



# MAGNIFYING THE GAPS

## Situation Analysis

Early Childhood Education  
and Development In  
KPK, Sindh

Dr. Shehryar Khan Toru  
Rabia Manzoor



SDPI  
Sustainable Development Policy Institute



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# FOREWORD

**P**akistan with its huge population of approximately 200 million people hasn't paid much attention to the age group of children from birth well into early years. The age brackets 0-3, 3-5 and 5-8 years are extremely important as conditions during the early years set lifelong trajectories and influence the health, well-being, learning and behavior throughout the child's life. Most of adult mental ability is formed in the first three years of life which forms 80% of brain growth.

It is recognized internationally that a child has distinct needs of health, nutrition and stimulation along with learning provisions and especially for ages 0-5. In Pakistan, the early years are a grey area that is compounded by lack of awareness, lack of data, nascent knowledge of health and inadequate education service provisions both in public and private sector. According to the 2014 State of Children in Pakistan report, one in every 14 Pakistani children (7.1%) die before their first birthday, and one in every 11 (9.1%) do not survive to their fifth birthday. The education statistics are equally alarming as over 6.5 million children are not enrolled in primary education, in other words 3 out of 10 primary age children are not enrolled in school.

Pakistan is a signatory of the Convention of Child's Rights (November 12, 1990) to protect and give children survival rights, development rights, protection rights, and participation rights. The convention of Child's Rights is highly relevant to early childhood education. It discusses the prime importance of family support and special care needed by children. Article 29 articulates that the education of the child should be focused on the '*development of child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential*'. For the fulfillment of Article 29, children can achieve the highest possible standards of educational achievement if they are provided a rich environment in infancy and early childhood.

On the other early childhood education provision is committed to in our National policy of 2009.

To respond to all the challenges stated above and to ensure fulfilment of international and national commitments, Parwaan a National Platform for brining ECED to the center of planning and implementation is set up in collaboration with the Children's Global Network and the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training. Parwaan today serves as a Think Tank and key platform to bring all stakeholders together and is dedicated to create a national narrative on ECED in Pakistan. Parwaan is also a coordination hub for E9 countries- Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria.

Hence Parwaan has embarked on a series of situation analysis. The situation analysis on ECED is undertaken to investigate through primary research the perceptions, practices and challenges in promoting and implementing early childhood interventions in the public sector of Pakistan. It points out the alarming and complex situation pertaining to the provision of early childhood education in the two provinces and formulates recommendations to improve

the present situation. This report will inform all stakeholders, media, academia, international multilateral and bilateral donors, and most importantly the decision makers and our political leadership to formulate productive resolutions to address this pertinent issue.

Parwaan team in coordination with all the stakeholders is committed to providing the best for our early years children so that each child lives to their fullest and becomes productive citizen of Pakistan and that of a global reality.

## **Mehnaz Aziz**

President- "Parwaan",  
E9 ECED Center of Excellence



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report is a product of a broad group of experts and their efforts. CGN-P would like to extend our gratitude to the following people and organizations that have made this possible.

We would first like to thank the Department of Education Abbottabad, Malakand, Khairpur, Mardan, Benazirabad, Tandoo Allah Yar and the District Teams CGNP in Abbottabad, Malakand (Sajid), Khairpur (Waqar Ahmed), Mardan (Masroor), Benazirabad (Sarang), Tandoo Allah Yar (Shahnawaz).

We appreciate the efforts of SDPI Team: Dr. Shehryar Khan Toru, Miss Rabia Manzoor and Mr Muhammad Sohaib for conducting situational analysis and developing tools for conducting this research.

We would like to appreciate the efforts of Secretary Education Sindh, Teacher Resource Center, Open Society Foundation, Ambreen Arif (Senior Education Specialist World Bank) Nasir Amin, Incharge NEMIS and AEPAM for guiding our research.

We would like to thank staff members from Parwaan and CGNP for their continuous support and technical input: Seema Zia, Samina Javed, Abid Hussain, Naveed Musarrat, Arshmah Jamil, Asma Abassi.

Last but certainly not the least, we extend a hearty thanks to the schools, parents, teachers, students, administrators and countless other stakeholders without whose participation this report would have been impossible.

# ABBREVIATIONS

ECE	Early Childhood Education
AKF	Agha Khan Foundation
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECCD	Early Childhood Care for Development
ECED	Early Childhood Education Development
EFA	Education for All
LHW	Lady Health Workers
LHV	Lady Health Visitor
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
EDO	Education District Officer

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
INTRODUCTION	8
Objectives of the Study	8
Early Childhood Development in Pakistan: A Situation Analysis	8
RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY	12
RESEARCH LOCALE AND SETTING	12
1. Awareness, Perceptions, Health Provisions and Social Practices	12
1.1. Awareness and Perception on Early Childhood Education Development	12
1.2. Health Provision and Practices	13
2. EXIT, VOICE AND LOYALTY	15
2.2. Demands for Low-Cost Private Schools	16
2.3. “In-adequacies” in Government System of Education	19
3. FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT	20
4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH	21
REFERENCES	24

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study analytically engages with the analysis of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) in selective districts of Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

There are different connotations of the concept of early childhood education. Existing studies on early childhood development lays emphasis on the importance of child-friendly environment, exclusive focus on children aging 4-5 and pre-and post-natal care. While early childhood studies have different focus and audience, this research adopts an analytical approach in assessing early childhood situation in selective districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh provinces.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate through primary research the perceptions, practices and challenges in promoting and implementing early childhood interventions in the public sector of Pakistan. This study particular notes that public sector education institutions have several limitations in terms of policy and mass awareness concerning the promotion of child-centric activities at the pre-primary level. At an abstract level, this research draws attention to an in-efficient public sector education system entrusted with the mandate of Early Childhood Education. By employing the framework of Hirschman exist, voice and loyalty, an attempt is made to investigate the reasons why parents prefer private schools for meeting social and mental development needs of children below the age of 5. With reference to the notions of “exit” and “voice”, this research attempts to demonstrate the demand for low-cost private schools providing early childhood education and care to middle or low income families. Despite free education in government schools, citizens seek early childhood education for their children in non-government schools. The broader picture points to the quality of education, infrastructure, management and dedicated class and teacher as key factors for the effective provision of early childhood activities in schools. The situation of early childhood education in selected provinces points to a complex situation pertaining to the provision of early childhood education. Private sector is better equipped to cater for the needs of children and meeting the expectations of parents.

The public sector struggles to promote the agenda of early childhood education because this particular service is not formally facilitated by the state. Moreover, lack of accountability and ineffective management of public schools has deeply affected the institutionalization of ECD. Through intensive interactions, focus group discussion and informal interviews held with parents, state officials and local citizens, three thematic areas are being pursued in this study. The first theme pertains to low-cost private schools early childhood “strategy” and “effectiveness”. The second theme briefly looks at political and administrative constraints affecting the provision of early childhood education in government schools. The third theme broadly engages with “perceptions” on early



childhood education and health practices”. The findings of the study argues that early childhood “environment” and personalized engagement of teachers with children below the age of 5 can have a significant impact on a child’s development and well-being.

The report further argues that in crafting public policy on early childhood care, attention must be casted on addressing inadequacies in public sector education system. The discussion on perceptions which are related to early childhood development and care, suggests child-friendly environment and an exclusive focus of teachers on the well-being of “children”. Concerning health practices, the mental and physical development of children depends on exclusive breastfeeding and immunization. This research notes that early childhood interventions must be grounded in assessing pre-and post-care interventions and practices. However, the analysis of health practices requires further investigation which concentrates on pre and post-natal health care services.

The recommendations provided in this study identify prospective areas for actions, which are related to conceptual underpinnings of early childhood interventions. The study also proposes a framework for the provision of early childhood education and development. The report also mentions limitations encountered in this research, which include: lack of data on “political and administrative” constraints in the context of formal education system. Moreover, the utterances of state officials concerning political connections and patron-client relationships could not be substantiated because of research ethics and restricted scope of study.

# INTRODUCTION

**E**arly Childhood Development (ECD) is underpinned by stages classified into physical, social, cognitive and emotional development of children, which spans up to 8 years<sup>1</sup> of age. In general terms, during early years, children require the right kind of environment, adequate nutrients and social interactions with attentive caretakers. Early childhood interventions such as pre-natal and post-natal care directly contribute to the physical growth of children. Beyond physical growth, children also require social and cognitive development underpinned by specific interventions such as community and school programmes supporting language and basic learning skills for different age group children. Thus, early childhood is a multi-dimensional concept focusing on child's well-being (social, nutritional, physical and mental). Recently, the concept of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) has gained importance amongst policy makers as a vital component of ECD. The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECDG) argues that ECCD is more holistic as it links the attributes of ECD to quality services such as education, health, sanitation and safe environment. Existing literature also makes reference to Early Childhood Education (ECE) advocating pre-schooling programs<sup>2</sup> for children between ages (3-6) within formal schooling system. The most critical aspect of ECE is the active involvement of "parents and primary caregivers" in helping the children to acquire the skills needed for making a transition towards primary education (ECDG).

Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) is relatively a new area in Pakistan. In the formal education system of Pakistan, early childhood education has been vaguely (not fully developed) practiced in pre-school locally referred as Katchi<sup>3</sup>. Under the ambit of Education for All (EFA), efforts are being made by the provincial governments to formalize (ECE) into the main education system. Despite policy statements and according to existing research, the situation of early childhood education in Pakistan remains a serious concern and has not received much attention. This study has been commissioned by "PARWAAN" to investigate the situation of ECED in selective districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh provinces<sup>4</sup>. The research broadly attempts to analytically investigate the responses of local community, parents and officials in explaining the reasons of why children between ages (3-4) are struggling to acquire access to early childhood care and education.

## Objectives of the Study

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>I</b>  | <b>II</b>   | <b>III</b>  |
| To analyze perspectives and understanding of ECED in KPK and Sindh provinces; | To analytically explore constraining factors affecting the provision of ECED; | To determine practical solutions for improving and promoting Early Childhood Education. |



## Early Childhood Development in Pakistan: A Situation Analysis

To ensure the provision of early child care and education, Pakistan is signatory to several declarations and agreements. In 2000, Pakistan was among 183 countries that ratified the Dakar Framework of action<sup>5</sup>. In order to honor this commitment, the Ministry of Education (MoE) prepared a National Plan of Action (NPA). The NPA 2001-2015 (April 2003) reflects the policy structure and programmatic strategies that Pakistan has committed to implement the goals of education for all. For this purpose, the first strategy, which is ECE, was implemented in 2003. The government officially accepted ECE as "Katchi" or pre-primary education defined as the provision of formal and informal education by both public and private sectors for children aged 3-5 years. In government schools, the katchi class is usually perceived as an informal class in which younger siblings of

<sup>1</sup>UNICEF (2013).

<sup>2</sup>Which includes playful learning exercises, group activities and access to a "variety of learning material and books" (ECDG).

<sup>3</sup>Katchi (pre-school) refers to the informal education of children between ages 3-4 on the pretext of not fully prepared to be enrolled in primary age group class termed as class 1.

<sup>4</sup>During research in KPK and Sindh provinces, we came to learn that additional resources have been allocated to promote Early Childhood Education.

<sup>5</sup>In the Dakar Framework Action, ratified countries commit to the achievement of education for all for every citizen and for every society.



students enrolled in grade one are allowed to attend school in order to make their enrolment and transition to next year more likely. The katchi was formalized in the early 1970s and integrated further into the formal education system. However, by the end of 1980s, such practice gradually fizzled out from the formal education system. Even though when early childhood and katchi classes existed, children were taught in a traditional way such as teacher standing in front of the black board directing the children. Rote memorization was encouraged instead of child-friendly teaching and learning. In this way, young children are unable to acquire quality education. At the same time, over the years early childhood development practices have thrived in the private sector. In primary schools, pre-primary education services include employing learning approaches and methods appropriate for young children. Although early childhood education is provided by private schools, they remain limited in their outreach. The growing demand of early childhood education in the private sector has induced some urgency in the public sector to take concrete steps to formalize pre-primary education, primarily because ECE is reflected in Education Structural Reforms (ESR). However, early childhood education is not formally recognized in Pakistan due to factors such as lack of finances, untrained ECD teachers, no separate rooms for pre-primary classes and framework of ECE. However, recently, the ministry of education has considered the provision of additional class room for children below the age of 5.

The major reason behind the non-institutionalization of ECD is that the government has not paid much attention to children between the ages of 3-5. Historically, the priority area has always been 5-9 age group children. Such prioritization becomes evident when we look at article 25-A, which states that:

**“The state shall provide free and complimentary education to all children of the age of 5 to 16 years in such manner as maybe determined by law”**

The aforesaid article explicitly makes reference to the provision of education amongst children aging 5-16. This means that the provision of education for the children below the age of 5 have not been recognized by the state. Under article 25A, the state is yet to recognize and mainstream early childhood education. In other words, children between ages 3-5 are deprived of their right to Education. This right is further undermined when children below the age of 5 “exit” from public schools to private schools, a phenomenon which is being analytically explored in this study with reference to the perceptions and utterances of diverse audience.

### Pre-Primary Education Statistics

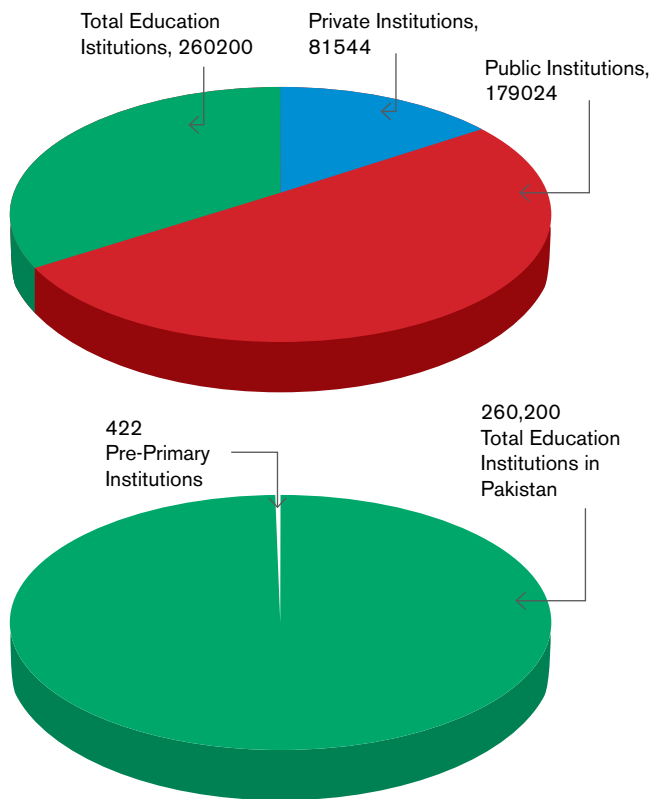
Education statistics reveals that the total number of education institutions of Pakistan is 260,200. Out of this total, the education institutions have 179,024 public and 81,544 private institutions. According to NEMIS, out of 260,200 education institutions, 422 are pre-primary schools. The data have not been further disaggregated into public and private education institutions. The ratio of public and private schools is very minimal. The existing data clearly depicts that the number of institutions offering pre-primary facilities is very small in proportion.

We have seen that most of the primary schools have an informal, if not a formalized katchi, arrangements, and student enrolled there would be much more than the students in pre-primary schools that the NEMIS attempts to capture.

The prevalence of informal education system presents a complex scenario when it comes to the provision of pre-primary education. In public institutions, there is no standaradised mechanism of enrolling young children. Most of these students are enrolled



informally (seeking pre-primary education by sitting alongside brothers and sisters in PAKKI class). It has been observed that

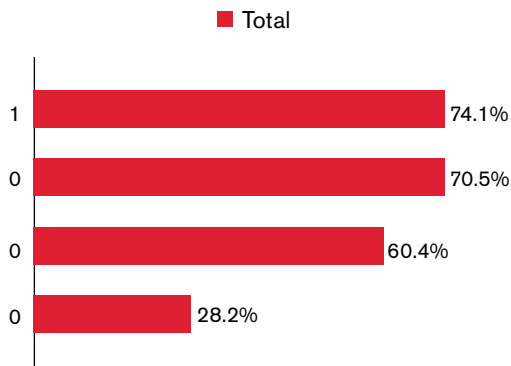


Source: National Education Management Information System, Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan 2015.

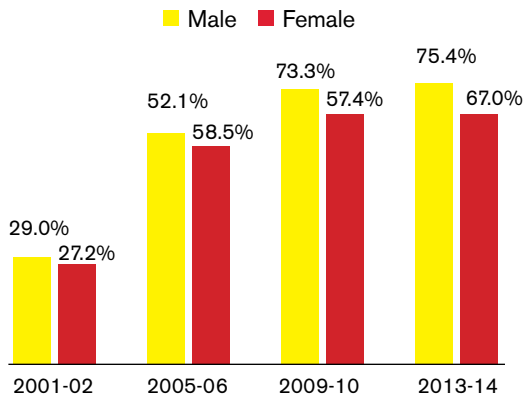
Public institutions are not equipped with separate classes for male and female children in both KACHI and PAKKI classes. However, an increase of gross enrolment ratio has been observed at pre-primary stage of education. The percentage of total gross enrollment and sex wise distribution in pre-primary education in different years is shown in the below figure. We have seen that in twelve years from 2001-02 to 2013-14, the gross enrollment ratio has been increased by 43.2% from 28.2% to 71.4%. The Male gross enrollment ratio in last twelve years has been increased by 46.4%. Similarly, the female gross enrollment ratio in pre-primary education in last twelve years has been increased by 39.8%.



Gross Enrollment Ratio in Pre-Primary Education



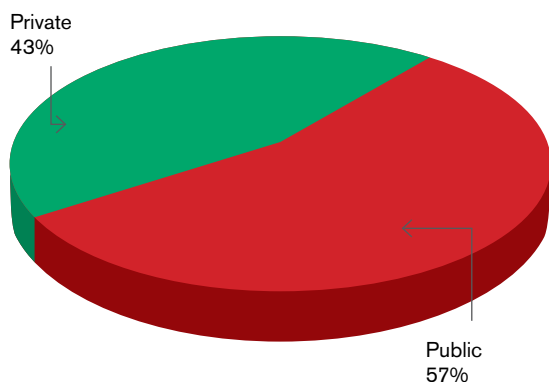
Male/Female Gross Enrollment Ratio in Pre Primary Education



Source: National Education Management Information System, Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan 2015.

At pre-primary stage, the total enrolment is 8.514 million. Out of which 4.841 million (57%) is in public sector and 3.672 million (43%) in private sector. The enrolment distribution at pre-primary stage in (%) is shown in the below figure. There are no separate pre-primary institutions in public sector in Pakistan.

Sector Wise Distribution of Enrolment in Pre-Primary



Source: National Education Management Information System, Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan 2015.

Lack of resources (human and financial) at public sectors, miss utilization of existing resources, and weak monitoring mechanism in public sector, the private sector creates sufficient demand in fostering pre-primary education. Despite higher ratio of government schools, the gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary stage is significantly better than government schools.

### The situation of ECD in Public and Private Schools

Like other services provided by the government, pre-primary education provision has been severely constrained by governance, quality and effectiveness. After the end of nationalization in 1979, Pakistan has witnessed an exponential increase in the role of private sector service providers. The negative experiences of government schools (Public Schools) have instigated parents to shift children from government to private schools. Sir Michael Barber (2010) mentions in his paper that due to poor facilities regarding infrastructure and learning outcomes reduces parents' enthusiasm for government schools. Furthermore, numerous other studies illustrate the cost effectiveness of the private schools compared to the government schools in providing decent education facilities and better quality of learning levels.

The Learning and Education Achievements in Punjab Schools (LEAPS) study was conducted to evaluate the education sector of the Pakistan using a detailed Punjab's data set. The study conducted from 2003 to 2007, found a significant and rising role of low fee private schools, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan. In spite of government school teachers receiving higher salaries and government schools using twice the resources to operate, the learning levels of children in private schools continued to be significantly better than public sector schools. Moreover, the public sector has much larger accessibility and outreach than the private sector. Similarly, an increased private sector role in the education sector has raised issues of equity. This may be the case because private schools have no incentive to improve any further than the bare minimum needed to attract demand for pre-primary education.

The state of private schools is better only in a relative sense that is if not taken in comparison to the government schools in Pakistan. The quality of private schools' services nevertheless needs major improvements, as Bari and Muzaffar (2010) argue in their paper. Policy development needs to take into account how to maximize the learning outcomes as well as improve the state of affairs in both the private as well as public schools. There are different approaches and methods of analyzing early childhood education. The following section engages with the research approach and methodology in understanding the dynamics of ECE.

# RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

**B**efore embarking upon field work, selective body of literature on the conceptions and approaches to engaging with early childhood education was reviewed. The study conceived a qualitative design to understanding the perceptions and responses of diverse social actors concerning early childhood development. As argued by Creswell (2003), qualitative design enables researchers to explore experiences, feelings and perceptions in a detailed, interpretive and descriptive manner. Qualitative research tools, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were selected for the study to seek answers to:

- I. **How early childhood education has been perceived and understood?**
- II. **What are the social practices, provision of health services and early childhood institutional and household linkages?**
- III. **What should be done at the policy and implementation levels to promote ECED?**

Semi-structured questions offer the versatility and the freedom to sequence questions in a preferred priority, and to vary the amount of time and attention devoted to different topics (Robson 1993, p.237). Interviews also provide a response appropriate to the researcher's interests, which is investigated "rather than treated as 'a problem' standing in the way of accurate reporting of 'facts' or 'experiences'" (Silverman 2006, p.127). Starting with generalized, semi-structured interview questions contribute to the identification of concepts followed by analysis and reformulation.

All key informant interviews and focus group discussions were tape recorded and transcribed. Data analysis was guided by content analysis, a qualitative technique used to determine the presence of certain concepts in texts (Berg, 2001). The text was read line by line to determine recurring themes and checking them against the data collected from key-informant interview and focus groups. The qualitative data revealed conceptual categories concerning "in-adequacies" and "demand for non- governments schools as well as childhood institutional and household concerns.

## RESEARCH LOCALE AND SETTING

The study was carried out in selective districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Sindh provinces. In KPK, districts Mardan, Abbottabad and Malakand were selected. In Sindh, the chosen districts consisted of Khaipur, Nawabshah and Tando Allah Yar. The sampling universe consisted of selecting four primary schools randomly in each district of both provinces. The composition of schools in each district included a rural male (government school) and rural female (private school). The same composition was applied in urban settings. Interactive discussions were held with research participants<sup>6</sup>; parents, public officials, teachers of government and low cost private schools<sup>6</sup>. The category of public officials constituted in-service senior and mid-career officials such as Lady Health Workers (LHWs), Lady Health Visitors (LHVs), EDO, and Secretary Education<sup>7</sup>. The category of parents included those whose children<sup>8</sup> were informally enrolled in pre-primary classes in both government and private schools. Due to small sample size, the research findings could not be generalized. Instead, an attempt is made to understand the perceptions and experiences of participants about early childhood learning and care.

### 1. AWARENESS, PERCEPTIONS, HEALTH PROVISIONS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

#### 1.1. Awareness and Perception on Early Childhood Education Development

Our data reveals that parents in urban areas had a non-normative understanding of early childhood development. Parents were of the view that early childhood development entails fulfilling



<sup>6</sup>The low-cost private schools are non-government schools that cater for the children of low-income families. The average monthly tuition fee in these schools ranges between Rs (300-600).

<sup>7</sup>The secretary education was interviewed in the case of Sindh province only.

<sup>8</sup>The age group of these children ranges between years 3-5.

children's social and emotional needs, development of skills, health and guiding them towards a bright future. The knowledge and understanding of parents 'concerning early childhood in rural areas appeared to be weak. For instance, a mother in KPK province narrated to us that:

**“They (parents) are not aware of the academic needs of children because of illiteracy and as a consequence, they are unable to promote early childhood learning and development”**

During field work, we also learnt about the importance of “parents” attention and influence on children between ages 3-5. During an informal discussion, a female teacher emphasized that early childhood learning cannot be achieved without parents' support. Unfortunately, early childhood education has not received much attention in rural areas as parents' are seldom encouraged to play a constructive role during the early years of children.



The other phenomenon concerns learning achievements of children at school. It came to our knowledge that parents seldom inquire from teachers about the progress of their children especially in selective districts of KPK. Another important observation concerns perceptions on early childhood education. Majority stakeholders (parents and teachers) were of the opinion that unless schools provide a favorable environment, early childhood would remain a wishful agenda. Concerning early childhood education in government schools, parents repeatedly made reference to untrained teachers. Anecdotal evidence does support the aforesaid observation. When we inquired about early childhood age, majority stakeholders informed us that 3-5 years is an ideal age bracket. During causal discussions about language, we learnt that the preferred medium of instruction at school is Urdu and English. However, native languages Pushto and Sindhi are also desired.

## 1.2. Health Provision and Practices

This section presents the situation of health provisions and practices in children between the age of 0-3 years in both provinces measured through a set of qualitative indicators such

as, skilled and unskilled birth attendant, child immunization and breastfeeding. Comprehensive analyses of health provision and practices have been drawn from interviews with mothers, siblings, LHWs, LHV's and community members.

### 1.2.1. Skilled/unskilled Attendant

The FDGs held with mothers in rural areas of both provinces reveal that women are still dependent on unskilled birth attendants. We learnt that in KPK and Interior Sindh, birth deliveries mostly take place at home under the care of traditional midwives. The main reason is the lack of basic health facilities in rural areas. One lady from rural Abbottabad said:

**“There is no BHU or dispensary near our house, but fortunately, our village is well connected by roads to Abbottabad district. It takes almost 30 minutes by car from our village to Ayub Medical Complex. We go to Ayub Medical Complex in case of emergency and for routine checkup. But for the poor, it is difficult to commute for routine checkup”**

Most of the basic health units are non-functional because of doctor's absenteeism especially in the selective districts of Sindh. It is extremely difficult for the poor to visit private doctors or hospitals and as a consequence, unskilled birth attendants remain the only option. We further learnt that rural women prefer unskilled birth attendants because private doctors are performing caesarean without proper diagnosis and reasons. Private Doctors predominantly prefer caesarean rather than normal delivery. One lady stated in Khairpur:

**“Throughout nine months, she visited private hospital for periodic checkups. The doctor informed her that the baby's health is good and there is nothing to worry about. But at the time of delivery, the doctor suddenly informed her that the child had gone into distress and as a consequence, medical intervention was imperative. Thereafter, the doctor went for caesarean”**

In Mardan, a lady had a caesarean in a private hospital. At the time of delivery, the doctor informed her that her amniotic fluid had reduced dangerously, because of which she could lose the baby. The baby was then delivered through caesarean. According to LHWs, doctors in private clinics narrate different excuses to perform C-Section such as the umbilical cord was wrapped around the baby's neck, the baby's heart beat had stopped and the amniotic fluid was too low. During conversation with LHWs and elder women, we came to know that babies with umbilical cords doubled-coiled around their necks were delivered naturally. In order to avoid health complications arising due to misleading and unethical reasons, women preferred unskilled attendant.

### 1.2.2. Breast Feeding

Community members in Sindh and KPK provinces informed us that breast feeding practice is directly related to the health of children who are less than two. Most mothers narrated to us that breastfeeding helps in social, emotional and psychosocial development of a child. A mother from Nawabshah district said that:

**“She has two children (a boy and a girl). The girl was breastfed for two years. For health reasons, the boy was breastfed for just six months. She claims that her daughter is much healthier and intelligent than her son”**

Majority mothers were well aware about the importance of breastfeeding. When we asked from mothers whether they have been educated on the importance of breastfeeding, and how long they breastfed their child, we received the following response:

**“Breast milk is the child right upon his/her parents”**

It was revealed from community responses that breastfeeding amongst mothers is influenced by religious beliefs. A mother narrated that:

**“Breastfeeding is encouraged in the Holy Quran and that’s why she preferred to breastfeed her Children for two years. However, mothers did not accord breast feeding as the first pre lacteal feed. Majority community members firmly believed that giving a lick of honey (ghutti) after the birth is a religious act. But the LHWs did not endorse religious reasoning and narrated that Breastfeeding with-in one hour after the birth is considered “rich protective factor” because it ensures the provision of colostrum amongst newly born children”**.



Sufficient attention to breastfeeding practices and care were discussed with LHWs. Lady Health workers highlighted health related problems in those mothers who do not breastfeed. During

the course of research, we learnt that exclusive breastfeeding is not practiced in KPK and Sindh provinces. We found that doctors encourage the formula milk even they recommend specific brands of formula milk. The alternative milk provision underscores ignoring promotion and supporting breastfeeding. Stressing on breastfeeding, LHWs were of the opinion that there is a need of developing a comprehensive engagement strategy which focuses upon dissemination of breastfeeding core competencies and best practices in accordance with specific needs (data on breastfeeding) and social practices.

### 1.2.3. Child Immunization

During informal discussion, majority of the parents responded that vaccinations are very important for children’s health because they help in stopping the spread of diseases. The children are therefore being vaccinated on regular basis. We also came to know that LHWs and LHVs have been visiting communities on regular basis, and they are administering vaccinations. They raise awareness about different diseases such as polio, dengue and tetanus. Despite such efforts, LHWs face parental refusal. One lady health worker in Agrah union council said:

**“Children in her locality were not vaccinated because the law and order situation was not favorable and vaccination teams faced security threats. In her view, the key reason of refusal is the lack of knowledge and misconceptions about vaccination”**

Majority of the mothers especially the ones belonging to rural areas, displayed hesitation in vaccinating their children. They were reluctant to administer drops to their children because they had developed doubts about vaccine. One mother in Batakhela said:

**“The polio vaccine is being used to control the birth rate, and it also decreases women’s fertility. That’s why she is reluctant to acquire vaccination for her children”**

During key informant interviews with teachers, we came to know that health teams also visited schools for health campaigns and polio drops’. The Principal of a rural school in Agrah said that they had refused the entry of polio workers as parents of many students are not allowed to let vaccinators administer polio drops to their children. On the other hand, the polio vaccination campaign was underway successfully in schools in selective districts of Sindh. The negative perception of community concerning polio drops seems to be a major factor inhibiting health concerns amongst children. A cursory glance at the following framework presents the importance of health and its relationship with early childhood development.



## Provision of Health Care and Nutrition for Early Childhood Development

Skilled Attendant at Delivery

Childhood Immunization

Well-Child Visit

Iron Fortification

Salt Iodization

Breast-feeding Promotion

Standard Health Screening for Women

## 2. EXIT, VOICE AND LOYALTY

This section sets up an analytical framework for analyzing the research data, and engages briefly with theoretical debates on concepts “Exit”, “Voice” and “loyalty”. According to Hirschman (1970, p.30), there are two types of responses to unsatisfactory situations in organizations. The first is “exit” or leaving without trying to fix things. When people are dissatisfied with a particular product or a service, they ‘exit’ from that firm to acquire it elsewhere. The second conceptual category is “voice” that is, speaking up and trying to remedy defects. Through the notion of “voice”, frustrated or disgruntled community attempts to change “practices, policies and outputs” of an organization. Through the mechanism of ‘voice’, an attempt is made to improve the quality of a service instead of escaping from an objectionable state of affairs, either individually or collectively or through different means such as protests, compliant or through an appeal to higher authorities (Ibid:30). Authors Schaffer and Lamb (1974, p. 79) argue that in the absence of an exit option, voice performs the function of highlighting the difficulties faced by people in acquiring access to public goods and services. Loyalty can modify the response, causing one to stand and fight (voice) rather than cut and run (exit).

In this study, “voice” is explored in terms of understanding the concerns and perceptions of parents and community on the

provision of early childhood education. The notion of “exit” on the other hand, is contextualized in highlighting the reasons why people opt for private schools when seeking early childhood education for their children. Both “voice” and “exit” contributes to knowing the dilemmas faced by people when the state attempts to provide a service. Loyalty also performs an important function as it enables us to analyze, why people stay loyal in the wake of unfavorable circumstances. It is one of three options- exit, voice and loyalty which Hirschman (1970) relates to when explaining the decisions and behavior of consumers in the face of deteriorating quality of goods and services. People exercise “exit” option when



they are no longer satisfied with the provision of a service. In diffused societies, there are people who are unable to exercise “exit” option and as a consequence, stay loyal to an organization or forced to embrace a degraded service. The voice-exit framework further informs us that when an exit option is available, people are less likely to resort to voice. The examination of the dynamics of voice and exit draw attention to the dissatisfaction or the inability of the political governments to address the factors affecting the expected provision of early childhood learning in government schools. Moreover, voice also informs us about the preferences and inclination of parents towards private schools, as better managed and conducive for early childhood learning and care. The concepts of exit, voice and loyalty will be used throughout to analyze the responses of research participants on early childhood education.

In recent years, attention has been focused on the existence of private schools catering to the children of low-income families. The private low-cost schools are found in the research districts in both KPK and Sindh provinces, all of these schools have a prescribed public policy in providing early childhood education to low-income families. There is strong evidence which points to the preference of lower socio-economic families sending their children to a fee-paying school instead of a school where early childhood education is free. This raises the question, why people prefer a low-cost private school for early childhood education?



## 2.2. Demands for Low-Cost Private Schools

The low cost private schools are small educational institutions situated in small households in both urban and rural areas. Much of the demands for low-cost private schools originate from parents who are not satisfied with government schools. There has been a noticeable increase in parental willingness to pay for better learning opportunities for their children. This is evident, in

the growth of low cost private school enrollment even amongst lower socio-economic segments of society. Evidence in Pakistan suggests that when there is a choice, many parents prefer to send their children to low cost private schools instead of government schools. Parents prefer private schools due to below reasons:

### 2.2.1. Quality of Education

Quality of education is one of the leading factors that distinguish private schools from government schools. Based on the responses of parents and local community, low-cost private schools provide better early childhood education compared to government schools. The delivery of early childhood education in private schools focuses on access to good- quality care and education (which may still be far behind when judged with reference to Early childhood international conventions<sup>9</sup>). In FDGs, parents stated that:

**“Government schools have large number of students in one class and large numbers of students are taught by one teacher. Where as in private schools, there is less number of students in one class”**

The above argument has been reaffirmed by teachers by admitting that “it’s easy to teach less number of students”. Moreover, quality of education is directly related to child’s friendly learning environment. Teaching and learning methodologies are different in public and private schools which include syllabus, course, timetable, recreational activities and physical structures. As observed in both provinces, mostly in government schools, the syllabus is taught in English but teachers also resort to Urdu



language. In private schools, learning and teaching methodology is primarily English with the exception when translating English concepts into Sindhi.

<sup>9</sup>A study conducted by Save the Children (2002, p.8) concluded that private education in Pakistan and Nepal are not provided in accordance to the “quality of education” as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For further explanation, please revert to CRC’s measures outlined in Article 29.

### 2.2.2 Learning Environment

Most parents whose children were enrolled in private schools narrated that private schools offers better learning environment to children of ages 3-5 years. According to the parents, “Adequate number of dedicated teachers concentrates on children’s well-being besides adopting a structured approach which caters to young children’s behavior and needs”. A father of a child in Nawabshah stated:

**“ECE methodology provides flexibility in learning and builds on group learning environment, which is the hallmark of peer learning. Children learn quicker in groups. It also polishes individual skills and inclinations towards different areas of interests”**



According to teachers in both provinces:

**“The ECE methodology is creative as it makes children think and plan in advance rather than following a monotonous routine. It has increased the motivation and continuous interests amongst teachers too”**

In FDGs, we learnt that ECD classes have attracted many students due to activity based learning strategies. The teachers observed an increase in enrollment, as the children studying in public schools were enrolled in private schools where ECD facilities were provided.

### 2.2.3 Teaching Material

At pre-primary level, most private schools teach “Oxford” syllabus, ostensibly preferred by teachers as an effective basic education syllabus, focusing upon “figures, pictures and group activities”. On the other hand, many public schools in both provinces did not have any guidelines and syllabus for pre-primary classes. In

urban areas, teachers informed us that they have teaching and learning material but its usage is not widely practiced. In private schools most of the teachers adopted child’s friendly activities and had been using teaching aids extensively. Conversely, in public schools, teacher’s complaint about the non replenishment of essential teaching aids which makes public schools less attractive for children and parents.

In Tando Allah Yar, teachers in FDGs expressed enthusiasm about activity based learning. They were of the opinion:

**“Learning material helps in explaining concepts which were otherwise difficult in conventional non-ECE classes. Activity based learning is most useful for children when they are at the age of exploring different concepts and learning new phenomenon. It facilitates teachers and guides them to a great extent”**

### 2.2.4 Dedicated Female Teachers

In addition to the above, in private schools, children between ages 3-5 were administered by female teachers. The most significant element in promoting early childhood care is that a “female” teacher is better care-giver compared to a “male teacher”, a phenomenon observed in all districts. During conversation with mothers in a rural community located in the Khairpur district of Sindh, the following response of mothers underscores preference for “female-teachers” in pre-schooling.

**“Women have strong disciplinarian tendencies towards young siblings. Women display love and affection towards a child, as they are mothers themselves. They know how to handle a child emotionally’ and intelligently”**

Existing literature on early child learning stresses upon social interactions with “attentive caregivers”. This observation confirms the hypothesis that children between ages 3-4 require mother/primary caregiver when considering social and emotional domains of early childhood development. The female teachers of private school narrated that physical, recreational activity, and one to one social interactions with young children inculcates the demand for the proliferation of private schools.

### 2.2.5 Building and other Facilities

Availability of reasonable facilities is one of the leading factors that distinguish private schools from government schools. According to this study, private schools had the availability of one room for one class, better toilets and sewerage system, better drinking water facilities and boundary walls. The only facility in which the private schools were worse off than government school was the non-availability of play grounds. Mostly the government schools have adequate land compared to low cost private schools established in houses either owned or rented by small proprietors. On female teacher in rural public school in Abbottabad reported:

**“One of the major reasons of low strength in her school was the non-availability of a boundary wall. Parents have security concerns due to which they prefer private schools”**

In addition to the above, more individualized attention of teachers with soft behavior and teaching in local language support the argument of strong preference and demand for private schools. The teachers of private school adopted soft behavior when interacting with newly enrolled children. In FDGs, private school teachers in both provinces informed us that they undertake playful activities with children after which, they ask children to reflect on what they have learnt. In some instances, teachers used flashcards and objects to incite creativity and curiosity in children. Moreover, the private school teachers conversed with children in English and Urdu but also reverted to local languages (Pushto and Sindhi) when difficulty was encountered in understanding. As a consequence, parents accord high importance to “child centric” measures.

### 2.2.6 Parent-teacher Interaction

What strongly emerges from the field is that parent-teacher interaction is very important for the child’s education. The data reveals that in private as well as government schools located in the province of Sindh, parents visit schools for discussing the progress of their children. Mothers usually show more concern about the performance of their siblings. On the other hand, in the rural areas of KPK province, mothers are least concerned about the progress of their children as they rarely visit schools. Factors such as illiteracy and poverty can be cited as the major causes restricting rural parents to take keen interest in the development of child.



### 2.2.7 Accountability, Performance Evaluation and Management

Another point worth mentioning is that accountability and performance evaluation of teachers teaching in private schools is much greater in comparison to public school. Through focus

groups held in both provinces, it becomes evident that parents perceive private schools to be more accountable and offering better quality of education. On the other hand, accountability in government school is much weaker as teachers have a permanent job with salaries and promotions which are seldom based on performance. Moreover, we observed suboptimum attendance of teachers in government schools particularly in the rural areas of Sindh. Mostly mothers in Sindh rural areas stated:

**“Teacher absenteeism is more prevalent in government girl schools where the infrastructure at the school facility is insufficient. Despite absenteeism, teachers are not fired and they continue to withdraw salary from the state. Political clientelism and patronage undermine accountability in the education sector”**



Private school owners and parents emphasized that accountability in the context of “parents” feedback from teachers plays a key role in evaluating a child’s growth and learning abilities or deficiencies.

As a consequence, reflecting on early childhood education, establishers and small proprietors of low-cost private school, implicitly made reference to the inability of the government to cater for pre-primary classes and personalized teaching. One of the reasons of “exit” from government schools to low-cost private schools is the “quality” and “care”.

The other phenomenon is that most citizens with the exception of those who are unable to afford, would not raise “voice” as they can afford in securing a service, such as early childhood education elsewhere. Hence, “voice” is weakened by the “exit” option. The demand for low-cost private schools informs us to investigate two important presumptions (contextualized within the research objectives). The first relates to the inability of the public sector to provide a stimulating learning environment to children between ages 3-4. The second pertains to “trust-deficit” amongst citizens concerning the provision of pre-primary schooling by the government.

### 2.3. “In-adequacies” in Government System of Education

Citizens' dissatisfaction with early childhood education is rooted in social and political structures and policy domain of public sector institutions. Firstly, let's examine the following observed inadequacies in the provision of early childhood education:

- I. In-adequate teacher strength (except for few urban schools)
- II. In-sufficient supply of “dedicated space/class” for children of age group (3-4)
- III. Over-crowding
- IV. High teacher absenteeism (especially in rural schools of Sindh)

The aforesaid mentioned “in-adequacies” gravely undermine the institutionalizing of early childhood education policy in government schools. The existing policy<sup>10</sup> of “two rooms” and “two teachers” is the biggest obstacle to exclusively focus on the well-being of children below the age of 5. For instance, in “Agra” union council, located in district Malakand, children between ages 3-5 were sitting outside on the floor. During informal conversation with the head-teacher, we learnt that the school had “two-rooms” and “two teachers”, excluding the head-teacher. Upon inquiring about early childhood education, the head- teacher responded in the following manner:

**“This school has two rooms, accommodating six classes, including pre-school class. Early childhood education is essential but, with the existing strength of teachers, it is not possible for us to teach six classes. There should be dedicated space for children between ages 3-4 years”**



The aforesaid observation is common to all government schools chosen for the study. Overcrowded classrooms demotivate teachers as they struggle to teach multiple classes. The other

significant “in-adequacy” of government schools pertains to high teacher absenteeism in rural (girls) schools in Sindh. The problem of protracted absenteeism in Sindh is associated with deeply politicized education system operating along the lines of patron-client relations. Political affiliations and connections of teachers with politicians contribute to the in- effectiveness of government schools. In some rural schools in Sindh and KPK, one teacher carrying out teaching as well as administering six classes is an extreme example of a policy problem. Hence, the basic premise of understanding demands for a policy is to address the prevailing conditions under which demands are made and articulated by different groups and people (Howlett and Ramesh 1994). Here, it is pertinent to engage with the concerns of those citizens' who are sending their children to government schools. Despite high demand for private low-cost schools, these schools are not within the reach of the poorest families who are more in need of seeking early childhood education. This argument is consistent with the fact that children of “poor families” cannot “exit” from a public school to a private school and therefore, reply on “voice”. Let's consider the following expression:

**“Parents are poor and they work from morning till late evening. As a consequence, they hardly get time to visit school and inquire from teacher about his/her child's performance. During summer vacation, the children of poor families work at shops. Even after school, these children seek short term employment. Everyday work routine makes them tired and therefore, they are unable to devote time to school work which is, a matter of great concern”**

Due to poverty and unemployment opportunities, poor families face extreme circumstances whereby, their immediate concern is to earn and support their family. As there is no tuition or enrollment fee, parents with exceptionally low income enroll their children between ages 3-4 in government schools. The children of poor families require government support so that they are able to focus on education instead of seeking employment. During fieldwork, we found that children below the age of 5 had to sit with older age group children. This characteristic appeared to be the norm in government schools, a characteristic highly deplored by parents as these children were unable to seek individual attention from teachers. As narrated by a teacher:

**“Huge number of students on a single teacher is a big burden in delivering quality education. A teacher can only give proper attention and individual time to a child, if he is not over- burdened”**

The existing un-favorable situation concerning early childhood is further aggravated by the lack of exposure to early childhood learning experiences and strategies. With the exception of few, majority teachers in government schools had no prior experience of early childhood development.

<sup>10</sup>National Education Policy 2009 by the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. <http://unesco.org.pk/education/teachereducation/files/National%20Education%20Policy.pdf>

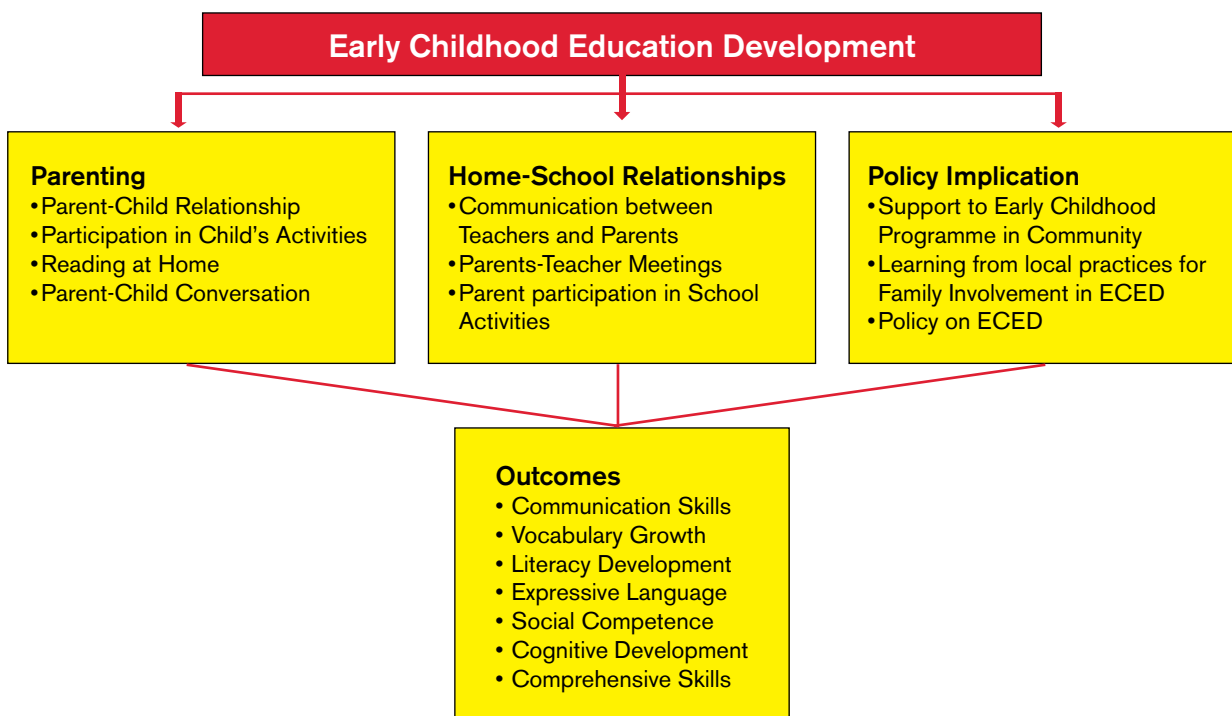
This research also noted a sense of “frustration and lack of faith” in government. This observation is directly related to the proliferation of low-cost private schools and to the phenomenon of “exit” from government to private schools. Both teachers and community members argued that the existing system of education is not delivering because of politicization and institutional constraints. On many instances, we observed dedicated teachers teaching overcrowded classes. Despite lodging innumerable complaints to higher authorities concerning issues related to “in-adequate strength of teachers and the policy of one teacher teaching six classes”, these local teachers are still performing official duties. Since organizational effectiveness and introducing changes into the existing state of affairs is too costly, teachers are staying loyal to the existing education system.

can be conceived to have entered the “institutional agenda”. The institutional agenda means action, indicating the readiness of the government to initiate a “policy dialogue and process dealing with the problems in question” (Ibid: 1994, 113). Unless the state seriously addresses complaints related to “in-adequacies” viewed in terms of “systemic and institutional domains, the existing situation concerning early childhood situation will not change. The key question is how serious is the government in both provinces in addressing “in-adequacies” affecting the provision of early childhood development and care. The following section offers recommendations and areas of further research.

Based on our interactions with teachers and citizens, it was evident that the complaints of service providers and service users’ related to pre-primary and primary education had not been reflected in the realm of policy. Although, this research had limited scope of engaging with these arguments, they are discussed briefly at an abstract level. If flaws in the education system pertains to in-adequacies (as explained earlier), it becomes a systemic or public agenda (Howlett and Ramesh 1994). Hence, when systemic agenda acquires sufficient political attention within the confines of “legitimate” existing governmental authority, it essentially becomes a public problem and a matter of concern which requires the attention of government. When the government accepts that the problem require solutions, it



### 3. FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT



## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

It has been observed that low-cost private schools exclusively cater for early childhood development, primarily due to the inability of the state to focus upon early childhood needs in the society. Although, our contention is not to discourage private sector, our recommendation is that the public sector must compliment the objectives of early childhood education. The suggestions are classified under the following ambits:

### I. Determination of ECD Policy

The state must clearly devise a policy on Early Childhood development. In this endeavor, the ministry of education, health department and NGOs should collaborate in devising an implementable policy. The NGOs should specifically assist the state in areas where ECD interventions have been successfully implemented. The AKF early childhood interventions in Baluchistan can provide some insights.

### II. Registration of private schools

Numerous reports mention the proliferation of private schools in both urban and rural areas. An initiation of the registration of private schools would be useful for two reasons. The first one relates to the mapping of existing private schools. The second pertains to the regulation of private schools in accordance with international conventions on early childhood development. Both measures would enable the government to prescribe an early childhood policy for private schools.

### III. Early childhood interventions (state-centered)

The state must provide incentives to children of poor families who are mostly enrolled in government schools. These incentives can be “healthy meals” or targeted incentives such as small financial support to families or earners. We know very little about poor families circumstances such as home practices and family obligations. By offering incentives such as meals to the children of under-privileged, these children will have better chances to stay at school.

Establishing early childhood education classrooms in existing schools. These centers can be established under a prescribed early childhood education policy. Additional classrooms must be adequately financed and reflected into the education policy.

The teachers in government schools must be trained on early childhood interventions and they must ensure the implementation of early childhood curriculum. In addition, early childhood interventions must be introduced with the objective of meeting the social and physiological needs of the children.

Early childhood interventions in government schools must be supported through the active support of community, NGOs and parents. The active involvement of parents in schools can make a huge difference in improving classroom interactions and supporting teachers in developing a culture of child's friendly activities.

There should be a dedicated female teacher for children below the age of 5. The selection of teachers must be based on merit and qualification. The government can initiate recruitment of female teachers in a phased manner depending on resources.

There is a dire need to focus on early childhood education in rural areas. Schools in rural areas have severe shortage of teachers. The most important aspect in this regards is to evaluate the social context in which the school operate in rural areas. Without analyzing the reasons of shortage of teachers and holding teachers accountable for not reporting on duty, additional spending will not achieve the desired results.

The above cited recommendations are not exclusive as they require a well-coordinated policy response. The framework of exit and voice does point to the challenge of developing optimal policy response to a mix of problems complicated by education statistics. For instance, schools providing early childhood schooling to poor communities require more funds. Moreover, pre-schooling interventions have to be grounded in local realities instead of suggesting one particular approach across the board.

### IV. Further research

There is a need of investigating pre and post-natal health care interventions. Numerous studies on early childhood education cite issues of “access” to health in diffused societies. Moreover, an independent research is required to investigate the viability and applicability of different models of early childhood interventions.

# ANNEX 1:

## Situation Analysis of Early Childhood Education Development (ECED) in KPK and Sindh Indicative/Guiding Questions for Key Informant interviews and Focus Groups

### 1. Personal Details

<b>Name of stakeholders</b>	
<b>Work Place</b>	
<b>Job Title</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Mobile No.</b>	
<b>E-mail</b>	

# DETERMINANTS OF ECD

## Overarching research question

To know about early child hood perceptions and practices amongst parents concerning children between ages 0-3 and teachers concerning children between ages 3-5

### Questions (Parents and family members)

1. What is your opinion about early child hood development needs and practices?

### Probing questions

- i. Please tell about your perceptions, opinions and social practices concerning your child's early year's development needs such as health and nutrition
  - ii. From birth till the age of 3, please tell us about social interactions such as looking after the child and meeting his/her social and emotional needs? Who interacted and how?
2. What are the social practices, provision of health services and early child hood institutional and household linkages?

### Probing questions

- i. Who administered the birth of your child (skilled and unskilled)? If in the case of un-skilled, please tell us about the reasons why un-skilled deliveries are commonly practiced, either at home or hospital? In which hospital?
- ii. In your view, what health complications are encountered or faced during or after unskilled deliveries?
- iii. Please tell us about immunization of your child at the BHU or by lady health workers.
- iv. Do you breastfeed your child? If yes how long? If not what was the reason?
- iii. Please tell us whether you have been educated on the importance of breastfeeding? Have you registered your children?
- iv. What are the basis/reasons of your decision when enrolling your child in public or private school? Who decided?
- v. Are you satisfied with your child's education in terms of learning, teachers focus, school environment (play ground, playful activities and one to one interactions of teachers with children)?
- vi. In your view, does language becomes a barrier in the early stage of child's learning? For example, do you prefer early childhood learning to focus on English as a standard medium of instruction in school? Which language you want your child to learn?

### Questions from Teachers

1. In your opinion, what does early child hood development means? What do you think that what is the best age of a child when he/she learns more?
2. Please tell us about early childhood development activities in your school. Please share what steps are being taken in your school for early grades? Or how you teach early grades? What activities you do with children of early grades?
3. What problems do you come across in the implementation of early child hood activities?
4. Does the text book cater for early child hood development learning activities? If not, please suggest what should be included.
5. Does your school have appropriate environment for the early child hood development. Clean drinking water, washrooms, playground, cleanliness and availability of teachers.
6. Have you been trained on important aspects of early child hood development? If yes please tell what are the contents or main topics were covered? If not, what are the reasons? (Awareness, financial, state priority)
7. Is early childhood programmes supported by the government? If not, what are the reasons?
8. In your view, how media can play a role in highlighting the importance of ECD?

### Questions from Policy Makers

1. What are the policies and programmes for ECEDs?
2. Do the primary level text books cater for early child hood development?
3. Is there specific budgetary allocation for ECED?
4. What specific problems are there in the implementation in ECED?
5. What should be done at the policy and implementation levels to promote ECED?

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# MAGNIFYING THE GAPS

## Situation Analysis

Early Childhood Education  
and Development In  
KPK, Sindh

Parwaan E9 National ECED Centre of Excellence initiated by Children's Global Network works in collaboration with the Ministry for Federal Education and Professional Training. The National Center of Excellence housed at Academy for Educational Planning and management is launched to bring ECED to mainstream planning and implementation. As a Public Private entity 'Parwaan' aims to strengthen partnership between stakeholders for the promotion and institutionalization of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) in Pakistan while bringing the well being and learning of children in focus. Parwaan being a repository of information and data for all stakeholders including academics, researchers' practitioners both public and private will serve as a hub for sharing research and knowledge.

Additionally Pakistan being the Secretariat of E9 countries-Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria -Parwaan will be a coordination point between all the E9 countries to share information and good practices.

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