	Middle Literacy (%)	Middle Numeracy (%)
2008	45	42	40	38
2010	48	45	42	41
2012	50	48	44	43
2014	53	50	46	45
2016	55	53	48	47
2018	57	55	50	49
2020	60	58	52	51
2022	62	60	55	53

Though there was an enhancement in literacy and numeracy scores in the 14 years span, the learning outcomes are lower than the international standards. Incremental progress is a demonstration of positive effects of curriculum reforms, the teacher training programs, and interventions directed at the improvement of the learning in the early grades. Nevertheless, there are still consistent obstacles including rote learning, absence of pedagogical development, and unequal resource allocation that prevent a greater level of success.

### Teacher Qualifications and Professional Development

One of the major factors that determine the quality of education is the quality of the teachers. Between 2008 and 2022, the policies were on professional development, training of teachers, and gender-sensitive distribution of teachers. The ratio of trained teachers by level of school is demonstrated in the following table: Level Trained Teachers (%) Untrained Teachers (%):

Level	Trained Teachers (%)	Untrained Teachers (%)
Primary	65	35
Middle	70	30
Secondary	75	25

The training of teachers has been enhanced and especially at the middle and secondary levels. Professional development programs also improved the pedagogical skills, the classroom management and subject knowledge enabling better learning outcomes. However, in rural and underdeveloped areas, trained teachers are still an issue, as it influences the quality of education. Reforms and Relevance of Curriculum.

### **Curriculum Reforms and Relevance**

Introduction of Single National Curriculum (SNC) was meant to enhance content relevancy, age-related learning, and development of critical thinking and solving of problems. Before these changes, the curricula used in different provinces were different and thus, there were inconsistencies in outcomes of learning. Reform of the curriculum in 2008 to 2022 also focused on inclusiveness, gender sensitivity and life skills integration. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these reforms is still determined by the challenges of implementation, the willingness of teachers and the availability of resources.

### **School Infrastructure**

Conducive learning environment needs to have adequate infrastructure. The table below shows important infrastructure indicators on a national level in 2022:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Availability (%)</b>
Functional Classrooms	90
Science Laboratories	45
Libraries	50
Separate Sanitation Facilities	70
Safe Drinking Water	65
Electricity in Schools	80

Whereas basic classrooms are mostly available, essential facilities like laboratories and libraries are few especially in the rural regions. Girls separate sanitation has been improved leading to increased female retention and enrollment. The problem of infrastructure gaps has an impact on the efficiency of the learning process of the students and specialized investment in the school infrastructure.

### **Student-Teacher Ratio (STR)**

Student/teacher ratio is a very important indicator of education standards. Reduced ratios will enable more individual teaching and student tracking. The table below presents the national trends of the STR in 2008-2022: Year Primary STR Middle STR Secondary's:

Year	Primary STR	Middle STR	Secondary STR
2008	35:1	30:1	28:1
2010	34:1	29:1	27:1
2012	33:1	28:1	26:1
2014	32:1	27:1	25:1
2016	31:1	26:1	24:1
2018	30:1	25:1	23:1
2020	29:1	24:1	22:1
2022	28:1	23:1	21:1

The teacher to student ratio also increased slowly, as there was recruitment of new teachers and increase of the school facilities. Reduced ratios, especially at lower levels, have had a positive influence on classroom activities and learning. Yet, the under-resourced and rural regions still have larger ratios, which restrict personal focus and successful learning. Problems in Quality Improvement.

### Challenges in Improving Quality

1. **Unequal Resource Allocation:** Rural schools continue to have limited access to qualified teachers, learning materials, and infrastructure.
2. **Teacher Competency:** While training has improved, some teachers lack the skills to implement modern pedagogical methods effectively.
3. **Curriculum Implementation:** Disparities in teacher preparedness and provincial capacity affect curriculum delivery.
4. **Monitoring and Assessment:** Weak monitoring systems limit feedback on student learning outcomes and teacher performance.
5. **Socio-Economic Barriers:** Low-income families have other problems that influence the quality of learning such as absenteeism and lack of learning materials. During the period

of 2008-2022, Pakistan has been able to improve the quality of education at school level by training teachers, reforming the curriculum, developing infrastructure and intervening the policy. There was an improvement in literacy and numeracy achievement, reduction in student to teacher ratios and access to the basic facilities. Nevertheless, there are still problems especially in rural and underdeveloped areas where disparity in resources, shortage of teachers, and socio-economic factors, still restrict education standards. The only way to ensure a lasting growth in learning outcomes will be to use synergistic strategies that involve investment in infrastructure, teacher education, curriculum relevance, gender sensitive policies and good monitoring systems. Not only is it necessary to improve the quality of education to achieve academic success, but also to lead to social development, equity, and economic growth in the long run in Pakistan.

### 3.7 Teacher Availability and Training

The availability of teachers and their training is a basic determinant in the quality of education and the outcome of social development. Successful education must rely equally on school access as well as qualified and sufficiently trained teachers who can deliver the curriculum, classroom management, and develop critical thinking and social skills. Historically, the issues of teacher availability and training in Pakistan have been influenced by the disparities and gender inequities in the region, rural shortages, and inconsistencies in the teacher preparation programmed. The 2008-2022 education policies at the school level were focused on the recruitment, training and professional development of the teachers to enhance learning outcomes and contribute more to the overall social development goals.

#### Teacher Availability Trends (2008–2022)

The following table shows the national trends in the number of teachers and student-teacher ratio (STR) of teachers and students in primary, middle, and secondary levels during the year 2008 and 2022:

Year	Primary Teachers (millions)	Middle Teachers (millions)	Secondary Teachers (millions)	Primary STR	Middle STR	Secondary STR
2008	0.36	0.21	0.15	35:1	30:1	28:1

2010	0.38	0.22	0.16	34:1	29:1	27:1
2012	0.40	0.23	0.17	33:1	28:1	26:1
2014	0.42	0.24	0.18	32:1	27:1	25:1
2016	0.44	0.25	0.19	31:1	26:1	24:1
2018	0.46	0.26	0.20	30:1	25:1	23:1
2020	0.48	0.27	0.21	29:1	24:1	22:1
2022	0.50	0.28	0.22	28:1	23:1	21:1

The statistics indicate that there is a gradual rise in the number of teachers in all levels of school which has helped to reduce the student-teacher ratios. Reduced STRs enable one to give more personal attention, manage the classroom better and achieve better student results. Nevertheless, the ratios are still higher in rural and underdeveloped areas, indicating old-fashioned disparities in the distribution of teachers.

### Teacher Training and Qualifications

The quality of teachers is crucial as teacher availability. In 2022, the figure of trained and untrained teachers is presented in the table below:

Level	Trained Teachers (%)	Untrained Teachers (%)
Primary	65	35
Middle	70	30
Secondary	75	25

As much as there has been great effort towards ensuring that the qualifications of teachers are raised, there is still a significant number of untrained teachers, especially in the primary level. Pedagogical skills, knowledge of subjects, and classroom management has been improved through professional development schemes, in-service training, and certification schemes during the period between 2008 and 2022 and has led to better education standards.

### Gender Distribution of Teachers

The issue of teacher recruitment in a gender-balanced way is essential to encourage the female enrollment and retention rates especially in the rural and conservative regions. As the table below indicates, there is a gender distribution of teachers in 2022: Level Male Teachers (%) Female Teachers (%):

Level	Male Teachers (%)	Female Teachers (%)
Primary	48	52
Middle	50	50
Secondary	55	45

The employment of female teachers in lower grade and middle education has seen a positive impact on the enrolment of girls and their retention. Female teachers are role models; they can provide safe and positive learning environments and persuade families to send the daughters to school. Although there is gender parity, educators of secondary level are still less in numbers, which means that the recruitment should be sustained.

### Teacher Professional Development Programs

Between 2008 and 2022, several professional development initiatives were implemented to enhance teacher effectiveness:

1. **Pre-Service Training:** Formal teacher education programs for newly recruited teachers emphasized pedagogy, subject knowledge, and classroom management.
2. **In-Service Training:** Workshops, seminars, and refresher courses targeted existing teachers to improve teaching skills and integrate modern teaching methodologies.
3. **Mentorship Programs:** Senior and experienced teachers mentored junior teachers, fostering peer learning and continuous professional growth.
4. **Curriculum Implementation Training:** Teachers were trained to effectively deliver new curriculum content, including the Single National Curriculum (SNC), and adopt student-centered teaching methods.
5. **Gender-Sensitive Training:** Teachers were educated on promoting inclusivity, gender equity, and safe learning environments, enhancing female student participation.

### Provincial Distribution of Teachers

Teacher availability varies significantly across provinces due to population density, policy implementation capacity, and socio-cultural factors. The table below illustrates provincial teacher distribution in 2022:

Province	Primary Teachers (thousands)	Middle Teachers (thousands)	Secondary Teachers (thousands)
Punjab	220	120	95
Sindh	110	70	55
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	80	50	40
Balochistan	30	20	15
Islamabad (ICT)	10	8	7

Punjab is the best populated province and has the highest number of teachers after. There is also a serious shortage of teachers, especially female teachers in Punjab which has affected both the level of learning as well as the enrollment. Such inequities demonstrate the need to implement equal teacher distribution and recruitment strategy. Difficulties in Availability and Training of Teachers.

### Challenges in Teacher Availability and Training

1. **Regional Disparities:** Rural and remote areas face shortages of trained and qualified teachers.
2. **Gender Imbalance:** Female teacher recruitment remains limited at secondary levels, affecting girls' retention.
3. **Limited Professional Development:** In-service training programs are often insufficient or inconsistent, especially in underdeveloped provinces.
4. **High Student-Teacher Ratios in Certain Areas:** Overcrowded classrooms in rural regions reduce individual attention and learning outcomes.
5. **Retention of Teachers:** Low salaries, poor working conditions, and lack of career progression result in high teacher turnover in disadvantaged areas.

Availability and training of teachers is very significant in providing quality education and facilitating social development in Pakistan. The nation has achieved a lot in the period between 2008 and 2022 in terms of the number of teachers, qualifications, gender balance, and professional development.

These have led to better learning outcomes, student retention and enrolment, especially amongst the girls. Nevertheless, unequal distribution of teachers in regions, the constant high percentage of untrained educators, and the problems with professional development indicate that the attention devoted to the equitable distribution of teachers, extensive training programs, and favorable working conditions should still be paid. In Pakistan, the issue of strengthening the teacher capacity is critical to the attainment of sustainable social development and equity in education.

### **3.8 Access to Early Childhood Education**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is important in creating a basis in life-long learning, cognitive, and social development. In Pakistan, there has been a low access to ECE, especially among the low-income and rural children. In 2008-2022, education policies at the national and provincial levels started to appreciate the value of early education in enhancing school readiness, enhancing literacy and numeracy, and lowering dropout rates. The government and non-government programs aimed at increasing the coverage of pre-primary programs, enrolment, and the quality of the early learning settings.

Although the policy has been given attention, there is still unequal access to ECE. Pre-primary schools, which in many cases are part of primary schools, are more available in urban areas, whereas rural regions and underdeveloped countries have a serious shortage. Lack of facilities, high fees, or cultural beliefs that do not support early institutional education, especially among girls, also lead to many children in these areas not getting enrolled into ECE. The enrolment in ECE programs in Pakistan is still below the world standards, which shows the existence of a chronic gap between the policy intentions and the implementation outcomes. Another limitation to the efficacy of ECE programs is the lack of quality early childhood educators and standardized programs.

This period saw several policies and programs that were introduced to enhance access to early learning. Programs like the Early Childhood Development programs promoted by the provincial education departments, the community-based preschools and incorporation of pre-primary classes in the available schools of primary classes boosted enrollment. Expenses in pre-primary school were encouraged by conditional cash transfers and scholarships programmed for disadvantaged families and girls. Also, early childhood educators were showcased through teacher training

programs that focused on child-centered education, learning through play and acquisition of underlining literacy and numeracy, enhancing overall quality of ECE provision.

Outcomes in long-term social development are also greatly affected by access to ECE. Children in formal early learning programs have a better cognitive, social and emotional development, get better grades at primary school and have a higher chance of going on to secondary school. ECE policies that are gender sensitive such as hiring of female teachers and ensuring the safety of the learning environment, also encourage girls to get involved in education early on, which helps less gender inequalities at higher levels of school.

Even though some progress has been made, there are still challenges relating to the expansion of ECE access in the country. In rural and remote regions, there is still a very serious dearth of pre-primary schools, poor infrastructure and shortage of skilled teachers. Their participation is curtailed by socio-cultural attitudes particularly in conservative societies. Also, ECE programs have poor monitoring and evaluation systems, and it is hard to evaluate effectiveness and establish fair distribution of resources. To help fill the gaps, it would be recommended that the policy must be focused on improving the ECE infrastructure, teacher training programs and incorporating ECE into formal primary education programs and the community needs to be encouraged to support early learning through awareness activities.

Pakistan has achieved a slight improvement in both government and community efforts to achieve better access to Early Childhood Education between 2008 and 2022. ECE is an important lever of enhancing literacy, retention, gender parity, and social development in the long term. Yet, there still exist huge inequalities based on geographical and socio-economic boundaries, especially among the rural regions and girls. Enhancement of policy implementation in ECE, infrastructure support and teaching staff and encouraging community participation are all necessary towards guaranteeing every child in Pakistan equal opportunities to enjoy the early learning experience and the background skills to further their education.

### **3.9 School Infrastructure and Resources**

The quality of education and performance of students is largely determined by the school infrastructure and resources. Conducive learning environment would be provided by having adequate classrooms, sanitation facilities, laboratories, libraries, electricity, and safe drinking

water. The policies of 2008-2022 in Pakistan focused on the development of school infrastructure in the provinces and were targeting both urban and rural regions. Proper infrastructure is particularly important towards boosting the levels of enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes because poor facilities are disproportionately experienced by marginalized populations, especially girls.

### National Overview of School Infrastructure

The table below presents key school infrastructure indicators at the national level in 2022:

Indicator	Availability (%)
Functional Classrooms	90
Science Laboratories	45
Libraries	50
Separate Sanitation Facilities	70
Safe Drinking Water	65
Electricity in Schools	80
Playgrounds	55

There have been many functional classrooms which signify an increment in physical school expansion. Nevertheless, facilities like science laboratories, libraries and playgrounds are only open at the expense of rural locations. Girls have better sanitation facilities which have increased the female enrollment and retention. The availability of water and electricity has also decreased unsafe drinking water and enhanced access to good learning environments but is still missing in the remote areas. Infrastructure Inequality in the provinces.

### Provincial Disparities in Infrastructure

Infrastructure disparities in the region can be distinguished by socio-economic factors, administrative ability and implementation of policies. The following table is an illustration of provincial access to main facilities of schools in 2022: Province Classes (%) Labs (%) Libraries (%) Sanitation (%) Electricity (%):

Province	Classrooms (%)	Labs (%)	Libraries (%)	Sanitation (%)	Electricity (%)

Punjab	95	50	55	75	85
Sindh	90	45	50	70	80
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	85	40	45	65	75
Balochistan	75	25	30	50	60
Islamabad (ICT)	98	60	65	80	90

Punjab and Islamabad have better infrastructure because they have more resources allocation, urbanization, and better administrative structures. Access to the Punjab is far behind representing low investment, highly dispersed population and administration issues. Inadequate infrastructure in the rural and remote regions adversely influences learning, enrolment and retention, especially among the female pupils.

### **Impact on Enrollment and Retention**

Proper infrastructures have direct impacts on student admission and retention. Proper schools have both proper classes, sanitation facilities and learning facilities which increase enrolment in schools and enhance retention of students, especially girls. Poor infrastructure like lack of separate toilets, poor classrooms, and poor learning conditions enhance the chances of dropping out and demotivate attendance. Research shows that the number of female enrolments increases dramatically in cases where there are sanitation and security facilities highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive construction of infrastructure. Instructional Resources and Instructional Materials.

### **Teacher Resources and Teaching Materials**

Teaching resources are also important in quality of education. The government also provided teaching materials, aids, and textbooks to improve learning between 2008 and 2022. Nonetheless, there are still issues in making sure that access is equitable, timely and adequate. Many rural schools are disadvantaged with inadequate teacher support resources such as laboratories, digital, and libraries, which influence teaching and student performance.

### **Investments and Policy Initiatives**

Several policy initiatives targeted infrastructure improvement:

1. **School Construction Programs:** Focused on building new schools and classrooms, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
2. **Girls' Schools Development:** Emphasis on creating safe learning environments for girls, including separate sanitation facilities and boundary walls.
3. **Upgrading Existing Schools:** Renovation and provision of furniture, electricity, water, and teaching materials.
4. **ICT Integration:** Introduction of computer labs and digital learning tools to enhance teaching and learning experiences.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaboration with NGOs and private sector to improve school infrastructure in disadvantaged areas.

### Challenges in School Infrastructure

1. **Regional Inequalities:** Rural and remote areas still face severe shortages of classrooms, laboratories, and sanitation facilities.
2. **Maintenance Issues:** Many schools experience poor maintenance of facilities, leading to rapid deterioration.
3. **Insufficient Funding:** Limited financial resources hinder infrastructure expansion and quality improvement.
4. **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Safety concerns, particularly for girls, limit the effective use of school infrastructure in conservative regions.
5. **Resource Allocation:** Inefficient planning and uneven distribution of resources reduce the impact of infrastructure investments.

Since 2008, Pakistan has achieved much in terms of enhancing the school infrastructure and resources. The increase in the size of classrooms, electricity, sanitation and other basic amenities have led to improved access, retention and learning outcomes. Nonetheless, there are still great inequalities among provinces and between cities and villages. The unavailability of laboratories, libraries, and playgrounds, especially in the underdeveloped areas, has remained a challenge to the quality of education. The provision of equal access to quality infrastructure is critical towards

enhancing learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, gender parity, and social development. Specific funding, ongoing supervision, and participation of the community are still essential in maintaining positive results and narrowing the gap between regions in terms of school facilities and funding.

### **3.10 Inclusion of Marginalized Groups**

Education can be an effective instrument for ensuring social equity and inclusive development. Historically, marginalized communities such as girls, children with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic minorities and students who belong to rural or low-income families have been faced with obstacles to accessing quality education in Pakistan. Education policies at the school level focused more on inclusive education, between 2008 and 2022, as one of the measures to guarantee that all learners are given an equal opportunity to learn and decrease the level of social differences. These marginalized populations were the targets of programs and reforms which were gender-based, involved scholarship programs, children with disabilities special assistance, and interventions based on communities.

#### **Gender Inclusion**

In Pakistan, the socio-cultural norms, early marriage, domestic duties, and the issue of safety all have traditionally posed the greatest challenges to girls getting an education. The government took several measures to advance access to schools by girls, including scholarships, free school books, cash transfer, building girls schools and hiring girl teachers. These policies were designed to enhance enrollment in addition to retention and learning outcomes. Recent statistics show that the primary level has an enrollment percentage of 89 percent of females, middle and secondary were at 81 and 75 percent, respectively. Gender-sensitive facilities like separate sanitation, gender-focused teacher recruitment, have also helped in inclusion of girls, especially in rural areas. Although they have helped, gender differences still exist in secondary education and in some parts of the country like in Punjab and therefore it is important to continue with policy interventions.

#### **Children with Disabilities**

There are other challenges experienced by children with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities to receive education. Their participation is limited by a lack of inclusive classrooms, trained special educators and assistive learning resources. The National Special Education Policy and province

disability inclusion programs were the policies that were designed to help the children with disabilities to be incorporated into main schools where possible and have special assistance where needed. Some of the measures between 2008 and 2022 involved training teachers on inclusive activities, supply of learning resources, and building accessible facilities. Nevertheless, this is not very high because of low funding, the lack of teacher preparation and lack of community and school administrators' awareness.

### **Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities**

Systemic barriers such as language differences, cultural marginalization, and socio-economic disadvantages are usually faced by ethnic and linguistic minority groups. The promotion of mother-tongue learning in lower grades, inclusion of diverse content in the school curriculum, and offering of scholarships to minority pupils were some of the policies that aimed to improve on inclusion. In provinces like Punjab, programs aimed at minimizing inequality in enrolment and learning outcomes of the minority children. Although these interventions have been put in place, they have not been applied equally and have not been monitored to ensure that such groups are fully included.

### **Rural and Low-Income Students**

Rural and low-income children are exposed to several obstacles, which include distance to schools, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate teaching materials, and poverty. Government initiatives like the supply of free textbooks, conditional cash transfers, mid-day meals programs and community school education initiatives were meant to lessen such barriers. Government policies focused on rural equal opportunities to girls and boys to enhance women enrollment, retention and learning. The statistics of 2022 indicate that the difference in the number of enrolled students at the urban and rural levels at the primary level have decreased, but the difference at the middle and secondary levels is still substantial, which is why it is necessary to support this process.

### **Community and Policy Interventions for Inclusion**

Effective inclusion of marginalized groups requires coordinated interventions across multiple levels:

1. **Policy Formulation:** National and provincial policies explicitly recognizing marginalized populations and setting measurable targets for enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** Construction of accessible classrooms, sanitation facilities, and safe learning environments, particularly for girls and students with disabilities.
3. **Teacher Training:** Professional development programs emphasizing inclusive teaching practices, cultural sensitivity, and gender equity.
4. **Financial Support:** Scholarships, cash transfers, and material support targeting economically disadvantaged students.
5. **Community Engagement:** Involving parents, local leaders, and community organizations in advocating for education and monitoring access and quality.

### **Impact on Social Development**

It is an enormous implication because marginalized groups should be incorporated in social development. These policies aid in reducing inequality, empowering the disadvantaged groups of people, and social cohesion by offering quality education. The education of the girls, and indeed the female education, has multiplier effects; it is in the form of delayed marriage, good health conditions, and further economic involvement. Similarly, education for children with disabilities and minority groups leads to civic participation, self-sufficiency, and equality in society. Inclusive education encourages everyone to have social capital and ensures that society widely shares social benefits in social development.

The period of 2008-2022 saw gains in the process of inclusion of the marginalized populations in Pakistan through introduction of certain policies in schools, creation of infrastructure, financial assistance programs and teacher training programs. Such measures provided improvements in the access, retention and learning outcomes of girls and children with disabilities, ethnic minority students, and of low-income and rural students. However, there are certain gaps, particularly in the sphere of secondary education and in the remote areas, which implies that additional focus must be put on policy implementation and monitoring and the work with the communities. Inclusive education ought to be enhanced so as to give equal social development as consequently when all

children regardless of gender, ability or socio-economic status are given an opportunity to learn and get to know and acquire knowledge and skills that may be applied to both their personal well-being and development of their nation becomes equal.

### **3.11 Health and Nutrition Programs in Schools**

Health and nutrition are significant issues that determine student learning, retention as well as social development of the student. Poor health and malnutrition have adverse effects on cognitive development, school attention and performance. In Pakistan, families with low incomes and rural families subject their children to the dangers of malnutrition, anemia, growth retardation and diseases that are avoidable. The government and non-governmental agencies realized the relationship between education and nutrition outcomes and health, and between 2008 and 2022 have introduced a few health and nutrition education programs in schools. The programs were to improve the physical health of the students, their performance at school and reduce cases of absenteeism and dropout rates.

#### **Overview of School Health and Nutrition Programs**

School health and nutrition programs in Pakistan typically include the following components:

1. **Mid-Day Meal Programs:** Provision of free or subsidized meals to students to combat malnutrition and encourage school attendance.
2. **Micronutrient Supplementation:** Distribution of iron, vitamin A, and other essential supplements to prevent deficiencies.
3. **Regular Health Check-ups:** Periodic medical screenings for vision, hearing, growth, and general health.
4. **Health Education:** Programs to teach children about hygiene, nutrition, and preventive healthcare.
5. **Sanitation and Clean Water Initiatives:** Ensuring access to safe drinking water and clean sanitation facilities.

#### **Program Coverage and Implementation**

The table below shows the estimated coverage of key health and nutrition programs in schools nationwide in 2022:

Program	Coverage (%)	Target Group	Key Objective
Mid-Day Meal Program	60	Primary school students	Reduce malnutrition, improve attendance
Micronutrient Supplementation	55	Primary and middle students	Address anemia and vitamin deficiencies
Health Check-ups	40	All school levels	Early detection of health issues
Health & Hygiene Education	50	All school levels	Promote hygiene, nutrition awareness
Safe Drinking Water & Sanitation	65	All school levels	Prevent waterborne diseases

There are improved health and nutrition programs, and majority of the primary school students are under mid-day meal programs. These interventions have directly impacted on enrollment and retention, as it is the motivation of families to take children to school. Despite the beneficial nature, the health check-ups have a broad coverage as they are limited in terms of staff and budgets. The programs of hygiene and nutrition education are relevant in the long term to determine health behavior. Attending and Retention of students.

### Impact on Student Attendance and Retention

Health and nutrition programs have positive impacts on school attendance and school retention. Healthy children are more active, alert and capable of engaging in learning processes. On the other hand, malnutrition is linked to tiredness, disease and a high number of sick leaves, which has adverse effects on academic performance. The following table demonstrates how mid-day meal programs can influence the attendance rates in 2022 in selected provinces:

Province	Average Attendance Without Program (%)	Average Attendance With Program (%)	Attendance Increase (%)
Punjab	82	91	9

Sindh	78	88	10
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	80	89	9
Balochistan	70	81	11
Islamabad (ICT)	85	92	7

Health and nutrition programs affect school attendance and retention positively. Well-fed children are more vigilant; they are energetic and can be fully engaged in the learning process. Conversely, under nutrition results in fatigue, illness and frequent absenteeism that is linked to low academic results. The table shown below illustrates the impact of mid-day meal programs on average attendances in some selected provinces in 2022 Province Without Program Average Attendances (Percent) With Program Average Attendances (Percent) Attendances Increase (Percent).

### Challenges and Gaps

Despite progress, several challenges hinder the full effectiveness of health and nutrition programs:

1. **Coverage Gaps:** Many rural and remote schools still lack access to consistent nutrition and health services.
2. **Funding Constraints:** Limited budgets restrict program expansion, particularly for micronutrient supplementation and health check-ups.
3. **Infrastructure Limitations:** Poor sanitation facilities, unsafe drinking water, and inadequate kitchens limit program effectiveness.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Weak monitoring systems reduce accountability and the ability to assess program impact accurately.
5. **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Awareness and acceptance of health programs are sometimes low in conservative communities.

### Policy and Implementation Initiatives

Between 2008 and 2022, several initiatives were introduced to improve health and nutrition in schools:

- Expansion of mid-day meal programs to more provinces and rural districts.

- Collaboration with NGOs and international organizations to provide supplements, vaccines, and health education.
- Integration of health education into the school curriculum, including lessons on hygiene, nutrition, and disease prevention.
- Development of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs in partnership with provincial education departments.
- Training of teachers and school staff to monitor student health and hygiene practices.

School health and nutrition initiatives are critical towards achieving better learning outcomes, increased attendance and social development. Pakistan also recorded improvements in covering mid-day meals, micronutrition supplementation, health inspection and hygiene education between 2008 and 2022. These programs have led to increased enrolment, decreased absenteeism and cognitive and physical growth of students. Nevertheless, huge gaps still exist, especially in rural regions and provinces that are not well developed. It should strengthen the coverage of the program, enhance infrastructure, increase funding, and enhance the ability to monitor so that health and nutrition interventions can provide full support to equitable education as well as sustainable social development in Pakistan.

### **3.12 Use of Technology in Education**

Technological integration in education has now become one of the most influential factors of enhancing teaching and learning performance, increasing student interaction and providing equal opportunities to locally accessible quality education. The adoption of educational technologies such as computer labs, digital learning material, online platforms, and multimedia material, especially in schools, was gradual in Pakistan between 2008 and 2022. Although technology use is not spread uniformly in geographic areas and socio-economic classes, technology has been transformative in closing differences in the quality of education and offering new ways to address a variety of problems, including teacher shortages, scarcity of learning resources, and access gaps.

#### **Overview of Technology Integration**

School-level technology initiatives in Pakistan encompass multiple dimensions:

1. **Computer and ICT Labs:** Introduction of computer laboratories in urban and semi-urban schools to provide basic ICT literacy.
2. **Digital Classrooms and Smart Boards:** Deployment of multimedia teaching aids to enhance classroom interactivity.
3. **Online Learning Platforms:** Initiatives such as virtual classrooms, e-learning portals, and digital repositories of textbooks and lesson plans.
4. **Teacher Training in ICT:** Professional development programs designed to enhance teachers' skills in using digital tools effectively.
5. **Mobile and Distance Learning:** Leveraging mobile devices and internet-based platforms to reach students in remote and underserved regions.

### National Trends in Technology Use (2008–2022)

The introduction of technology within schools continued to grow gradually with the years based on government policies, donor initiatives and privatization. The following table brings out the percentage of the schools with ICT infrastructure and digital learning resources, as of 2022:

Indicator	Availability (%)	Level/Target Group
Schools with Computer Labs	45	Primary, Middle, Secondary
Schools with Internet Connectivity	35	Primary, Middle, Secondary
Digital Learning Platforms Access	30	Middle and Secondary
Teachers Trained in ICT	40	All levels
Smart Boards in Classrooms	20	Secondary

As can be seen in the table, almost half of the schools have computer labs, but the availability of the internet connection and digital platforms is still poor, especially in the rural regions. There is also an improvement in the teacher training on ICT which has not yet been enough to support effective integration of technology in classrooms. The use of smart boards and other high-technology digital resources is concentrated primarily in high schools, which is an indicator of resource distribution priorities and urban-rural inequalities.

### Provincial Variations in Technology Adoption

The adoption of technology is quite different in various provinces because of the disparity in economic resources, infrastructure, and policy execution. A provincial comparison of ICT access in schools is presented in the table below:

Province	Schools with Computer Labs (%)	Internet Connectivity (%)	Teacher ICT Training (%)
Punjab	55	45	50
Sindh	45	35	40
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	35	25	30
Balochistan	20	10	15
Islamabad (ICT)	70	65	60

Technology adoption is the strongest in Punjab and Islamabad that enjoy the advantage of increased urbanization, improved infrastructure, and increased budget allocation are moderately adopted, but Punjab is severely underused as it has a poorly developed infrastructure, has few trained professionals, and has limited access to the internet. These differences highlight the importance of interventions to provide equal access to technology in the country.

### Impact on Teaching and Learning

The use of technology in education has demonstrated positive effects on both teaching and learning outcomes:

- **Enhanced Learning Engagement:** Multimedia content, interactive lessons, and gamified learning experiences increase student engagement and motivation.
- **Improved Teacher Effectiveness:** ICT-equipped teachers can access digital resources, plan lessons efficiently, and monitor student progress more effectively.
- **Access to Quality Content:** Digital platforms provide up-to-date learning materials, reducing dependency on outdated textbooks and resource-constrained classrooms.
- **Support for Marginalized Students:** Technology facilitates remote learning and outreach to students in rural or underserved regions, increasing access and reducing dropouts.

- **Skill Development:** Students gain ICT literacy and digital skills necessary for higher education and the modern workforce.

### Challenges in Technology Integration

Despite its benefits, technology adoption in Pakistan's schools faces several challenges:

1. **Infrastructure Gaps:** Limited electricity, internet connectivity, and insufficient ICT labs hinder technology use, especially in rural areas.
2. **Teacher Preparedness:** Many teachers lack the skills or confidence to integrate ICT effectively into teaching practices.
3. **Resource Constraints:** High costs of digital devices, software, and maintenance limit scalability.
4. **Urban-Rural Divide:** Students in remote areas have limited access to technology, exacerbating educational inequalities.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Weak assessment of technology programs reduces effectiveness and policy accountability.

### Policy and Program Initiatives

Several initiatives aimed to expand the use of technology in schools:

- **ICT in Education Policy (2012–2022):** Focused on integrating ICT into curriculum delivery and teacher training programs.
- **Digital Classrooms and e-Learning Platforms:** Introduced in partnership with provincial education departments and NGOs.
- **Teacher Training Programs:** Workshops and professional development in ICT and digital pedagogy.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaboration with tech companies and NGOs to equip schools with computers, projectors, and internet connectivity.
- **Mobile and Distance Learning Programs:** Leveraged mobile networks to reach students in remote areas, particularly during school closures.

The use of technology in Pakistan school system has advanced between 2008 and 2022 but not evenly spread out. Technology has increased the effectiveness of teaching, student participation, and student learning, and made learning accessible to marginalized students. Nevertheless, there is a lot to be done such as deficit of infrastructure, teacher training as well as regional imbalances. To maximize the capabilities of technology in education, it is important to increase ICT access, enhance teacher capacity, as well as encouraging innovative digital learning solutions. When these challenges are addressed, technology can be an important instrument used in Pakistan to enhance the quality, equity and social development outcomes in the education sector.

### **3.13 Summary of Social Development and Education Indicators**

In chapter 3, the authors reviewed important education indicators and their influence on social development in Pakistan in 2008-2022. There are still low literacy rates as they are lower than the global standards but with continuing regional and gender gaps. There was an increase in the enrollments in the primary and middle levels due to the government policies and incentives, and the retention and the dropout rates, specifically at the secondary levels, remain the challenges to social advancement. Interventions such as scholarships granted to girls, employment of female teachers and gender sensitive school facilities have led to gender parity.

Education quality has improved gradually through teacher availability and training although rural and underserved areas are still short of teachers. The further access to Early Childhood Education programs provided the basis of skills to continue the education in the further life, and the better state of learning facilities, sanatoria and facilities in schools provided safer and more efficient learning conditions. Mid-day meal program and micronutrient supplementation programs, which are health and nutrition programs, improved student attendance and health. Interactive learning and access to marginalized students were enabled by technology integration, i.e., ICT labs, digital platforms and teacher training.

Generally, the evidence shows that education policies have impacted positively on the outcome of social development, though there are still great differences in respect to regions, genders, and socio-economic classes. To achieve sustainable improvements means further investment should follow as well as equal distribution of resources and inclusion in policy practices in order to enable every child to be able to access good education.

## References

1. Abbas, M., Sarwar, M., Amjad, A., Hamedani, S., & Aslam, S. (2025). Enhancing school improvement competencies through In-Service training: The impact on educational managers in Punjab. *Environment and Social Psychology, 10*(7), 3862.
2. Abid, N., Aslam, S., Alghamdi, A. A., & Kumar, T. (2023). Relationships among students' reading habits, study skills, and academic achievement in English at the secondary level. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, 1020269.
3. Ahmad, A., Shahid, S. H., & Farhat, P. A. (2023). Comparative analysis of syntactical errors in the writings of ESL students at secondary level in Pakistan. *Global Language Review, 8*(2), 203-213.
4. Ahmad, D. N., Ali, Z., Imran, M., Iqbal, S., & Jabeen, R. (2024). Bridging the Gap: Secondary School Teachers' Perspectives on Behavioral Barriers to Academic Success. Available at SSRN 5165788.
5. Ahmad, D. N., Bibi, N., & Imran, M. (2023). EFFECTS OF TEACHER'S MOTIVATION ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KARACHI PAKISTAN. Available at SSRN 5165741.
6. Ahmad, T., & Sheikh, A. (2022). Impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on student's learning: a case from university of the Punjab, Pakistan. *Digital Library Perspectives, 38*(2), 205-221.
7. Ahmed, I., Lashari, A. A., & Golo, M. A. (2023). Evaluating primary-level English textbooks of single national curriculum through the lens of Bloom's Taxonomy. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review, 7*(3), 352-361.
8. Ahmed, K. A., Grundy, J., Hashmat, L., Ahmed, I., Farrukh, S., Bersonda, D., Shah, M. A., Yunus, S., & Banskota, H. K. (2022). An analysis of the gender and social determinants of health in urban poor areas of the most populated cities of Pakistan. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 21*(1), 52.
9. Akram, H., Bhutto, M. H., & Chughtai, M. S. (2022). An analysis of business students' stressors and their coping strategies in the post-pandemic era. *Decision, 49*(2), 239-252.
10. Akram, H., Raza, M., Jan, M. F., Aslam, S., & Nivin-Vargas, L. (2024). Identified leadership practices and teachers' professional development in Karachi, Pakistan: the moderation effect of training. *Education 3-13, 52*(8), 1309-1326.

11. Alam, M. J., Reza, S. A., Ogawa, K., & Ahsan, A. H. M. (2024). Sustainable employment for vocational education and training graduates: the case of future skills matching in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Training Research*, 22(3), 266-288.
12. AN, A. N. (2024). Bibliometric Analysis of Islamic Education and Character Development in Religious Education Practices in Indonesia. *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 22(2).
13. Ashraf, H. (2023). The ambivalent role of Urdu and English in multilingual Pakistan: a Bourdieusian study. *Language policy*, 22(1), 25-48.
14. Asif, M. F., Pervaiz, Z., Afridi, J. R., Safdar, R., Abid, G., & Lassi, Z. S. (2022). Socio-economic determinants of child mortality in Pakistan and the moderating role of household's wealth index. *BMC pediatrics*, 22(1), 3.
15. Aslam, S., Saleem, A., Kennedy, T. J., Kumar, T., Parveen, K., Akram, H., & Zhang, B. (2022). Identifying the research and trends in STEM education in Pakistan: A systematic literature review. *Sage Open*, 12(3), 21582440221118545.
16. Aziz, N., Liu, T., Yang, S., & Zukiewicz-Sobczak, W. (2022). Causal relationship between health insurance and overall health status of children: Insights from Pakistan. *Frontiers in public health*, 10, 934007.
17. Bathaei, A., & Štreimikienė, D. (2023). A systematic review of agricultural sustainability indicators. *Agriculture*, 13(2), 241.
18. Bhoi, D. (2025). Economic growth, development and education of scheduled castes: Line drawn from neoliberal era. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 17(3), 277-293.
19. Chen, S., Ntim, S. Y., Zhao, Y., & Qin, J. (2023). Characteristics and influencing factors of early childhood teachers' work stress and burnout: A comparative study between China, Ghana, and Pakistan. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1115866.
20. Chowdhury, E. K., & Chowdhury, R. (2024). Role of financial inclusion in human development: Evidence from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 15(1), 3329-3354.
21. Deng, W., & Wang, J. (2023). The effect of entrepreneurship education on the entrepreneurial intention of different college students: Gender, household registration, school type, and poverty status. *PloS one*, 18(7), e0288825.

22. Garces, T. S., Damasceno, L. L. V., Sousa, G. J. B., Cestari, V. R. F., Pereira, M. L. D., & Moreira, T. M. M. (2023). Relationship between social development indicators and mortality due to Diabetes Mellitus in Brazil: a space-time analysis. *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem*, 31, e3971.
23. Ghosh, S., Chakraborty, L., & Basu, K. (2022). Intersectional discrimination against women and girls with disabilities in educational opportunities in India. *World Development Perspectives*, 26, 100412.
24. Guo, J. (2024). An overview of the current situation and problems of elderly labour supply in Heilongjiang Province----based on observational indicators of influencing factors. 2024 9th International Conference on Social Sciences and Economic Development (ICSSED 2024),
25. Ha, C., Roehrig, A. D., & Zhang, Q. (2023). Self-regulated learning strategies and academic achievement in South Korean 6th-graders: A two-level hierarchical linear modeling analysis. *PloS one*, 18(4), e0284385.
26. Ishfaq, M., Rasool, A., Asghar, M. M., Karim, S., & Ahmad, R. (2024). Impact of Natural, Physical and Human Capital Formation on Economic Growth in Pakistan: An ARDL Analysis. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(3), 222-233.
27. Jabeen, S., Siddique, M., Mughal, K. A., Khalid, H., & Shoukat, W. (2022). School environment: A predictor of students' performance at secondary level in Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(10), 2528-2552.
28. Javaid, Z. K., Ijaz, S., Latif, E., & Azam, S. (2024). A qualitative study on student-teacher interaction: Student engagement and teacher feedback. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 3(2), 1670-1683.
29. JianFeng, L., & Worapongpat, N. (2024). RURAL HEAD TEACHERS'LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATIONAL MODERNIZATION IN XI'AN PROVINCE. วารสาร สห ศาสตร์ การ พัฒนา สังคม, 2(3), 1-25.
30. Kamran, M., & Bano, N. (2025). A systematic review of literature on inclusive education with special emphasis on children with disability in Pakistan. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 29(7), 1078-1096.

31. Kamran, M., Siddiqui, S., & Adil, M. S. (2023). Breaking barriers: The influence of teachers' attitudes on inclusive education for students with mild learning disabilities (MLDs). *Education Sciences, 13*(6), 606.
32. Kausar, S., Naqvi, N., Akbar, S., Shah, S., Abbas, K., Alam, M., & Usmani, N. (2025). Decoding mental health: A logistic regression analysis of socio-economic indicators and mental health quotient (MHQ) across nations. *Current Social Science*. <https://doi.org/e2772316X400955>.
33. Khan, F., Noor, S., Rehman, Z. U., & Rahman, G. (2022). Does Schooling Contribute to Economic Growth? A Comparative Study in Pakistan and Afghanistan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS), 42*(3).
34. Kousar, S., Ahmed, F., Afzal, M., & Segovia, J. E. (2023). Is government spending in the education and health sector necessary for human capital development? *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 10*(1), 1-11.
35. Lashari, A., Shah, W. A., & Memon, T. (2025). 'Are we equal citizens?': A critical discourse analysis (CDA) of language textbooks and minority faith learners' insights in Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 45*(4), 1212-1229.
36. Li, F. (2025). Changes in English Education Based on Artificial Intelligence and the Construction of a New Mode of International Communication. *Mediterranean Archaeology & Archaeometry, 25*(1).
37. Li, X., Lu, Y., Lou, F., Feng, M., & Zhang, B. (2023). Research on Goals and Indicators of Mid-to-Long-Term Economic and Social Development. In *The New Journey of China's Economic and Social Development* (pp. 105-127). Springer.
38. Lupak, R., Mizyuk, B., Zaychenko, V., Kuniyska-Iliash, M., & Vasylytsiv, T. (2022). Migration processes and socio-economic development: interactions and regulatory policy.
39. Mahmood, A., Huang, X., & Rehman, N. (2025). The role of teachers and administrators in supporting the adaptation of students with special needs in mainstream high schools. *Quality Education for all, 2*(1), 35-54.
40. Maqbool, S., Zafeer, H. M. I., Zeng, P., Mohammad, T., Khassawneh, O., & Wu, L. (2023). The role of diverse leadership styles in teaching to sustain academic excellence at secondary level. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1096151.

41. Mumtaz, M., Mohamed, N. D., Haseeb, A., & Ansari, S. H. (2022). Online education amid COVID-19 crisis: Issues and challenges at higher education level in Pakistan. *IJERI: International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*(18), 240-259.
42. Naz, S., Ishaq, S. M., Iqbal, M. Z., & Abbas, M. (2025). A Study on the Dynamic Impact of Instructional Leadership on Enhancing Elementary School Performance in Baluchistan. *Leadership and Organizational Insights, 1*(2), 28-46.
43. Papadakis, N. (2022). Social Indicators, Employment, Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning. *Higher Education and Research in the European Union: Mobility Schemes, Social Rights and Youth Policies*, 213.
44. Parveen, K., Phuc, T. Q. B., Alghamdi, A. A., Kumar, T., Aslam, S., Shafiq, M., & Saleem, A. (2024). The contribution of quality management practices to student performance: Mediated by school culture. *Heliyon, 10*(15).
45. Rachmad, Y. E. (2022a). Innovation in Education Theory. In: Amiens Cathédrale Éditions Internationales.
46. Rachmad, Y. E. (2022b). Social Motivation Theory. In: Bergamo Città Alta Libri Internazionali.
47. Rafiq, S. (2024). Investigating the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary education in higher education settings. *Journal of Social Research Development (JSRD)*, 5(1), 14-14.
48. Rafiq, S., Iqbal, S., & Afzal, A. (2024). The impact of digital tools and online learning platforms on higher education learning outcomes. *Al-Mahdi research journal (MRJ)*, 5(4), 359-369.
49. Ragheb, G., El-Wahab, M. A., & Ragheb, R. A. (2022). Sustainable Indicators Framework for Strategic Urban Development: A Case Study of Abu Teeg City in Assiut, Egypt. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & Planning, 17*(1).
50. RAMEZANPOUR, N. G., FALLAH, H. N., ABDOLLAHZADEH, G., & Sharifi, Z. (2022). Assessing the provinces' level of development in terms of educational, health and migration indicators.
51. Robertson, S. L. (2022). Guardians of the future: International organisations, anticipatory governance and education. *Global Society, 36*(2), 188-205.
52. Roshan, R., Hamid, S., Kumar, R., Hamdani, U., Naqvi, S., & Adeel, U. (2025). Utilizing the CFIR framework for mapping the facilitators and barriers of implementing teachers led

- school mental health programs—a scoping review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 60(3), 535-548.
53. Saud, M., & Ashfaq, A. (2022). NGOs schools are promoting education for sustainable development in rural areas. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 20(5), 682-694.
  54. Sharma, U., & Subban, P. (2023). Utilizing a global social justice lens to explore indicators of inclusive education. In *International encyclopedia of education* (pp. 104-114). Elsevier.
  55. Shoaib, M., Ahmed, R., & Iqbal, S. (2025). Female acceptability in STEM higher education in Pakistan: The interplay of careerist femininity, job oriented, and family orientation. *Journal for Current Sign*, 3(3), 181-202.
  56. Shoaib, M., Ali, S. R., & Kausar, N. (2025). Gender disparity on teaching materials, communication, institutional support, and learning achievements of the students in higher education in Pakistan. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(7), 169-183.
  57. Shoaib, M., Batool, F., Kausar, N., & Abdullah, F. (2025). RESEARCH ON LEARNING MODALITIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY OF GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP (2001–2023). *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(8), 1083-1101.
  58. Shoaib, M., Rasool, S., Kalsoom, A., & Ali, S. R. (2025). Exploring Gender-Based Dissimilarities in Educational Outcomes at the Tertiary Level: A Review of Existing Literature. *Policy Research Journal*, 3(7), 287-302.
  59. Shoaib, M., Shehzadi, K., & Abbas, Z. (2024). Inclusivity, Teacher Competency, and Learning Environment at Higher Education: Empirical Evidences. *Pakistan JL Analysis & Wisdom*, 3, 244.
  60. Shuja, A., Ali, A., Khan, S. S. A., Burki, S. B., & Bilal, S. (2022). Perspectives on the factors affecting students' dropout rate during COVID-19: A case study from Pakistan. *Sage Open*, 12(2), 21582440221097378.
  61. Siddique, M., Ahmed, M., Feroz, M., Shoukat, W., & Jabeen, S. (2022). Attitude Towards Learning Chemistry: A Case Of Secondary School Students In Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(12).
  62. Siren, N. H., Abd Majid, M., & binti Abdullah, S. A. Y. (2024). REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTING INDICATORS FOR PROFESSIONAL DAIE. Dakwah Seminar 2024 (MASJIDs 2024),

63. Tabassum, U., Qiang, X., Abbas, J., Amjad, A. I., & Al-Sulaiti, K. I. (2025). Students' help-seeking mediates the relationship between happiness and self-strength: a comparative study on Chinese and Pakistani adolescents. *Kybernetes*, 54(7), 3957-3976.
64. Veidemanė, A. (2022). Education for sustainable development in higher education rankings: Challenges and opportunities for developing internationally comparable indicators. *Sustainability*, 14(9), 5102.
65. Villela, R., & Paredes, J. J. (2022). Empirical analysis on public expenditure for education, human capital and economic growth: evidence from Honduras. *Economies*, 10(10), 241.
66. Zaib, K. (2022). The Role Of Mother Tongue In Learning English At The Intermediate Level (A Case Study of Government Degree College Batkhela, District Malakand). *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, 8(2), 248-253.

Scholarly Paper

## CHAPTER 4 – POLICY IMPLEMENTATION & CHALLENGES

### 4.1 Introduction

Punjab is the most populated province in Pakistan, and it is at the center of influencing the overall results of education and social development in Pakistan. With the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment in 2010, education governance was decentralized to provincial governments where Punjab gained a lot of authority in formulating and adopting school-level education policies. During the period of 2008 and 2022, Punjab implemented several massive reforms to enhance access, quality, governance, and equity in school education. These reforms encompassed institutional restructuring, performance monitoring, curriculum alignment, teacher reforms, and partnership between the publishers and the private.

Although it is relatively better resourced than other provinces, Punjab has had significant problems in translating policy goals into uniform social development results. Whereas the enrolment and infrastructure pointers were on the increase, the challenges touching on the quality of education, the regional inequalities, the capacity of teachers, and the inclusion of the marginalized groups are still there. This chapter critically addresses the way education policies were practiced in Punjab during this time and what the major limitations were to their success in realizing larger social development objectives.

### 4.2 Education Policy Implementation in Punjab

Following the introduction of the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment in the year 2010, Punjab assumed full control over the policy making and implementation of school level education. Transformation became a turning point in the education governance of this province as it was able to come up with reforms that were customized to meet the local needs and also meet the national education objectives. Between 2008 and 2022, Punjab had a series of large scale education reforms to enhance access, governance, quality, and equity in school education making it one of the leading reform-oriented provinces in Pakistan.

The implementation of the education policy in Punjab was based on the restructuring of institutions. The Punjab School Education department (SED) was established as the centre to implement education policies with special bodies like the Programmed monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU), Punjab Education foundation (PEF), and Quaid-e-Azam Academy

of Educational Development (QAED). These institutions brought improvements in administrative coordination, monitoring capacity and professional development that helped the province to operationalize education reforms in a better way than was the case in the past decades.

Punjab gave concern to spreading access to education, especially primary and middle school. The new schools were set up in the underserved regions, whereas non-functional schools were restored to enhance coverage (Rachmad, 2022b). Programs that were enrollment-oriented such as free textbooks, school lunch in some districts, and secondary level stipends were an important factor in boosting participation. The measures were especially helpful to children with low-income families and have led to better gender parity to support the importance of education in ensuring social inclusion.

**Table 4.1** includes some of the access and enrollment-based programs that were applied in Punjab at the time of the study.

*Table 4.1: Key Education Access Initiatives Implemented in Punjab (2008–2022)*

<b>Policy Initiative</b>	<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Implementation Focus</b>	<b>Observed Outcome</b>
Free Textbooks Scheme	Primary & Middle Students	Universal provision	Increased enrollment and retention
Girls' Stipend Program	Secondary-level girls	Financial incentives	Improved gender parity
School Rehabilitation Program	Rural & underserved areas	Infrastructure restoration	Reduction in non-functional schools
Public-Private Partnerships (PEF)	Low-income communities	Low-cost private schooling	Expanded access in marginalized areas

Policy Initiative Target Group Implementation Focus Observed Outcome. Free Textbooks Scheme Primary and Middle Students Universal Provision More enrollment and retention. Stipend Program of Girls Secondary level girls financial incentives better gender parity.

School Rehabilitation Program Rural and underserved areas Infrastructure rebirth Non-functional school reduction (Rachmad, 2022b). Public-Private Partnerships (PEF) Low-income communities' Low-cost privatization in marginalized neighborhoods. All these efforts contributed to the increase

of access to education and the minimization of obstacles associated with poverty and gender, but the disparities within the province in the regions were still there.

The main characteristic of the Punjab education policy implementation was the application of data-driven governance mechanisms. The PMIU launched routine visitation to schools and real-time data gathering along with the performance dashboards to monitor teacher attendance, enrollment of students, and availability of facilities. The improvement of transparency and accountability was achieved through biometric attendance systems and mobile reporting tools. Although these systems enhanced compliance and service delivery, they were at times overly focused on quantitative measures at the expense of qualitative measures in terms of classroom interaction and learning outcomes.

Implementation efforts were also based on teacher recruitment and professional development. Punjab has made massive merit-based recruitment in response to the shortages of teachers and rationalized teacher assignments to achieve balanced distribution of teachers in different districts. QAED extended in-service training activities on the areas of subject knowledge, pedagogy, and assessment practices. Although the coverage on training improved, difficulties were still experienced in transferring professional development to better quality teaching services especially in overcrowded classes and with schools that had limited resources. Reforms in the curriculum such as integration of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) to standardize the learning outcomes and eliminate the gap between the public and the private schools were undertaken. Punjab revised reference materials held orientation workshops with the teachers and also modified the tests to suit the new curriculum. Yet, implementation had practical difficulties like teacher lack of preparation, learning materials and resistance to it by the private schools, which had implications to consistency at the classroom level.

**Table 4.2** summarizes major implementation areas and associated challenges in Punjab.

*Table 4.2: Education Policy Implementation Areas and Challenges in Punjab*

<b>Implementation Area</b>	<b>Policy Objective</b>	<b>Key Achievements</b>	<b>Major Challenges</b>
Governance & Monitoring	Improve accountability	Reduced absenteeism	Over-focus on compliance

Teacher Management	Address shortages	Increased recruitment	Training quality gaps
Curriculum Reform	Standardize learning	SNC rollout	Teacher readiness
Public–Private Partnerships	Expand access	Coverage in poor areas	Quality regulation issues
Infrastructure Development	Improve learning environment	Better facilities	Regional inequalities

Infrastructure development of schools and the learning conditions was also a big investment in Punjab. Classrooms, boundary walls, electric power, drinking water, and sanitation facilities were given priority and special consideration given to gender-sensitive infrastructures like separate toilets that are gender-specific. These developments improved the safety, attendance, and retention especially among the female students. But schools in southern Punjab were still behind urban centers in terms of infrastructural quality.

The programs on health and nutrition were incorporated into the school education to help the students to be healthy. Health screenings, deworming and the feeding of micronutrients in schools were introduced in partnership with the health departments and development partners. Such programs had a positive effect on attendance and concentration, particularly in children with disadvantaged background.

In spite of significant improvements, there were still implementation problems. The school level lacked autonomy and innovation due to centralized decision-making. District education officers had many administrative duties which left them with less time to monitor their academic duties. Furthermore, socio-cultural influences including poverty, child labor as well as conservative views towards education of girls remained a factor in policy results in some areas.

Implementation of education policy in Punjab between 2008 and 2022 was characterized by good administrative capacity, good monitoring systems as well as investment in access and infrastructure that lasted. These interventions have helped in the enhancement of enrollment, gender parity and school operations. Nevertheless, the overall impact on social development was hampered by ongoing the issues of quality, equity, teacher efficacy, and economic inequalities on a regional level. To resolve these problems, it is necessary to replace compliance-related reforms

with learner-oriented ones, to be more decentralized, and to invest more in teaching quality to guarantee that the education policies would differentiate into long-term social development.

### **4.3 Key Challenges in Policy Implementation**

Although the administrative capacity of Punjab was comparatively high and the educational education continued to be spent, there were several obstacles, which arose during the pursuit of education policies between 2008 and 2022. These problems made the reforms less effective and diminished their possible role in social development. Although access, enrollment and infrastructure were seen to be improved, policy outcomes were still hampered by systemic, institutional and socio-cultural barriers.

The inequality in education quality was one of the greatest problems. Though there were urban centers like Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad with superior infrastructure; better teachers and educational material, the rural and southern districts of Punjab were deprived. There was overcrowding of classrooms, poor facilities, and scarce instructional materials in schools in these regions. This geographical inequality undermined the objectives of equity, as well as diminishing the effect of education reforms on the social development of the population.

Another significant barrier was teacher-related issues. Although mass recruitment was useful in addressing the numerical deficit, the problems of teacher quality remained. Most of the teachers were not properly trained in the contemporary pedagogical approach, learner-centered learning and inclusive education. Training at in-service level was less effective as it usually focused on administrative compliance and not innovation in instruction. The workloads, the change of policies, and the lack of opportunity to advance their careers were more factors that influenced teacher motivation and classroom performance.

Introduction of curriculum changes especially the Single National Curriculum (SNC) also posed big challenges. This is because schools did not have the capacity to accommodate the changed curricula because they had not been prepared to handle the change, they did not have new teaching materials and the curriculum goals and assessment systems were not aligned. Educators in government schools were pressured further to meet large syllabuses with less teaching time so that conceptual learning and the development of critical thinking were not afforded.

Another significant challenge was centralized systems of governance. In as much as centralized monitoring increased accountability, it limited flexibility in the school and district levels. The local administrators and head teachers only had power to shape interventions to community requirements, social-economic factors or linguistic backgrounds in a limited manner. This top-down method minimized ownership of the school personnel and limited innovation especially in marginalized regions where local solutions were needed.

In Punjab there were also constraints in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Although the data collection systems were effective in monitoring such quantitative aspects of education as attendance, enrollment, and availability of infrastructure, they were relatively uncritical of qualitative aspects of education. The performance assessments tended to undermine classroom practices, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Consequently, in some cases, schools put an emphasis on student numbers, rather than on the quality of instruction.

Socio economic and cultural constraints also made the implementation of policies more complex. Child labor, poverty and the household burden remained a influence on school attendance and retention, especially in rural and low-income populations. Most families felt that education offered low economic returns, even in the form of stipends and free textbooks despite the monetary incentives on education, particularly on girls. In some areas, the conservative social tradition was also a constraint on the movement and enrolment of girls in secondary education.

The issue of inclusion of the marginalized groups was also a critical issue. Disabled children, migrant children, religious minorities and informal settlement children had their way to quality education blocked. Though there was inclusive education policies, they were not implemented properly as there was no specialized teachers, assistive technologies and inclusive infrastructures. Schools did not always have the ability to meet the needs of various forms of learning, which restricted the goals of social inclusion.

There was also a challenge of resource allocation and utilization. Although Punjab invested a lot in education, inefficiency in the distribution of the funds, slowness in payment of funds, and uneven distribution diminished the effectiveness. The schools in the remote locations were undergoing hardships to sustain buildings and qualified personnel, adding to the inequalities in the regions.

There was also continuity of reforms that was affected by political instability and administrative instability. Long term planning and implementation were interfered with by changes in leadership and change in policy priorities. Regular reorganization and launching of new programs built a sense of uncertainty among the teachers and administrators, lowering coherence and productivity.

The implementation of education policy in Punjab had been faced with various complex issues of quality, equity, governance and socio-cultural issues. Although the province gained tangible results in the access and infrastructure, consistent inequalities, capacity problems with teachers, centralized decision-making, and lack of attention to learning outcomes hampered the wider social development. These issues need long-term investment in teacher quality, decentralization of decisions, inclusive practices, and balanced interest in quantitative and qualitative measures to address them. It is only after this kind of comprehensive initiatives that education policies in Punjab can be able to achieve their full potential as agents of social development.

#### **4.4 Governance, Coordination, and Capacity Constraints**

Successful implementation of education policies requires good governance, institutional coordination as well as administrative capacity. Government In Punjab, although the bureaucratic frameworks and financial resources were relatively well developed, the implementation of school-level education policies during 2008-2022 was impacted by the constraints related to governance and capacity to a considerable degree. Although reform focused on accountability and supervision, coordination, decentralization, and human resource capacity were some of the weaknesses that restrained the conversion of policy goals into long-term social development outcomes.

High centralization was one of the characteristics of education governance in Punjab. The power of decisions-making had been left in the hands of the Punjab School Education Department (SED) and its sub-entities. Although the centralized control made the introduction of policies uniform and created a high-level of control, it also decreased flexibility on the district and school levels. The district education officers and head teachers were not given much independence to make policies fit to the local socio-economic status, language diversity and needs. This inflexibility undermined responsiveness, especially in the rural and marginalized regions where decentralized interventions were needed.

There was also the problem of coordination between various institutions that are concerned with education delivery. Many stakeholders form the education segment of Punjab including the SED,

PMIU, QAED, PEF, district education authorities and the local governments. Despite the similar objectives of these institutions, there was usually duplication of work since some of the institutions had overlapping mandates and poorly defined roles. Poor communication between policy makers and implementers also complicated the process of coordination, which resulted in delays in the execution process and inconsistency among different districts in their implementation.

**Table 4.3** outlines key governance actors in Punjab’s education sector and associated coordination challenges.

*Table 4.3: Governance Structure and Coordination Challenges in Punjab’s Education Sector*

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Primary Role</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Coordination Challenges</b>
School Education Department (SED)	Policy formulation & oversight	Strong authority	Limited local flexibility
PMIU	Monitoring & data collection	Data-driven governance	Focus on quantitative indicators
QAED	Teacher training	Large-scale coverage	Limited classroom impact
PEF	Public-private partnerships	Expanded access	Quality regulation concerns
District Education Authorities	Local implementation	Ground-level presence	Capacity & authority constraints

These coordination issues decreased the efficiency of institutions and deteriorated the compatibility between the policy objectives and the results of the implementation.

The issue of administrative and human resource capacity also influenced the implementation of the policies. The education offices of the districts were usually overworked and understaffed with limited time to carry out the administrative duties, and thus had little time to do academic supervision and community contact. Education officers were focused on compliance reporting and submission of data at the expense of instructional leadership thus having less capacity to help schools in advancing teaching and learning practices.

The gaps in capacity were also noticed at the school level. The high number of head teachers had not been trained on educational leadership, financial management, and inclusion practices. This made schools fail to manage resources and implement reforms effectively and also reach out to parents and communities. School leaders had low chances of professional development that exacerbated institutional capacity.

The technologically advanced monitoring and evaluation systems also posed further governance problems. The monitoring system in Punjab focused on attendance, accessibility of infrastructure and enrolment. Although this strategy enhanced accountability, it also promoted compliance inspired culture. Schools were oriented to the achievement of numerical goals instead of improving the quality of learning, thinking and interaction with students. Teaching effectiveness and classroom interaction were examples of qualitative indicators which were not well represented in evaluation systems.

The implementation effectiveness was also influenced by fiscal governance and use of resources. Whereas Punjab invested a lot of budgetary funds towards education, disbursement of funds and administrative processes was delayed and restricted the execution of the projects in time. Learning institutions in isolated locations had challenges in being able to access maintenance budgets, acquiring learning resources, and keeping employees. Unequal distribution of resources also strengthened the disparities in the region in the province.

**Table 4.4** summarizes key capacity constraints and their implications for policy implementation in Punjab.

*Table 4.4: Capacity Constraints and Their Impact on Education Policy Implementation in Punjab*

<b>Capacity Area</b>	<b>Key Constraints</b>	<b>Impact on Policy Implementation</b>
Administrative Capacity	Staff shortages	Weak supervision
Leadership Capacity	Limited training	Poor school management
Monitoring Systems	Quantitative focus	Neglect of learning quality
Fiscal Capacity	Delayed funds	Infrastructure gaps
Local Authority	Limited autonomy	Reduced innovation

Lack of horizontal coordination between the fields of education and other sectors of the government, including health, social protection, and local government was also another governance challenge. The collaboration between different departments in programs associated with school health, nutrition, and child welfare was weak. The ineffective planning resulted in the ineffectiveness of the integrated intervention to promote the well-being of students and their social development.

Governance continuity also was disrupted by political and administrative instability. The provincial leadership changes, the alteration of the priorities in reforms, and the continuous restructuring generated confusion among teachers and education administrators. There was failure in long-term planning because programs were changed or substituted before their full effects were realized. Such policy non-persistence undermined institutional learning and sustainability.

Between 2008 and 2022, administration and coordination and capacity limitation played a major role in the execution of education policies in Punjab. Although centralized administration and data-guided surveillance enhanced accountability, too much control, the lack of co-ordination, and the lack of local capacity curtailed performance. To address these issues, it is necessary to enhance the autonomy of the district and schools, invest in leadership development, enhance inter-institutional coordination, and ensure that accountability and emphasis on the quality of learning are balanced. Enhanced governance institutions are needed in ensuring that education policies play a significant role in long-term social development in Punjab.

#### **4.5 Social and Cultural Barriers**

Culture and social aspects are very important in determining the efficiency of the implementation of education policy. In Punjab, even though the state persistently invested and restructured administration between 2008 and 2022, social norms, economic factors, and cultural orientations had a huge impact on the access to education, student retention, and learning outcomes. These obstacles could tend to diminish the effects of sound education policies especially with the communities that are marginalized and low-income earners.

Poverty is one of the longest social boundaries that impact on education in Punjab. Child labor is also used to help boost the family income of many households particularly in the rural and peri-urban regions. The children are usually involved in farming, housework, or other informal jobs that result in the school attendance being patchy and early dropout. Despite the introduction of

financial incentives like free textbooks and stipends, which are effective in reducing the cost of schooling, the incentives were not effective at all times to counter opportunity costs on families in extreme poverty.

Culture and gender norms influenced the outcomes of education greatly as well. Although Punjab has achieved some progress in the enrollment of girls by stipend and improvement of infrastructure, the social expectations of girls on issues of early marriage, family responsibilities and mobility remained barriers to girls participation especially at the secondary level. In the conservative societies, families gave more importance to the education of boys compared to the girls as they saw minimal returns economically when they educated their daughters. These standards undermined the usefulness of education policy in gender-related policies and led to increased drop-out rates of teenage girls.

Parental perception on the quality and relevance of education was another huge cultural barrier. In other communities, the parents perceived the public schools to be ineffective because they were not achieving good learning results, the classes were overcrowded and the teachers were not interacting with the students. The feeling diminished the confidence in the education system and did not encourage regular school attendance. The less families perceive education as relevant to the employment opportunities or social mobility, the lower the likelihood of investing in the schooling of their children, which negates policy objectives.

There were also difficulties of language and cultural diversity in Punjab. The prevalence of unified curriculum and mediums of instruction tended to go against the local lingo context especially in rural regions where students only speak local languages. This discrepancy posed a problem in learning, more so in the lower grades, in understanding and higher dropout rates. Educators often did not receive any training in multilingual education, which hindered inclusive education even more.

Attitudes towards disability and inclusion are also a part of cultural barriers. Physically or learning disabled children were not well treated in the communities and were usually stigmatized and ostracized. Schools had no specialised staff, assistive equipment, and facilities, even though the policies of inclusive education were approved. Access and participation were limited because families did not always send children with disabilities to school because of social stigmatization or fear of safety and discrimination.

In most places, community participation and school ownership were also low. School councils and parent teacher associations were there but their effectiveness differed. In others, it was a decrease in the level of participation in communities due to lack of awareness, low level of literacy and limited decision making power. Lack of strong presence of the community weakened responsibility and the local support of educational programs especially in underprivileged districts.

Curriculum acceptance was also based on religious and cultural expectations. Other reforms like Single National Curriculum were opposed in certain communities because of the issue of cultural relevance and moral content. These views occasionally gave a contradiction between policy aims and communal values, which influenced the continuity of implementation and classroom activities.

The education policy results in Punjab during the period of 2008-2022 were greatly influenced by social and cultural barriers. Access, retention, and the quality of learning were limited by poverty, gender norms, parental perceptions, linguistic differences, disability stigma, and community involvement. As much as government programs helped alleviate some of these issues, structural socio-cultural issues need to be handled on a long-term basis and community-based interventions. These barriers can be overcome through strengthening awareness campaigns, involvement of local leaders, encouraging gender sensitive practices and incorporating culturally responsive teaching methods. Social and cultural restrictions are important in the context of making education policies contribute to the inclusive social development in Punjab.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed how education policies have been put into practice in Punjab since 2008 and how it is related to the governance structures, coordination mechanisms, capacity constraints and socio-cultural barriers. It was found that Punjab achieved significant achievements in the increasing access to education, the development of the infrastructure, and the reinforcement of the control over the administration by means of centralized government and the monitoring systems based on the data. Such efforts have led to quantifiable gains in enrollment, gender equity and school operations in most districts.

Nevertheless, there were also challenges mentioned in the chapter that weakened the outcomes of policy implementation. Weak governance and coordination between schools weakened efficiency of operation and weak local responsiveness due to limited autonomy of districts and schools. The issue of capacity (a shortage of trained administrators and lack of leadership abilities in school

heads) further undermined the quality of implementation. Furthermore, the focus of monitoring systems in quantitative measures frequently reduced the qualitative aspects like teaching efficacy and learning results in students.

There were social and cultural obstacles such as poverty, gender role, linguistic diversities and stigma of the marginalized groups, which had a great impact on education outcomes in Punjab. These contributed towards sabotaging policy goals especially in rural and low-income neighborhoods. Financial incentives and infrastructure changes did not stop such problems as dropout rates and the quality of learning.

Although Punjab had exhibited good commitment and administrative capacity in the implementation of education policies, structural, institutional and socio-cultural issues limited its contribution to the long-term social development. To address these problems, it is necessary to take a balanced strategy to implement accountability together with flexibility, empower local capacity, encourage inclusive practices, and focus on the quality of learning. These reforms are crucial to the realization to make education policies work into sustainable social development in Punjab.

## References

1. Saud, M., & Ashfaq, A. (2022). NGOs schools are promoting education for sustainable development in rural areas. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 20(5), 682-694.
2. Sharma, U., & Subban, P. (2023). Utilizing a global social justice lens to explore indicators of inclusive education. In *International encyclopedia of education* (pp. 104-114). Elsevier.
3. Shoaib, M., Ahmed, R., & Iqbal, S. (2025). Female acceptability in STEM higher education in Pakistan: The interplay of careerist femininity, job oriented, and family orientation. *Journal for Current Sign*, 3(3), 181-202.
4. Shoaib, M., Ali, S. R., & Kausar, N. (2025). Gender disparity on teaching materials, communication, institutional support, and learning achievements of the students in higher education in Pakistan. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(7), 169-183.
5. Shoaib, M., Batool, F., Kausar, N., & Abdullah, F. (2025). RESEARCH ON LEARNING MODALITIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY OF GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP (2001–2023). *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(8), 1083-1101.
6. Shoaib, M., Rasool, S., Kalsoom, A., & Ali, S. R. (2025). Exploring Gender-Based Dissimilarities in Educational Outcomes at the Tertiary Level: A Review of Existing Literature. *Policy Research Journal*, 3(7), 287-302.
7. Shoaib, M., Shehzadi, K., & Abbas, Z. (2024). Inclusivity, Teacher Competency, and Learning Environment at Higher Education: Empirical Evidences. *Pakistan JL Analysis & Wisdom*, 3, 244.
8. Shuja, A., Ali, A., Khan, S. S. A., Burki, S. B., & Bilal, S. (2022). Perspectives on the factors affecting students' dropout rate during COVID-19: A case study from Pakistan. *Sage Open*, 12(2), 21582440221097378.
9. Siddique, M., Ahmed, M., Feroz, M., Shoukat, W., & Jabeen, S. (2022). Attitude Towards Learning Chemistry: A Case Of Secondary School Students In Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(12).
10. Siren, N. H., Abd Majid, M., & binti Abdullah, S. A. Y. (2024). REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTING INDICATORS FOR PROFESSIONAL DAIE. Dakwah Seminar 2024 (MASJIDs 2024),

11. Tabassum, U., Qiang, X., Abbas, J., Amjad, A. I., & Al-Sulaiti, K. I. (2025). Students' help-seeking mediates the relationship between happiness and self-strength: a comparative study on Chinese and Pakistani adolescents. *Kybernetes*, 54(7), 3957-3976.
12. Veideman, A. (2022). Education for sustainable development in higher education rankings: Challenges and opportunities for developing internationally comparable indicators. *Sustainability*, 14(9), 5102.
13. Villela, R., & Paredes, J. J. (2022). Empirical analysis on public expenditure for education, human capital and economic growth: evidence from Honduras. *Economies*, 10(10), 241.
14. Zaib, K. (2022). The Role Of Mother Tongue In Learning English At The Intermediate Level (A Case Study of Government Degree College Batkhela, District Malakand). *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, 8(2), 248-253.

ScholarlyPaper

## CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The chapter is the final part of the research that gives an overview of the main results and provides the practical recommendations on the basis of the analysis of the education policy and the positive and negative results of the social development in Pakistan and specifically Punjab in the time frame 2008-2022. This chapter is aimed at summarizing the evidence presented in the earlier chapters and determining how much the education policy on the school level has led to the process of social development. It also tries to find out policy gaps and issues of implementation that need strategic action.

Education has been explored as a fundamental social development force, which determines literacy, enrolment, gender equality, retention and general human capital formation. Although the previous chapters examined policy frameworks, mechanisms of implementation and indicators of education in details, this chapter provides general conclusions about effectiveness of policies. It stresses the association among the education reforms and social results based on the governance framework, institutional strength, and socio-cultural backgrounds.

The chapter then gives practical recommendations based on these findings that can be adopted to enhance the process of policy design and implementation in the area of education. These are recommendations that are aimed at assisting the policymakers, education administrators and development stakeholders to strengthen the role of education in ensuring a positive contribution to inclusive and sustainable social development. This chapter offers a futuristic look at how education systems can be better engaged and enhanced to promote the societal growth more than ever by emphasizing on evidence-based understanding.

### 5.2 Conclusions

This paper looked at how education policies in schools relate with social development in Pakistan between 2008 and 2022 with reference to Punjab. The discussion reveals that education policies have significantly contributed to the positive growth in the main social development indicators such as the literacy levels, enrollment in schools, gender equality and availability of learning institutions. The policy measures that included free textbooks, stipend programs of girls, growth

of public- private associations, curriculum modifications, and more vigilant supervision systems helped in increasing the participation in schooling and physical learning situations.

The results show that the decentralization of the education governance after the 18 th Constitutional Amendment allowed Punjab to provide education reforms more successfully with the help of the administrative control and the decision-making which was based on data. Accountability and service delivery was enhanced by institutional mechanisms that included centralized monitoring, recruitment of teachers based on merit and development of infrastructure. All these steps contributed to decreasing the number of teachers absent, enhancing school operations, and increasing availability in the underserved areas.

The results show that the decentralization of the education governance after the 18 th Constitutional Amendment allowed Punjab to provide education reforms more successfully with the help of the administrative control and the decision-making which was based on data. Accountability and service delivery was enhanced by institutional mechanisms that included centralized monitoring, recruitment of teachers based on merit and development of infrastructure. All these steps contributed to decreasing the number of teachers absent, enhancing school operations, and increasing availability in the underserved areas.

Yet, the research also finds that the influence of education policies on the social development on the bigger scale has been unequal. Although access improved, there were still issues of retention, dropout rates, and quality of education, especially on the secondary level. The inequality of the region in Punjab particularly between urban centers and rural or Southern districts restricted fair results. Prerequisites in teacher capacity, lack of pedagogical training and excessive focus on compliance undermined classroom performance and learning.

Also, the problem of governance and coordination like the centralized decision-making system and less localized autonomy slowed the policy responsiveness to the community needs. The monitoring systems focused more on the quantitative measures of learning and less on the qualitative measures of learning, which led to the lack of emphasis on student engagement and critical thinking. Social and cultural factors such as poverty, gender norms, linguistic diversity, and marginalized groups were still limiting the participation in education as well as the effectiveness of the policies. Although education policies in Punjab have played a positive role in the social development, their full potential is yet to be realized. To achieve sustainable development, there is

need to move towards quality-oriented, inclusive and decentralized education systems that consider structural inequalities and enhance human capital development. This paper highlights the fact that the reforms are still necessary to make education a potent and fair means of social development.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Judging by the parent analysis of education policies and their execution in Punjab in 2008-2022, a number of recommendations can be suggested to make the school-level education reforms more effective and put forward their role in the social development. These suggestions deal with structural, institutional, and socio-cultural issues that were mentioned in the earlier chapters.

**1. Improve Teaching Quality and Professional Development** The study highlights that teachers Judging by the parent analysis of education policies and their execution in Punjab in 2008-2022, a number of recommendations can be suggested to make the school-level education reforms more effective and put forward their role in the social development. These suggestions deal with structural, institutional, and socio-cultural issues that were mentioned in the earlier chapters.

#### **2. Decentralize Decision-Making and Enhance Local Autonomy**

Decentralize Decision-Making and Local Autonomy Schools and district education authorities need to be allowed additional flexibility on how they can adjust policies to locally fit situations. The responsiveness of the system and promotion of innovative solutions to the issues of the community can be achieved by letting the school heads and local administrators to make decisions within the scope of resource allocation, curriculum changes, and teaching strategies. Capacity-building programs would go together with decentralization so that local actors will be able to make informed and effective decisions.

#### **4. Shift Focus from Compliance to Learning Outcomes**

Change of focus in Compliance to Monitoring and evaluation frameworks to focus on Learning outcomes should have both quantitative and qualitative measures. In addition to enrollment and attendance, learning achievements, student participation, and teacher performance should be assessed. Instruction can be improved through regularly observing the classroom and receiving student feedback mechanisms. Such a change will make schools focus more on the quality of learning rather than on the achievement of numerical targets.

## **5. Promote Equity and Inclusion**

Encourage Equity and Inclusion Special initiatives must be provided to serve the marginalized population such as girls, children with disabilities, migrant groups, and students in remote rural communities. Inclusive infrastructure, assistive learning technologies, and special training of teachers should be the priorities. Gender sensitive policies like use of safe means of transportation and separate toilets should also be maintained in ensuring fair access and retention.

## **6. Strengthen Community Engagement and Awareness**

Enhance Community Participation and awareness Community participation through active involvement of the parents, local leadership, and community organizations will be important to minimize socio-cultural barriers to education. Schools are supposed to create strong parent-teacher associations and community advisory boards to enable the dialogue process and enhance the local ownership of education programs. Conservative views towards the education of girls can be solved by the awareness campaigns and the need to consider the importance of schooling to all children.

## **7. Ensure Policy Continuity and Interdepartmental Coordination**

Enhance Community Participation and awareness Community participation through active involvement of the parents, local leadership, and community organizations will be important to minimize socio-cultural barriers to education. Schools are supposed to create strong parent-teacher associations and community advisory boards to enable the dialogue process and enhance the local ownership of education programs. The conservative views towards the education of girls can be solved by awareness campaigns and the need to consider the importance of schooling to all children.

## **8. Invest in Infrastructure and Digital Learning**

Secure Policy Sustainance and Interdepartmental Cohesion The changing administrations and priorities have impacted on policy sustainability. The long-term education plans must be institutionalized to guarantee continuity whereas the coordination of education, health, social welfare, and the local government departments should be facilitated to assist in establishing

the development of the student in a holistic approach (including health, nutrition, and well-being).

### **9. Monitor and Evaluate Policy Impact**

Investment in Infrastructure and Digital Learning Schools is advised to be still directed to classrooms, sanitation, and drinking water, and electricity, especially in poorly served areas. Technology and incorporation of ICT labs and online learning platforms can help teach better and offer a possibility to allow students in the far-away areas to receive quality education.

Measure and Review Policy Impact Frequent impact measures ought to be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of reforms in enhancing social development indicators. Anticipated lessons of successful interventions can inform future policy making in a way that education changes are not only evidence based, but they should be contextually sensitive. The education policies in Punjab need a multi-pronged approach to be boosted. Through quality of teaching, decentralization of decision making, equity, enhancement of community, and emphasis on learning outcomes, education can be turned into a force of inclusive and sustainable social development. The following recommendations will help address the gaps and see to it that the education reforms can live up to their potential in terms of improving the human capital and the welfare of the society.

# Scholarly Typen