

# Strengthening the nexus between Quality of Education and Total Factor Productivity in Pakistan under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): With a Focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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This paper is an attempt to find out the nexus between the quality of education and total factor productivity (TFP) in Pakistan with a focus on province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The aim is to explore key policy areas for sustainable development and to meet the set-out targets for 2030. Qualitative methodology is adopted for this research paper to collect and interpret the data. The basic assumption opted to write this paper is that a well-educated and well-trained population helps a society to increase its ability to acquire and use relevant knowledge. Human capital, for example, in the form of level of education, has a significant effect on TFP. Its role as a determinant of capacity of economy to carry out technological innovation is unavoidable. Labor in-efficiency, deficient supplies of entrepreneurship; inadequate training and measuredly slow growth in knowledge are highly linked to overall economic backwardness. In case of KP, it has missed the target of acquiring literacy rate of 86% by 2015 like other provinces of Pakistan. The kind of education imparted in Pakistan including KP is not up to the mark at all. Supplementing higher dropouts, improper teaching and teaching aids, absenteeism, inefficient time management as well as biased, discriminatory and myopic textbooks fail to impart a knowledge-based education. Curriculum remains irrelevant and teacher-student contact time is limited. However, Pakistan has signed and showed commitment to meet the new targets under SDGs by 2030 and the same is adopted by KP and other provinces. Major improvements can be done by making more investment in public education, adopting human rights principle, revising the curriculum, infrastructure improvement, ensuring merit-based learning and promoting vocational training can lead towards a well-educated population to contribute as a component of total factor productivity.

**Key Words:** Quality Education, Total Factor Productivity, SDGs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, MGDs

Role of education in the economic development of any country is vital. Increase in sustainable economic development, economic prosperity and labor productivity are directly linked to literacy rate (Bartel, 1992). There is consensus worldwide to curb the emerging challenges of modern world to develop skilled human capital for optimal utilization of technological innovations (Johns 2004). In developing countries where the majority of world's people live, there is a need to reshape their education policies and plans to enhance productivity through highly skilled manpower. Empirical studies have witnessed the importance of education for growth and development via total factor productivity (TFP) (Bartel and Connell, 1999).

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Quality Education is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Pakistan has recognized the important role of education by signing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it highlights education as a stand-alone goal (SDG 4). This agenda includes targets on education under several other SDGs, notably those on health; growth and employment; sustainable consumption and production; and climate change. In fact, education can accelerate progress towards the achievement of all of the SDGs. Therefore, it should be a part of the development strategies to achieve each of them. The renewed education agenda encapsulated in Goal 4 is comprehensive, holistic, ambitious, aspirational and universal, and is inspired by a vision of education that transforms the lives of individuals, communities and societies, leaving no one behind. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa( KP) like other provinces of Pakistan is also focusing on goal 4 and hence education in full letter and spirit.

Since 2000, Pakistan has made enormous progress in achieving the target of universal primary education. However, progress in this respect has faced tough challenges in KP due to conflicts, law and order situation and other emergencies like natural disasters/ floods in years 2005 and 2010. Children from the poorest households are four times more likely to be out of school than those of the richest households. Disparities between rural and urban areas also remain high.

Quality Education is one of the key factors that play an important role in national growth. It produces the major capital stock in the form of skilled labor. In the same manner, the indicator of education expenditure is somewhat a broader measure of human capital. Government intervention in the market for training and higher education tends to improve the allocation of resources and thereby raise productivity growth over the long term. Investment in education promotes more skilled and specialized labor input. Since more skilled workers are better able to adjust in a dynamic, knowledge-based economy, this results in enhanced productivity and performance. Literature on sustainable growth witnesses that increase in public support for training, higher education, research and development enhances overall productivity of the economy.

It is evident from the unfinished agenda of MDGs that without achieving inclusive and quality education for all, sustainable growth and development is unattainable. The new SDGs agenda 2030 for quality education reaffirms the belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development. This agenda aims to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, and to eliminate gender and wealth disparities with the aim of achieving access to a quality higher education. Hence, the GDP growth and literacy rate are positively correlated, but KP, like other provinces of Pakistan has failed to achieve its targets as committed in MDGs by 2015.

The new targets for growth and development under the 2030 agenda demands for new policies, strategies and planning. Investing in quality education means enhancement in capital stock. This paper is an attempt to find out the nexus between quality of education and total factor productivity in Pakistan with a focus on KP province. The aim is to explore key policy areas for sustainable development and to meet the set-out targets for 2030.

## Literature Review

Labor in-efficiency, deficient supplies of entrepreneurship; inadequate training and measuredly slow growth in knowledge are highly linked to overall economic backwardness. The developed countries are characterized as high economic achievers only because of educated labor force. Educated labor raised the level of output due to accumulation of high level of human capital, resulting in the increase of growth rate over a continuous period of time (Shabbar, 1994).

Education is central point in any development strategy as the quality and quantity of education has direct influence on the labor force, workings of institutions and governance. Quality of education is necessary to attract foreign investments as it provides the investors with skilled labor force. The universal access to education benefits the poorest of the poor through macroeconomic growth.

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Different empirical studies have confirmed the productivity benefits of education. For example, one of the studies concluded that if all the factors are considered constant, the addition of one extra year of education may lead to increase in productivity (wage employment) by 10 percent. Technical education and skill development is identified as a key determinant of manufacturing export performance and comparative advantage in case of trading. It is well established in case of Pakistan, that higher level of development can be only be observed in those districts where literacy rate is high compared to low performing districts (Hussain, 2010).

Education and economic growth are interlinked. Greater access to quality education has resulted in higher rates of economic growth and development. The empirical evidences witnessed that in Pakistan the 20 percent returns to expanding years of education are still considerable (Behman, 1995). The simple explanation to this phenomenon can be stated as "Pakistan would have earned significant earnings if it has invested more in education sector. With a 13% of social rate of return for primary education at public schools if reinvested in Pakistan, it may have led to doubling of assets within six years (Shabbir 1994).

Improved schooling remained central to development strategies for decades, but became controversial with the passage of time. The outreach and expansion of schools had not guaranteed improvement in economy and economic wellbeing of people. In the backdrop of missing targets of 2015 agenda, there is a need to redesign educational policies by majority of the developing countries to promote productivity in key sectors of the economy as half of the worlds' population resides there. These countries can meet their economic targets by addressing development needs for rapid industrialization through highly skilled manpower (Hanushek, Eric A.; Woessmann, Ludger 2007).

Education, primary and secondary education in particular, is the very arena of human-rights convergence with development along with adult education and poverty reduction. Motivated by the international Development Partnership (DP) in the last one and a half decade, South Asian states have been making tall claims to ensure Education for All (EFA) along with the technical and physical facilities to ensure universal, equitable and accessible education. To achieve the said goals, DPs, mainly UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Asian Development Bank (DB), European Union (EU) and UNICEF have been pledging millions of dollars to improve the vital literacy statistics intertwined with the principle of 'education as a fundamental right' and a 'pre-condition for a country's socio-economic development'. Both formal and non-formal education/literacy programs have been launched to accomplish the goals and targets set-forth in MDGs, and SDGs in the continuum. What lies ahead and how far these goals have been achieved? Was conventional paradigm of education discarded or transformed to comply with the four principles of education i.e. availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability that help realize objectivity, equality and democratic plurality through education?

In one of the study, it was attempted to characterize the cost of low schooling and larger gender gap on the dependence of growth of school investments by a series of simulation exercises based on pooled data sets (Hannum and Buchmann 2006). This study was conducted in late 80s. The study has estimated that if Pakistan had the primary enrollment rate equivalent to Indonesia, Pakistan's national income would have been 25% higher to what was it was in 1985. Income of Pakistan would have been 16 % higher in case enrolment rates of male and female had been equivalent to each other (Birdsall, Ross and Sabot. 1993). Later on, these projections were further extended to year 2005 in different studies. The results of these studies concluded that per capita income of Pakistan in year 2005 would have been almost double than today and poverty record would have been better too subject to improved literacy rate and reduced gender gap.

## Method

This research paper is based on qualitative method of investigation. It utilizes secondary sources of data to analyze and draw conclusion. The researcher has reviewed relevant documents to understand the education system, policy regime in national context with a focus on kyber Pakhtunkhwa and global commitments and major education reforms programs in the country. Annual Status of Education Report

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(ASER), Framework for Education 2030, National Education Policy, Economic Survey of Pakistan and several other relevant documents have been consulted for analysis.

## **Understanding the Link of quality education and TFP and State of Education in Pakistan in comparison with KP**

### **Role of Education in Total Factor Productivity**

Quality education produces well informed human capital and it directly affects the TFP (Isaksoon 2005). Several econometric models are formulated to study the link of two of these. The role of knowledge in productivity factors can simply be studied in terms of factors of productions known as inputs and outputs as the end product. Inputs are denoted as X (capital and labor) and knowledge Y. the latter is concerned about organization of inputs for better production. In other words, it is decided to choose a combination of inputs (labor & capital) to produce higher rate of output holding the costs constant (Schultz 1961). In principle, greater the Y and X, the greater outputs can be produced. In simple words, output growth is derived by the sum of inputs (change in X) and knowledge (change in Y). Clearly, Y also indicates the level of technology and it must be seen as technological and innovate inventory based on the level of achieved knowledge.(M.P Timmer and los B 2005).

A population that is well-educated and well-trained helps society to increase its ability to acquire and use relevant knowledge. Human capital, for example, in the form of level of education, has an important effect on TFP. Its role as a determinant of an economy's capacity to carry out technological innovation is unavoidable (P.Romer 1990), especially for developing. There is a clear distinction between the higher education and basic education. Basic Education is necessary for learning and information utilization. Higher education is necessary for technological innovation. Labor in-efficiency, deficient supplies of entrepreneurship, inadequate training and measuredly slow growth in knowledge are highly linked to overall economic backwardness, to adopt (and adapt and implement) foreign technology (S.E Black and L.M. Lynch 1995).

### **Critical Aspects of State of Education in Pakistan in general and in Specific in KP**

Quality learning and performance at primary or secondary level spreads across grades and regions in Pakistan. Multiple national or international assessments disclose students' knowledge and skills to be far lower than their grades. The Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) results (2016) in languages i.e. English, Urdu and Sindhi and Arithmetic are utterly disturbing. The national average score in languages for Class V was 32% and for Class VIII it was only 37%. Average score for mathematics was only 24% for both the levels. As assessed by ASER (2016), 48% of the Grade-V cannot read Grade-II level story texts in Urdu, Sindhi and Pashto (as goes by the province). Regarding English language only 46% of the students of Grade-V were able to read simple sentences of the level of Grade-II. Competency in Arithmetic is extremely poor as only 48% of Class-V students were able to do two-digit division - technically the level of Grade-II. When it is compared with KP it is clearly seen that KP is lagging behind here as well like other provinces where only AJK has shown improvement.

Pakistan's National Education Policy (NEP-2009) was poised to increase its literacy rate to 86% by 2015. By up-scaling on-going programs of education and non-formal literacy, it has set its goal for UPE along with achieving 'zero-drop-out-rates'. All that proved to be a distant dream. Literacy rate currently is around 58% (even falling 2% points below from 60% last year) as assessed by the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2016-17. The survey shows that KP comes at third place after Punjab and Sindh standing at 53% literacy rate which is same as was in previous need and hence falls way short of the target. With 12 million children out-

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of-schools (most of them being girls), Pakistan amasses the second highest number of out-of-school-children in the world. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER-2016), there is 81% enrollment of children (6-16). Children enrolled in private schools is 37 % which is a high percentage. The state of education in each province is also not very impressive especially after 18th amendment and devolution of power. According to Pakistan Education Statistics 36% children are out of school which is comparatively better percentage than other provinces rather KP is having best percentage among all the provinces. However, in this 36%, ratio of females is high as compared to other provinces of the country which needs to be addressed.

Precisely, the country failed to achieve its goal of education i.e EFA-MDGs of 97.5% by 2015 ( DFID 2011-2015). GER even fell from 90% (2013-2014) to 87% (2015-2016). NER was registered as 54% in 2015-2016 as compared to 57% in 2013-14 showing a decline of 3% (Business Recorder 2017). NER for the year 2015-2016 for Punjab and KP declined from 64% to 59% and 54% to 53% respectively. Baluchistan witnessed a notable decline of NER from 39% in 2013-2014 to 33% in 2015-16.

Almost on all education indicators, Punjab performed relatively better than other provinces. Though still low but GER here is observed around 70% (2015). In 2017, students' attendance at primary level increased to 92%. Despite of the progress, drop-out is still high whereby 13-16% of children are still out-of-schools in the province ( Khaliq 2013).

Education is our top priority the government of KP keeps repeating this mantra. But in reality, even official data depicts a dismal picture of primary and secondary education in the province. Household Education Survey of 25 districts (2016-17), puts approximately 1.8 million children (5-16) out-of-schools. Since 2012, literacy rate stagnates at 53% meaning almost half the adults remain non-literate. NER and GER in the province, at the primary level, plummeted by 1% from 49% to 48% and 63% to 62% respectively in 2015-16 as compared to 2014-15 ( Pervez 2017).

Baluchistan scores poor as compared to other provinces as its literacy rate barely stands at 56%, even counting those who can only read-write their names. Women's literacy ratio is as low as 23% - almost lowest in the world (Baloch 2014). Post-primary drop-out is glaringly high i.e. 60%. GPI as calculated by Economic Survey of Pakistan places Baluchistan at 0.35 i.e. lower than Punjab (0.69), Sindh (0.61) and KP (0.49). Lagging behind on all counts of education, Baluchistan faces challenges of equity, quality as well as rural-urban and ethnic divide.

Following the suit, Sindh too has been bragging of achieving its EFA-MDG's by 2015. However, the statistics are terribly disappointing. The province's NER at the primary level (6-10) sits at 61.6%; at middle level (11-13) at 35.7% and at the tertiary level (14-15) at 23.1% (Soomro 2017). Overall NER stagnates at 48% for the last couple of years.

In Pakistan, subject of education has been devolved post 18th Constitutional Amendment 2010, provincial governments made repeated announcements to double their education budgets, but reality speaks otherwise. Affecting quality, efficiency and expansion altogether, national education financing is chronically inadequate in Pakistan( Osmani 2010).

Though provincial education budget in Pakistan has also increased over the period, but it is not ample and hardly meets the requirement. Nevertheless, the provinces' capacity to consume their budgets for education development - apart from salaries that equates 80% of the budget - remains severely constrained. Frequent within-year budgetary adjustments also keep frustrating the plans(Osmani 2010). For the budgetary year of 2017-18, KP allocated Rs. 128 billion, Punjab as Rs 345 billion and Sindh about Rs 202 billion for education (Business Recorder 2017).

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## **New SDGs Agenda and Quality of Education**

New agenda under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to ensure quality education and lifelong learning for all segments of society on the principal of inclusiveness and equitability. There lies a separate international level goal on education (SDG 4) in all 17 SDGs of 2030 development agenda. In the backdrop of unfinished agenda of MDGs 2015, SDG 4 speaks to ensure access to quality education for all children and youth. This agenda encompasses free, inclusive, equitable and publicly funded quality primary and secondary education spreading over at least nine years. It also shows commitment to ensure quality education for those children who are out of this process through a range of modalities.

This agenda also proposes the provision of pre-primary education for at least one year. Quality and coverage should not be compromised even in provision of pre-primary education. The right to education can only be fulfilled if equitable, relevant and effective quality education is provided. It will ensure smart outcomes in all settings at all levels. Development of numeracy skills and foundational literacy are the integral part of quality education as well as building blocks for further learning. This foundation of learners is also necessary to acquire higher-order skills in later stage of higher education. Provision of quality education is also dependent on learning methods, relevant teaching and content of the curriculum. Therefore, teachers should be well-trained, well-educated, motivated and adequately remunerated. This definitely demands for appropriate pedagogical approaches to deliver quality education which can be supported by use of an appropriate information and communication technology (ICT). Quality education can be achieved only when the learning environment is gender-responsive, safe, healthy, adequately resourced and inclusive.

Lifelong learning is guiding point for agenda 2030, as the right to education begins at birth and continues till death. This agenda demands for broad and flexible learning opportunities to complement and supplement formal schooling as well as non- formal education systems.

The support of multiple donors – both budgetary and programmatic – has yet not entirely succeeded in materializing desired improvement in education as committed in Jomtien, Dakar's EFA, MDG's and SDG's framework. Home countries' social, political, economic and demographic trends pose barriers in achieving the set targets.

## **Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning for all**

Building on and continuing the EFA movement, Education 2030 takes into account lessons learned since 2000. What is new about Education 2030 is its focus on increased and expanded access, inclusion and equity, quality and learning outcomes at all levels, within a lifelong learning approach. Believing education to be an inalienable right of every child irrespective of caste, class, gender, ethnicity and locality, it is appropriate to examine how responsive the respective states and donors have been to realize the ideal. Accepted and adopted universally, progress around EFA-MDGs can be effectively inspected around the three principles of 'availability and accessibility' including gender equity; 'quality and efficiency' and thirdly of 'adaptability and/or acceptability' of the content and contours of the education imparted.

In 2012, the UN Secretary-General pushed for the Education First agenda. The purpose was to motivate broad spectrum of actors, trigger MGDs and laydown the groundwork for post-2015 vision of education. In 2013, the government representatives, civil society and academics met again in Dakar to review global education progress since 2000 and forwarded recommendations for post-2015 educational framework. Precisely, the deliberations prioritized four things i.e. equity; quality learning and expanding access to more than just primary education(Ahmad 2013).

The Constitution of Pakistan (CoP) recognizes education as citizens' fundamental right and make the state responsible to impart 'free and compulsory education' to all their citizens. Article 25-A of the CoP states, "The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen

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years in such manner as may be determined by law.”. Equality, equal rights and non-discrimination between sexes are also assured in the CoPs of the Pakistan.

Similarly, Pakistan binds itself to the commitments made in the Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) EFA Conferences along with the post-Dakar National Plan of Action (Bangladesh 2002-2015) (Pakistan 2001-2015) and aims to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by extending 100% UPE to all its citizens. In other words, Pakistan has assumed the responsibility of imparting objective, accessible, free, compulsory, equitable and quality-driven education to children as their right and has extended the commitment to 2030 agenda for sustainable education.

In response to the needs and circumstances of diverse social groups, NGOs prove to be more innovative and responsive than the highly centralized and standardized approaches of the government. However, much of their efforts do not add-up to the official statistics. Public sector’s dislike (rather abhorrence in case of Pakistan) to collaborate with and learn from them is the major cause. Despite serving millions of children in the country, official statistics do not consider hundreds of one-room, one-teacher schools run by NGOs. Obviously, it distorts gross and net enrollment ratios. Put succinctly, civil society plays an important role in maintaining pressure on the powers that be to hold them accountable in the delivery of citizens’ right to education. It has been critical of inefficient and inappropriately designed state-driven projects, marred with delays, corruption and misappropriation.

In Pakistan many NGOs are running low-cost community schools. Others are cooperating with National Commission for Human Development (Pakistan), Provincial Education Funds, and with several donors to improve quality, access and provision of physical facilities in schools. Strengthening Schools Management Committees (SMCs) has been another major task that NGOs assume quite effectively.

Though the attitude towards NGOs has been different of different governments but apart from shifting intensities, they remain intolerant of all those NGOs/CSOs which promote human-rights and expose their failures i.e. serious deficiencies in availability, equity, accessibility and quality of education. In Pakistan, even service-delivery NGOs are no more tolerated.

It is well established that education targets of 2030 agenda are specific, measurable, accountable, reliable and time bound (SMART). These targets contribute directly to achieve all of the 17 SDGs. All targets of SDG4 are applicable to all partner countries. However, the national capacities, realities, priorities and policies must be taken into account while setting national level targets to achieve SDG4. It is an understood fact that change will be driven by Country-led actions, facilitated and strengthened by multi-stakeholder financing and partnership (UNESCO 2014).

## **Developing the Nexuses Between Quality of Education and Total Factor Productivity**

Beyond enrollment and gender equity, EFA envisions improving early ECE, promoting learning and life skills, and most importantly the quality of education. Unfortunately, Pakistan performed poor on that count. Merely a reductionist-mechanistic rise in enrollment is not enough. Apart from the right-to-schooling, children also hold the right to quality-education. During and post-MDGs drive, donors and policy managers did consider to materialize rights-in-education but didn’t succeed much. The chronic structural and functional flaws undermined attempts to promote creativity and innovation.

The kind of education imparted in Pakistan is unfortunately not up to the mark. Supplementing higher dropout-outs, improper teaching and teaching aids, absenteeism, inefficient time management as well as biased, discriminatory and myopic text books fail to impart a knowledge-based education. Curriculum remains irrelevant and teacher-student contact time is limited. Only a few teachers are adequately qualified and appropriately trained, hence failing in children’s intellectual growth. Teachers-student ratio in Pakistan is 1:46, about 29% primary schools have got one-teacher, one classroom in Pakistan ( Pakistan Bureau of

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Statistics 2015-2016). On top of that missing facilities, low presence of students and loss of working days under political crises make the situation worse.

Multiple forms of education, within the public sector, with a rage of governance patterns deepen social division and affect quality outcome. Despite being devolved to the provinces; the education system is now provincially centralized and lack capacity to demonstrate excellence.

The 'education for development' regime has not been as successful as hoped. By the turn of the century to this date, number of well-established and credible criticism of international DP's has been offered. For instance, *Elusive Quest for Growth - Economists' Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics* (2001) by William Easterly; *Despite Good Intentions - Why Development Assistance to the Third World Has Failed* (2003) by David Ellerman; *Helping People Help Themselves - From the World Bank to an Alternative Philosophy of Development Assistance* (2005); *The White Man's Burden - Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done so Much Ill and So Little Good* (2006) by William Easterly; and *Dambisa Moyo's Dead Aid - Why Aid is Not Working and How There is Another Way for Africa* (2008) speak volumes on that.

As suggested by Mark Mason's (2017) analytical approach to DP, international funding in education can be described as partially successful in Pakistan. With the failure or inexistence of homegrown models and pre-requisites for EFA, introduction or at times forcing "established best practice" seems accomplishing limited success. Technically DP implies collected ownership, shared objectives and policy decisions, mutual trust, information sharing, collective monitoring and evaluation, improved research capacity and mutually agreed implementation along with assuming responsibilities. However, it has been less so in case of education partnership in Pakistan. Frequent dialog can help improve the situation. DP cannot be assessed without assessing the socio-economic inequities, problems and preconditions (Mason 2011).

Vertical relationship of education administration and even donor agencies is based on authority, constraint, imbalance of power, substituted sovereignty and the transposition of models, or, on the other side of the coin, paternalism and condescension, where help also cause barriers. Instead, this need to be founded on dialogue in a horizontal relationship in which parties participate as equals with enriching mutual experiences. The skewed relationships of power between the (northern) donors and the (southern) recipients' imbalance the scales and affect progress. The responsibilities must be shared in failure as well as success.

## Conclusion

There is no second thought about the fact that education is a major contributor in economic prosperity. In order to achieve growth, it is important to give top priority to education. It becomes more true in case of developing countries like Pakistan. Therefore like all other provinces of Pakistan, KP should also give due importance to education sector. The impact of education can be interpreted in two ways. At first, education gives people decision-making power which also helps in achieving gender equality. Secondly, educating people is a choice made in effort of making a better world to live in. The links between income distribution and poverty reduction and education and economic growth are well established. It is education that equips people with required knowledge and skills needed for increasing income and for expanded employment opportunities. Therefore, if province of KP needs to achieve success it will have to focus on quality education and have to strive harder to achieve education related targets

## Findings and Recommendations

National, regional and international level efforts are required to achieve the set targets of education under the SDG 4 through;

- Inclusive and effective partnerships;
  - Devising well defined education policies and program
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- A commitment to work together with responsibility and ownership;
- Setting the goals of inclusiveness, equitability and quality education institutions and mechanisms for all;
- Local and global resource mobilization to finance education system

In the light of above mentioned key strategic visions, a set of strategic approaches is designed and recommended by UNESCO to partner countries. These approaches are built on the unfinished agenda of EFA and MDGs to deliver on vastly more ambitious universal Education 2030 goal and agenda, and to monitor progress. These specific approaches are;

- Strengthening policies, plans, legislation and systems
- Promoting lifelong learning
- Focusing on quality and learning
- Emphasizing equity, inclusion and gender equality

It should be noted that these strategies are quite generic and will require appropriate adaptation by the Government of Pakistan to set targets according to country contexts and priorities. These targets then will be translated into context of KP and other provinces. With respect to Pakistan, here are the key suggestions and recommendations to streamline these approaches to achieve the education targets in true sense.

- Having lost much of the MDGs & EFA targets, SDGs also seem difficult to be achieved without enhancing the domestic budget at least up to 20% - for Pakistan 6% to start with. Only robust financial support can help promote equity, expansion and excellence in education. KP in the similar manner will have to increase educational budget to ample level

- Human rights principles and standards as such are not governing the so called educational movement in the country. The assumption of progressive realization of development (in this case education) has almost become a smokescreen for the states under discussion to cover-up their failures. Huge infrastructures and economic growth must be balanced out in favor of people's right to education. Resource constrains, are in-fact excuses over other priorities meant to serve the ruling party's political interests.

- Higher drop-out at all three levels makes increased GER and NER virtually ineffective and meaningless which tantamount to exclusion. Distance, poverty, gender, socio-cultural norms, morbidity and disabilities, conflicts and terrorism in case of KP, natural disasters and inefficient education policies all such factors are keeping children out-of-school and/or forcing them to drop-out early. Data and evidence-based strategies and adequate investment may help achieving the goal of the zero-drop-out and sustenance in schools.

- There are certain sections of society to which KP Government must pay significant attention to i.e. urban and suburban working/laboring children and, rural and tribal children. KP Government must address the needs of minorities and areas where they are in concentration. Terrorism-affected schools and areas need incentives and protection to provide safer environment to school-going-children. Ideally madarsa education should be discontinued but to avoid reaction from religious circles - reforms and transformation be assumed to improve the quality and content of education.

- Apart from being a fundamental right and a-priority need for social development, literacy has become an indicator of success for donors, executing agencies and the successive governments. Therefore, maneuvering benchmarks and/or spinning statistics demonstrate conflicting results between governments and various assessment agencies what affects policy and program contents. Fudged numbers rarely justify the reform process and outcome. An international standard and benchmark for literary be adopted with clear competency indicators at all three levels. However, ASER exercise needs to be strengthened.

- Ambitious reforms and efforts to reveal progress, heads-must-roll-on strategy (say from higher authorities in Punjab), donors' pressure to deliver sometimes ends-up in 'deliverology' and compels the school and district authorities to doctor the statistics. Bottom-up district and provincial plans for reform and progress with an adequate donors' assistance proves more successful. Otherwise, the education department is reduced to merely an implementer of the agenda defined by the donors/authorities.

- Elimination of ghost-schools, ghost-teachers and absenteeism, test-and-merit-based teachers' recruitment, putting an end to political interference and cronyism (mostly common in Sindh and Balochistan) and removing corruption in posting, promotion and transfer is essential to rectify the system from the ailments that halt progress. Paper-and file-based system of employment records must be done away with that helps manipulating things on ground.

- NGO-Government cooperation as well as PPP strategy needs to be clearly articulated. NGOs potential must be employed; their contribution must be acknowledged, mainly in education, assessments and opinion. Similarly, Fundamental reorientation is needed in the way the government-donor relationship works before making funding arrangements and developing the state policy of Pakistan to comply with the right-to-development approach.

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