

Recommendations from NEP Consultation Session Sindh: Hyderabad, Mithi, Sukkur

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

During the group discussions, participants reviewed the existing ECE policy and its implementation in order to identify gaps. They addressed what age group falls under ECE, what the desired targets are, and whether or not the current policy is reflecting the appropriate age of ECE.

Below is a list of recommendations provided by groups in all three districts:

- Imperative to ensure that ECE enrollment rate is not being falsely reported – better SEMIs tracking system with formal census of all children in ECE grades with General Registration Numbers (GR) allotted in a timely manner.
- The policy should include not only compulsory primary enrollment, but also compulsory ECE enrollment as per 25 A law in Sindh
- ECE policies should also include life skills based education awareness such as educating students about “good touch bad touch” both with children and parents/caregivers etc.
- The ECE Status in education system should be recognized as separate entity with cadre of
- The government should allocate a bigger budget to this subsector
- Special attention should be paid when recruiting ECE teachers, and ECE teachers should be hired on a permanent basis by the government.
- Teachers with training just like primary and post primary level

Primary Education

Within these groups, there was a lively discussion on strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system and ensuring every child is getting quality education. Some of the areas highlighted in their discussion included how community awareness can be increased, and how political influence --that hinders with meritocracy -- can be prevented.

To achieve higher enrollments and to address other pressing issues, groups in all the districts presented the following recommendations:

- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure proper implementation of the policy and right to education
- All recruitment processes must be transparent and merit based with sufficient number of teachers at primary level – number of 1 and 2 teacher schools and 1 and 2 room schools must be raised to 6 teachers and 6 rooms with library /resource room urgently
- Primary teacher should receive training upon induction and further, I.T. literate supervisors must be hired for monitoring purposes
- Urgently address the issue of missing facilities and other basic necessities in schools
- Ensure that students have access to resources and learning materials
- Extracurricular activities should be given importance at primary levels of education

- Eliminate parallel systems of education and introduce a uniform system that is equitable in quality matters as well as facilities
- Increase the budget allocated to this sub-sector

Secondary Education

The group discussion on secondary education addressed the issue of a high dropout rate at secondary level and proposed a research based methodology to address gaps in implementation. They discussed how enrollment rates can be increased, what the loopholes in implementation are, and what strategies can be taken to improve secondary education in Sindh. Pointing out parents, students, teachers, and the government as key stakeholders, they said that parents must be included in SMC fund utilization.

Below are important takeaways from group discussions in all three districts:

- Education at this level should be standardized and uniform from grade 6-12
- Many more schools must be opened at post primary level as currently this number is too small and children drop out due to a supply issue (even private sector presence is very low in rural areas) ; SEF should also encourage more post primary schools through partnerships .
- Monitoring tools such as bio-metric systems should be in place to eliminate issues of teacher absenteeism
- Recruitment criteria for hiring teacher should be revised and strictly followed
- Ensure that life skills based education is included in the curriculum and teacher education/training
- To make sure all student make it to secondary level, it should be made so that a CNIC will only be provided to those who have completed secondary levels of education
- It should be taken care that all secondary schools have well maintained, up to date labs with learning materials /chemicals and well qualified teachers to assist students with their learning
- Special emphasis should be laid on ensuring female enrollment rate is high as well both for students and teachers
- All teachers must be subject specialists
- Double periods in secondary schools must be encouraged for major subjects for concepts comprehensions (Language, Math, Science etc.)
- Innovations and ICTs must be introduced for technology based and inquiry based learning

TEVT and Special Education

These groups focused their discussion on providing equal opportunity and support for all, especially children with special needs. They also discussed the importance of practical knowledge so individuals can earn a living. They addressed important questions such as how the government can support special need students in schools, and what can be done to create an environment more conducive to learning. They also talked about the need for more vocational training centers and trained teachers to impart vocational training.

Below is a list of important takeaways and recommendations received from all three districts:

- The number of technical and vocational centers must be increased by at least 40 percent
- There should be community based vocational centers so that members of the community are getting the most relevant trainings. Center should definitely be focusing on IT and electronics
- Market and labor linkages must be ensured for TVET graduate employment and decent work
- Open option to special children so that they can express themselves in a better way. Special needs students are sometimes better with arts and craft or carpentry than with traditional studies.
- Health workers can be engaged & trained for creating awareness even of TEVT & special education

NFE and Adult Literacy

This groups' main objective was to identify what the actual problems are in the area of NFE and Adult literacy. There are over 4.5 million children out of primary schools and many more at post primary levels. They questioned why people have to remain so inaccessible to programs in alternative learning for younger and older age groups, and why government initiatives aren't as impactful as programs conducted by NGOs etc., and why training programs aren't deployed efficiently.

The following recommendations were made:

- Youth and adults must be engaged and informed of the opportunities to increase enrollments in such programs of alternative learning at primary and post primary level and also programs of life skills
- Providing monetary and/or non-monetary incentives will also assist in increasing enrollments
- The government should provide post-program job opportunities via job fairs or placements in Private and/or Government organizations. Public Private Partnerships can play a significant role here.
- A significant variety of training programs should be offered that are flexible and suit the needs of the out of school youth and adults
- NFE should be linked with formal education, with bridge programs like CBP and can be made part of the curriculum to help develop literacy, numeracy, and other interactive practical skills
- Staff & teacher trainings, such as capacity building, communication & behavioral training, must be introduced for these target groups
- ICTs or technology enabled life skills must be introduced for these target groups
- A proper monitoring and census system must be in place for this sub-sector that takes into account all service providers of the government of Sindh, Federal Govt. and non-state private/NGO providers as right now all information is lying scattered
- A formal body should be appointed to make amendments & revision in NFE and adult literacy policies, curriculum, assessment and standards

Governance and Financing for Education

School Management Committees and their role in governance was an important topic of discussion. The groups talked about the importance of identifying SMCs and mobilizing them. Further they discussed the role that Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) can play in improving governance and financing of education.

When it came to governance, identifying and implementing effective monitoring tools was also significantly discussed.

The main recommendations gathered from all three districts are as follows:

- After the creation of SMCs, meetings should be held on a regular basis so all parties are on the same page and any concerns can be addressed right away
- More funds on a regular basis to SMCs for school improvement, quality and even hiring staff to make up for temporary shortages and missing facilities.
- Monitoring tasks should be given to a third party
- There should be focus on capacity building of communities. The more aware they are, the more invested they will be in their child's education – including monitoring through technology enabled platforms such as smart phones
- There should be a check and balance in place and all fund allocation/utilization should be made transparent

Madrassa Education

Discussions within this group were started by first analyzing the role of Madrassas in the education system, and explored the challenges faced by budget constraints and lacking technical capacity of the system. The talked about whether or not madrassa education can be brought under the management of public sector, and what can be done at local, provincial, and national levels to protect the rights and interest of children enrolled in madrassas.

Recommendations from the three districts are as below:

- There should be an umbrella of board for madarssas present as a monitoring body
- Madrassas should have the same level of rigorous hiring process as the other schools and teachers' qualification MUST be vetted before hiring. The minimum criteria of qualification should be graduate level
- Curriculum for madrassas education should be revised so they too can play a role in increasing literacy e.g. along with Quranic lessons, also teach math science, English, ICTs with life skills etc.
- More interaction at district level with different school systems in co-curricular activities to break the isolation of parallel school systems
- Strict monitoring mechanisms should be in place to ensure safety and protection of children. Third party monitoring is an option