Draft Concept Note

Data Festival 2025

From Enrollment to Learning: Ensuring Quality Education for All in Pakistan

Background and Context

Pakistan faces one of the world's largest education crises, with over 25 million children out of school and nearly three out of four ten-year-olds unable to read a simple text. Despite successive policies and constitutional commitments to universal education, progress has stalled, reflecting structural inequalities, weak governance, fragmented implementation, and insufficient focus on learning outcomes.

The Prime Minister's declaration of an Education Emergency in 2024 and the creation of the National Education Emergency Taskforce signal a national commitment to address this crisis through coordinated, evidence-based action bridging federal and provincial divides. The Taskforce aims to align resources, strengthen provincial capacities, and ensure accountability for measurable outcomes.

The 18th Constitutional Amendment devolved education to the provinces, improving local ownership but exposing gaps in institutional capacity, fiscal space, and data-driven planning. Compounded by rapid population growth, inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, gender disparities, and regional inequalities, these challenges hinder the achievement of foundational learning and broader human development goals, including SDG 4: Quality Education.

Problem Statement

While enrollment has increased, millions of children leave school without mastering basic skills, perpetuating cycles of poverty, inequality, and exclusion. Learning poverty, rote pedagogy, and outdated curricula is Pakistan's most urgent education challenge. Failure to act decisively threatens human capital formation, workforce readiness, and national competitiveness.

Structural bottlenecks include:

- Weak teacher training, management, and accountability.
- Outdated curricula misaligned with 21st-century skills.
- Overcrowded classrooms and under-resourced schools, particularly in rural and marginalized areas.
- Fragmented governance and limited provincial-federal coordination.
- Gender inequities and barriers for marginalized populations.

Role of Data and Evidence

Data-driven decision-making is critical to shift focus from inputs to learning outcomes:

- **Learning assessments** (ASER, PEELI, TIMSS, LANA) identify literacy and numeracy gaps and regional disparities.
- **Administrative data** (school records, teacher deployment, attendance) highlight inefficiencies.
- **Digital tools** (EMIS, dashboards, AI analytics) track progress and support teacher performance.

- **Disaggregated data** guide interventions to address gender, socioeconomic, and geographic inequities.

Policy and Investment Priorities

1. **Teacher quality:** Reform recruitment, training, deployment, and accountability linked to student outcomes.
2. **Curriculum and assessment:** Update curricula, promote competency-based assessments, and strengthen 21st-century skills.
3. **Resource allocation:** Target high-burden districts and marginalized communities.
4. **Technology integration:** Use EdTech for personalized learning and teacher support.
5. **Innovative learning models:** Expand non-formal education, community schools, and digital platforms.
6. **Equity-focused interventions:** Address barriers for girls, children with disabilities, and remote populations.
7. **Data-driven planning:** Integrate EMIS, household surveys, and citizen-led assessments to inform budgeting, policy, and accountability.
8. **Public-private partnerships:** Mobilize civil society and private sector for complementary action.

Key Discussion Questions

1. *From Enrollment to Learning*: How can Pakistan move beyond focusing on school access to ensuring all children achieve meaningful learning outcomes?
2. *Teacher Quality and Classroom Impact*: What reforms in teacher recruitment, training, management, and accountability will most effectively improve learning in the classroom?
3. *Data, Technology, and Innovation*: How can data, digital tools, and innovative models be used to reduce learning poverty and expand equitable access?
4. *Curriculum and Assessment for the 21st Century*: How can curricula and assessments be redesigned to equip children with foundational skills, critical thinking, and competencies needed for the modern world?
5. *Coordination, Resources, and Accountability*: What strategies can strengthen federal-provincial coordination, optimize resource allocation, and ensure policies and investments translate into real improvements in learning outcomes?

Suggested Keynote Speakers

1. Pernille Ironside- UNICEF Representative (Option A)
2. Dr. Maleeha Lodhi- education advocate, policy reform experience
3. Dr. Shahnaz Wazir Ali- former SAPM on Education, policy expert

Proposed Panelists

1. Mr. Nadeem Mahbub-Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training- federal perspective/National Education Emergency Taskforce
2. Dr. Shahid Soroya, Director General, Pakistan Institute of Education-National Achievement Test and National Open Data Portal

3. Zahid Ali Abbasi, Secretary, School Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh- provincial challenges and innovations
4. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics – data and indicators
5. Dr. Baela raza Jamil, CEO, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi -ASER Pakistan- citizen-led learning assessments
6. Dr. Nadeem Javaid, Vice Chancellor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE)- resource efficiency
7. Mr. Abbas Rashid-Executive Director, Society for the Advancement of education (SAHE)
8. Haroon Yasin - Founder & CEO Taleemabad
9. Maliha Hyder, Education Specialist, World Bank

Expected Outcomes

- National commitment to reducing learning poverty with measurable targets.
- Shift from input-focused planning to results-driven systems emphasizing learning, equity, and accountability.
- Integrated framework for data, evidence, and technology use in policy and planning.
- Strengthened provincial-federal coordination and policy coherence.
- Enhanced teacher quality and accountability linked to student learning outcomes.
- Roadmap for National Education Taskforce action and follow-up.