

POLICY BRIEF

Bridging the Education and Skill Mismatch in Balochistan

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A Youthful Province at a Crossroads

Balochistan, the largest province by area, lags on human development. Its population is about 14.9 million (2023), with nearly 60% under 30: a potential dividend or a risk if jobs stay scarce. Unemployment is 9.1% (above the national average), literacy is 42% (the lowest in Pakistan), and labor force participation is 38.6%. Youth are hit hardest: the youth participation rate is about 44% (the lowest among provinces), and many leave the province for low-paid, insecure work. At the core is a skills and jobs mismatch: education and TVET are not aligned with demand. Only 2.3% of youth receive any vocational training, and those who do often cannot find work in their field. Curricula do not meet the market requirements, institute and industry links are weak, career guidance is thin, and gender norms limit women's mobility and options. The result is that young people invest in schooling or training but end up unemployed or underemployed, discouraging others from upskilling. Disparities in employment opportunities exist within Balochistan.

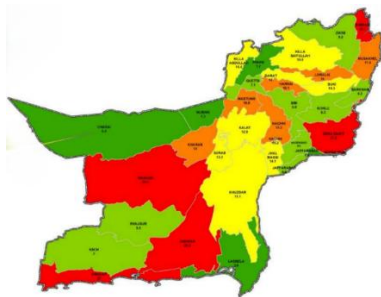


Figure 1.1: Unemployment Rate by District in Balochistan



Figure 1.2: Regional Variation in NEET by district in Balochistan

What is “mismatch”? In this brief, *mismatch* refers to a discrepancy between a person's education/skills and the requirements of their job. It includes “**over-education**” (having higher qualifications than needed for one's job), “**under-education**” (lacking the qualifications the job ideally requires), and **skills mismatch** (training in a field different from one's job or not utilizing one's skills fully). Mismatch matters because high levels of over-education imply wasted human capital and frustration for workers, while under-education can signal inefficiencies and skill gaps for employers. Both forms are linked to lower productivity and higher unemployment. Balochistan presents a stark case of both education and skill mismatches, which this brief examines to inform urgent policy action.

Mismatch in Balochistan: Scale and Consequences

Balochistan faces a severe education and skill mismatch: about 52% of workers are in roles that don't fit their Education, one of the highest rates in Pakistan, signaling major underuse of human capital. Over-qualification is far more common than under-qualification, meaning many higher degrees don't translate into appropriately matched jobs.

The effects are clear: over-educated workers are more likely to face unemployment, unstable work, and frequent job changes; some employers hesitate to hire them, fearing higher pay demands or quick exits, wasting talent and discouraging youth.

Mismatch also runs the other way: a smaller group is under-educated/under-skilled for their roles, facing a “double penalty” of weaker productivity and earnings. Even adequately qualified workers report over skilling, indicating inefficiencies across the market. Balochistan's labor market is misaligned at multiple levels, leading to both lost years of education (over-qualification) and skills gaps (under-qualification) in the workforce. Addressing this gap is urgent, because unless jobs catch up with education,

efforts to educate and train the youth will not yield their hoped-for benefits.

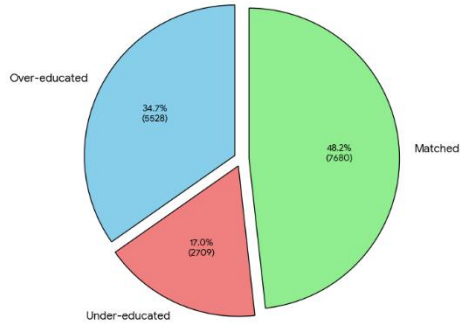


Figure 2: unemployment among TVET trained individuals

The Vocational Skills Disconnect: TVET Outcomes in Focus

Outcomes for technical and vocational graduates in Balochistan are weak. Fifty-seven percent are unemployed, which is higher than the overall youth unemployment rate. Among the 43 percent who are employed, about half work outside the trade they trained for, and more than half say their skills are not fully used. This points to over skilling, wasted potential, and a TVET system that is not yet translating training into jobs. Figures 4 to 7 illustrate unemployment among TVET-trained individuals, overall mismatch, mismatch by employment type, and mismatch by employment status.

The disconnect reflects several pressures at once: curricula and limited alignment with industry needs, as also noted by Ahmed et al. (2023); scarce suitable vacancies in a thin industrial base; weak post-training placement support; and poor labor-market information that steers trainees into oversubscribed or low-demand trades. Unless these systemic issues are addressed, sending more youth through vocational programs will not by itself raise

employment; the bridge from skills to jobs needs to be strengthened.

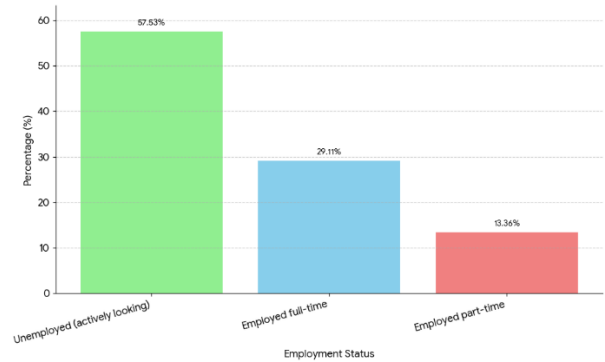


Figure 3: unemployment among TVET trained individuals

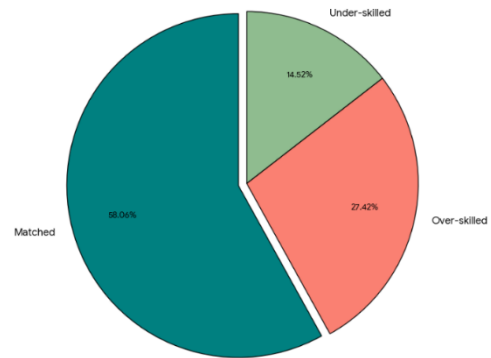


Figure 4: Vocational skill Mismatch in Balochistan

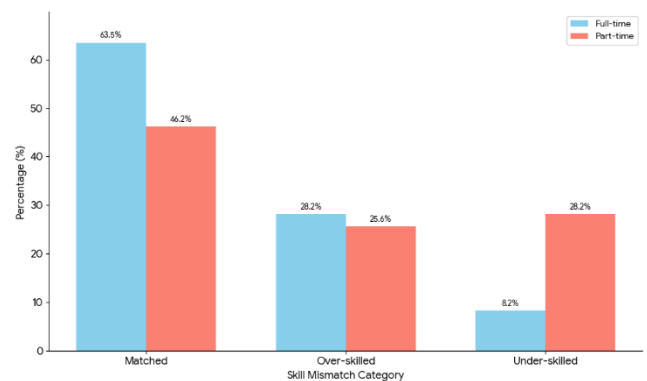


Figure 5: Vocational skill Mismatch by type of employment in Balochistan

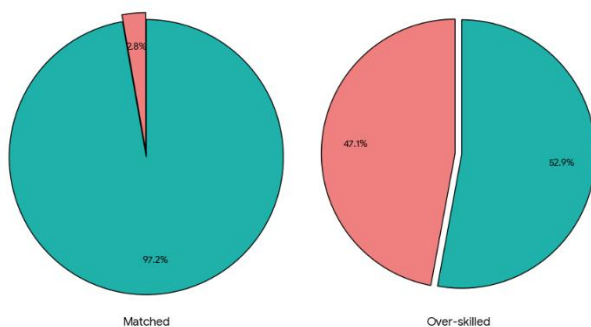


Figure 6: Vocational skill Mismatch and employment status in Balochistan

Who Bears Brunt? Gender and Regional Disparities

Women in Balochistan are disadvantaged. Only 3.7% of the TVET sample were women. Among those who work, about 56% are in jobs below or outside their qualifications versus about 20% of men, and female unemployment is around 17–18%, roughly three times the male rate (5–6%). Female over-education is roughly double that of men. Cultural norms, safety concerns, limited mobility, and narrow “acceptable” occupations restrict where and how women can work, pushing many qualified women into unemployment or roles beneath their skills.

Regional divides compound the problem. Jobs are concentrated in Quetta, while many secondary towns and rural districts offer few skilled vacancies. Youth trained locally often find no relevant jobs nearby and either migrate or take unskilled work; as one survey plea put it, the government should create jobs “in different cities so that local candidates can benefit.” In Quetta, an excess of graduates competes for too few posts, producing crowding and educated unemployment. Without spatially inclusive growth, more industry and targeted programs in secondary cities, plus better job matching in Quetta, skills development alone will not close the gap.

Why Mismatch Persists: Structural and Policy Factors

Several underlying factors contribute to the chronic mismatch between education, skills, and jobs in Balochistan. Balochistan’s education and employment mismatch is not simply a matter of individual choices or “too much education.” It is **symptomatic of deeper structural issues**: an economy that isn’t generating enough good jobs, an education/training system that isn’t producing the right skills for those jobs, and social structures that hinder many from utilizing their skills. The policy gap is evident – while strategies and policies exist on paper (e.g., national skill strategies), they have not been effectively implemented on the ground in Balochistan. Bridging this gap requires **concerted action on multiple fronts, both supply and demand**. The next section outlines actionable recommendations to move toward a more aligned, inclusive, and dynamic skills and job ecosystem in the province.

Existing Policy gaps

Balochistan’s TVET and education systems are not aligned with market needs: curricula need updated, industry linkages are weak, and employers have little role in shaping content. This sits atop a thin industrial base and poor labor-market coordination, even well-trained youth struggle to find relevant jobs. Students often choose fields without clear job information, and career guidance is minimal. Only 2.3% of youth receive vocational training, limiting access to practical, work-ready skills. The result is high unemployment and underemployment, felt most acutely by youth and women.

- Limited outreach of TEVT, missing industry linkages, and lack of market-relevant skills.
- A weak industrial base and poor labor-market coordination limit employer involvement in curricula.
- Students choose fields with little insight into job prospects; career guidance is minimal.
- Only 2.3% of youth receive vocational training, restricting access to practical, work-ready skills.

- Youth and women are disproportionately affected by unemployment and underemployment.

Key Messages:

- **Widespread education–job gap:** A significant share (over half) of Balochistan’s workforce is in jobs that don’t closely match their education, placing the province among those with higher mismatch. This contributes to sporadic unemployment and underemployment for educated youth, pointing to untapped human capital.
- **Vocational training not translating into jobs:** The province’s technical and vocational training (TVET) system is not yet translating consistently into employment. About 57% of vocational graduates are currently unemployed, and among those working, roughly half are outside their trained field. As a result, many skills are underused, limiting the full return on public and youth investments.
- **Women and remote regions most affected:** Gender and location shape outcomes. Among employed women, about 56% work in positions that do not align with their qualifications (versus roughly 20% of men), and female unemployment is approximately 18%, about three times higher than for men. Opportunities cluster in Quetta, leaving rural youth at a disadvantage. In some districts, youth NEET is above 60%, while others are under 12%, indicating marked disparities.
- **Underlying causes are systemic:** With a smaller industrial footprint, Balochistan generates fewer skilled job opportunities for graduates. Education and TVET programs often rely on old curricula and have limited employer engagement, leading to training in areas with lower demand. Gaps in career guidance and socio-cultural constraints,

particularly for women, add to the mismatch.

- **Opportunity through coordinated reform:** Tackling the mismatch now is critical to harness Balochistan’s youth bulge. Provincial authorities (Labor, Education, Planning) and B-TEVTA must act to partner with industry and expand job opportunities beyond Quetta. With the right policies updated courses, internships, local job creation, and inclusion of women. Balochistan can turn its educated youth from a “lost potential” into an engine of growth.

Priority Actions

Balochistan can close the Education and skill mismatch by tightening links between training and real demand, guiding students toward viable careers, expanding access to TVET, and ensuring women can participate fully.

- Strengthen industry linkages so programs teach market-relevant skills.
- Formalize employer engagement in curriculum design and labor-market coordination.
- Provide career guidance and labor-market information so students choose fields with clear job prospects.
- Increase vocational training opportunities (address the 2.3% training incidence).
- Expand women’s access and participation in training and employment (local cohorts, safe transport/hostels, hiring incentives).