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**History of Educational Policy Making
and Planning in Pakistan**

Kaiser Bengali

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Mailing Address: PO Box 2342, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Telephone ++ (92-51) 2278134, 2278136, 2277146, 2270674-76
Fax ++(92-51) 2278135, URL:www.sdpi.org

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
National Education Conference: 1947	1
National Plan of Educational Development: 1951-57	2
First Five Year Plan: 1955-60	3
Report of the Commission on National Education: 1959	4
Second Five Year Plan: 1960-65	5
Third Five Year Plan: 1965-70	5
The New Education Policy: 1970	6
The Education Policy: 1972-80	7
Fifth Five Year Plan: 1978-83	8
National Education Policy and Implementation Programme: 1979	8
Literacy and Mass Education Commission: 1981	10
The 10-pint Programme: 1983	11
Sixth Five Year Plan: 1983-88	12
National Literacy Plan: 1984-86	13
Evaluation of Iqra Pilot Project	15
Drop-in Schools: 1986-89	16
Nationwide Literacy Programme: 1986-90	17
Nai Roshni Schools: 1986-90	17
Seventh Five Year Plan: 1988-93	18
National Education Policy: 1992	20
Eight Five Year Plan: 1993-98	22
National Education Policy: 1998-2010	23
Conclusions	26

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History of Educational Policy Making and Planning in Pakistan¹

Kaiser Bengali

Introduction

Pakistan achieved independence from over a century of British colonial rule in August 1947. The colonial period did witness some progress in education. However, the progress was largely limited to what emerged as India. The regions comprising Pakistan were relatively backward in all respects, including in education. At independence, 85 percent of the population was illiterate and in the more backward regions of the country, e.g., Balochistan, the literacy rate was even lower, with the rate for rural women therein being virtually zero.

It was realized then that the task of nation building would not be achieved without an educated and skilled manpower. And in recognition thereof, a National Education Conference was convened the same year, which recommended that universalization of primary education should be achieved within a period of 20 years. Since then, universal primary education has remained an important objective of all governments. And to this end, considerable resources have been expended in creating new infrastructure and facilities and various projects and schemes have been launched. Yet, the desired progress has not been achieved, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Half a century down the road, Pakistan remains a largely illiterate country. Close to two-thirds of the population and over 80 percent of rural women are still illiterate. More than a quarter of children between the ages of five and nine do not attend school. And for those who do, the quality of education is seriously wanting. One 1994 study conducted arithmetic and urdu language tests to grade-3 school children in Lahore and found that only 33 percent of students in government schools passed both the tests. The same test conducted in 1996 to test grade-3 students in 5 districts in Punjab found that only 22 percent of the students in government schools passed both the tests. The same test administered to the teachers did not elicit an encouraging result either. This paper outlines this process from the education conference in 1947 to the education policy presented in 1998.

National Education Conference: 1947²

One of the first attempts in the field of education and literacy was the National Education Conference in 1947. The Quaid-e-Azam, in his message to the Conference said:

"... the importance of education and the type of education cannot be over-emphasized ... there is no doubt that the future of our State will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children, and the way in which we bring them up as future

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1. Research support of The Asia Foundation Basic Education Project, Pakistan, is gratefully acknowledged.
 2. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of the Interior (Education Division), *Proceedings of the Pakistan Educational Conference, 1947*.

citizens of Pakistan ... we should not forget that we have to compete with the world which is moving very fast in this direction."

The Conference formed a number of committees, including for primary and secondary education and for adult education. The Primary and Secondary Education Committee "considered it essential that a national system of education should be based on the strong foundations of free and compulsory primary education." It proposed separate pre-primary and primary education stages for children of ages 3 to 6 and 6 to 11, respectively. It also took account of and dwelt on the problems of medium of instruction, teacher training, physical education, etc.

The Committee on Adult Education pointed out that illiteracy was high at 85 percent and, at the then rate of increase of literacy, 140 years would be required to liquidate the problem. Highlighting the urgency of introducing literacy among the masses, including women, it identified the objective of literacy as a means to further education. "The primary aim of the campaign must be not merely to make adults literate but to keep them literate", it stated. It called for the provision of facilities for adult education on the widest scale and the introduction of a free and compulsory system of primary education to be treated as complementary to one another. It suggested the setting up of a permanent system of adult education, closely linked with compulsory primary education, to solve the problem in a period of 25 years.

The Committee's report was fairly pragmatic in its approach and the language used was matter of fact. It dwelt on the problems and constraints facing the task and identified issues of training adult school teachers, teaching materials and literature for adult schools, instruction methodologies, etc. It cautioned against attempting to draw up a code or prescribe uniform methods or approaches applicable to the country as a whole and, instead, called for a committee of experts report on questions of teaching technique and results of experimentation. It also advised against drawing any rigid distinction between adult education in the strict sense and technical, commercial or art instruction and suggested that adult students may be provided literacy through subjects of a vocational character.

The report recommended the following stages for the execution of a programme of adult education. The first 5 years were to be devoted to planning, recruitment of teachers and training. In the sixth year, about 500,000 persons were to be made literate with an annual increase of 300,000 thereafter. It acknowledged that illiteracy was not confined to the rural areas and a large proportion of the urban population was also illiterate. It, thus, called on all government departments and all employers and trade unions to ensure that their employees, workers, and members are literate. The question of levying a tax on those employers who do not make adequate provision for the education of their employees was also presented for consideration. Other specific proposals included (i) the possibility of making a period of social service obligatory on all university students and (ii) the use of mechanical aids to learning, such as radio, cinema, the gramophone, and magic lantern.

National Plan of Educational Development: 1951-57³

In 1951, an education conference was held to adopt a six-year National Plan of Educational Development for the period 1951-57. The Plan was presented as "the first deliberate effort to anticipate and provide for our requirements in the various fields of education for a period of six years." Pragmatically again, the Plan identified problems and constraints facing the task. The principal constraint identified was that of

3. Government of Pakistan, Education Division, *Proceedings of The Educational Conference*, 1951

lack of trained teachers, given the fact that almost half the teachers in primary schools were untrained and the expansion of primary schools would require over 86,000 additional teachers. "It is obvious that we have to revise the plan in order to provide for more training institutions, for otherwise our education will remain gravely deficient in quality", it was stated. It also identified needs for school buildings, teaching aids, scientific equipment, etc. It acknowledged that two thirds of children in the age group of 6 to 11 were out of school and proposed to establish over 24,000 new primary schools with a total capacity of 3.7 million pupils. It was claimed that at the end of the plan period in 1957, two thirds of the children in the relevant age group would be enrolled. The plan also proposed to make 2.8 million adults literate every year through the Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (V-AID) programme; whereby literacy centres were to be set up and teachers and teaching materials provided.

However, the efforts and expenditures of the decade 1947-57 failed to produce the desired results. A review of the decade long efforts⁴ showed that the literacy rate actually remained unchanged or declined, albeit marginally. "At the end of 1950's, the literacy ratio went down by .1% from 16.4 percent in 1951 to 16.3 percent after a decade". The failure was attributed to the fact that "the administrative and organizational arrangements were unstable."

First Five Year Plan: 1955-60⁵

The First Five Year Plan was launched two and a half years late in December 1957. It proclaimed that "a system of universal primary education is imperative. Primary education is essential to prep citizens for the discharge of their democratic and civic responsibilities and to provide them with equal opportunities for economic and cultural advancement. It is essential to the nation as a base for the entire structure of secondary and higher education from which will come leadership in all walks of life and support for technical development in agriculture and industry." While no precise targets were established, a universal system of free and compulsory primary education, including for girls, was expected to be in place in about twenty years, i.e., by about 1975 to 1980.

The Plan proposed to add 4000 new schools to the 15,602 already in existence in the country⁶. Additional schools were also proposed to be built under the Village-AID programme. The number of trained primary teachers were to be increased from about 75,000 to about 118,500 raising the percentage of trained teachers in primary schools from about 65 to 85 percent. These additions were estimated to increase school enrolment by about 600,000 to one million children, and raise the primary enrolment rate from 43 to 49 percent. The quality and content of primary school teaching was recognized as poor and provisions made for teacher training, curriculum development and provision of teaching aids. "The foundations laid for primary education during this plan period will permit a rapid advance on a sound and confident basis towards the goal of universal free compulsory primary education", it was claimed.

The Plan devoted considerable attention to the organization and management aspects of primary education. Among other things, it considered "the possibility of constituting local school management committees and district advisory boards ... elected by members of the community (and which) should be responsible for providing school buildings, for consulting with the area education officers on the

4. Khwaja, Sarfraz, *Eradication of Illiteracy in Pakistan: An Analysis 1947-87*, Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Government of Pakistan, 19??

5. Government of Pakistan, National Planning Board, *First Five Year Plan: 1955-60*, 1957

6. All figures and discussion for the pre-1972 period relate to the then western wing of the county.

selection of teachers and the school programme, and for supplementing the school supplies and learning materials provided by the directorate"

Report of the Commission on National Education: 1959⁷

The 1959 Education Policy commenced with a harangue on the undesirable attitudes of the people towards public duty, government, nation-building, manual work and education. It called upon the people to revise their "concept of government and their relationship to it", for "a corresponding transformation ... within government and among its officials", for "a revision of attitudes on the part of the professional educator", for "the traditional views toward education ... held by people ... to be altered", and so on. It lamented that less than 50 percent of the children of primary school age were enrolled in schools and recommended eight years compulsory education to make the "child functionally literate". Regarding adult education, the Report admitted that "during the last 30 years a number of campaigns have been launched to eradicate illiteracy, but only very limited results were achieved"

Defining the objectives of the educational system, it stated that "the reorientation and reorganization of education in Pakistan which we have suggested will ... provide us with the trained manpower, educated citizenry, and competent leadership we require". Stating the objectives of adult education, it said:

"the aim of adult education cannot be anything other than the general aim of all education, i.e., the development of the individual to his full capacity in his personal and social life so that he may be a happy, healthy and useful citizen and able to make his optimum contribution to the community in which he lives ... Starting with the pressing needs and problems of the community concerned, it may, in the long run, include skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and calculation; vocational skills; domestic skills; skills of self-expression in arts and crafts; personal and community hygiene; simple and practical science; civics; economics; spiritual and moral development; and training in reasoning and scientific thinking."

The lofty aims were, however, qualified thus: "Before these broader aims can be achieved, the population must be made literate, and therefore the development of a literate population must be the immediate primary objective of adult education in Pakistan." It further stated that: "We are well aware that ours is not the first set of proposals for reform of our educational system. Our hope is that it may be the first to be translated into both prompt and long-term action."

A target of achieving compulsory universal enrolment in 15 years, i.e., by 1975, was also specified. It called for curriculum reform to "develop the basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, a liking for working with one's own hands, and a high sense of patriotism", for religious education to be made compulsory, and for teaching in national languages. It also called for improved facilities in school buildings and furniture and for involving "the local community in the opening, upkeep, and operation of primary schools." To achieve mass literacy, it recommended somewhat unique, if not fanciful, strategies for eradication of illiteracy. It proposed: (i) use of school children as teachers to make their parents literate, (ii) use of undergraduate college students as adult literacy teachers, and (iii) use of one literate adult to teach another under the "each one teach one" approach. No target for the literacy rate was specified.

7. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, *Report of the Commission on National Education*, 1959.

Second Five Year Plan: 1960-65⁸

The Second Five Year Plan, which incorporated the recommendations of the 1959 Policy, proclaimed thus:

"Upon education falls the supreme task of preserving the national ideals and building up the national character on strong foundations of faith, unity and discipline, without which no nation can aspire to greatness. The essential goals must be to provide an informed leadership, a responsible citizenry, and trained manpower. It is through the advancement of education alone that these goals can be achieved. No uneducated community has progressed far in the modern world, and no educated community with initiative and leadership has remained backward. An illiterate society clings to customs, traditions, and outmoded practices; it resists the forces of change which stimulate the acquisition of new knowledge and new skills. Training of human beings in all fields of endeavour is essential if a breakthrough is to be effected from a state of chronic backwardness, and the country is to move rapidly forward towards the attainment of the desired social and economic goals."

Evaluating the First Plan performance, it stated that: "Accomplishments during the First Plan period, though by no means negligible, were in several respects disappointing. No significant improvements in the quality of school education were made. Primary school enrolment did not increase to the extent expected. With respect to the training of teachers, it said that "no increase was registered at the primary level." It further stated that: "The First Plan contemplated 4,000 new primary schools in West Pakistan to be added ... during the Plan period (only) 2,400 primary schools were opened ... It was anticipated that during the Plan period enrolment in primary schools would increase by about one million. The actual increase was only 440,000."

The Second Plan allocated Rs 990 million or 66 percent of the total 5-year social sector outlay to primary education. It proposed to raise the proportion of children in the 6-11 age group attending school from 42.3 to 50 per cent by 1965. It provided for the opening of 15,200 new primary schools, in addition to the 18,000 existing ones. These efforts were expected to increase primary school enrolment in west Pakistan by 1.2 million, raising the primary enrolment rate from 36 to 56 per cent. Improving the curriculum content, provision of teaching aids, and teacher training also received considerable attention.

The education of girls received special attention. It was stated that "of the 4.7 million children presently attending primary schools, only 1.1 million are girls. Clearly, girls must be provided with much greater opportunities for primary education. This will be done both by admitting girls to more of the existing primary schools, and by ensuring that where separate facilities are required a much larger proportion is assigned to schools for girls.

Third Five Year Plan: 1965-70⁹

The Third Five Year Plan allocated Rs 2652 million or 5.1 percent of the total 5-year outlay to primary education. It recognized "the concept of education as a vital national investment and a major

8. Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, *Second Five Year Plan: 1960-65*, 1960

9. Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, *Third Five Year Plan: 1965-70*, 1965

determination of the nation's economic growth." It set the following objectives of educational planning in the country:

1. to provide an educational system which would facilitate transition into an era of science and technology, promote political, social and economic development and bring the country's spiritual and cultural heritage into harmony with the contemporary world;
2. to provide the youth of the country with conditions conducive to the full-fledged development of their individual capacities and character;
3. to raise the quality of education at all levels so that it may properly fulfil its nation building tasks.

Evaluating the Second Plan, it stated that: "Conscious realization of the high positive correlation between educational effort and the growth of the nation was suitably reflected in the rationale of the Second Plan which, in financial terms represents a five-fold increase over the First." It commended the fact that two million additional children were brought under primary instruction during this period, as against a target of 1.2 million.

The Third Plan aimed at widening the base of primary education and proposed to increase the primary enrolment rate from 45 to 70 per cent in 1970. This implied additional enrolment of 2.8 million children in primary schools by 1970. To this end, 42,500 new schools were proposed to be set up in West Pakistan. Attention was also focussed on improving retention rates, teacher training, teacher salaries, teaching aids, and physical condition of schools.

The New Education Policy: 1970¹⁰

The 1970 Education Policy reaffirmed the government's commitment "to the objective of universal elementary education" accepting it as a "basic principle of State Policy in the Constitutions of 1956 and 1962", and of "the Karachi Plan of 1960 (which) proposed ... compulsory, universal and free primary education as a target for 1980." However, it also lamented that "the attainment of the goal ... seems to have receded further and further with the lapse of time and Pakistan today has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the world."

Outlining its basic principles and concepts, it stated that:

"education and training are critical inputs in the economic effort of the nation. Without harnessing the vast human resources available to Pakistan, the task of sustaining and accelerating economic development would remain unfulfilled. In this regard, the basic objectives are, on the one hand, to broaden rapidly the base of education with a view to attaining the ideal of a universally literate and productive society and, on the other, ensure a continuous supply of highly trained persons capable of providing imaginative and creative leadership in different spheres of national activity."

The Policy aimed at free and universal enrolment up to Class V by 1980, with particular stress on girls education. It also identified that there were about 100 million illiterates in Pakistan of whom 90 percent are concentrated in the rural areas. It innovated further to aim at covering 5 million adults and school leavers by 1975 through (i) requiring all employers, including government, to provide work-oriented basic education to all of their employees, and (ii) establishment of a National Education Corps. The policy

10. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, *The New Education Policy*, 1970.

was never implemented on account of the war with India, secession of East Pakistan, and the collapse of the military government.

At the time of the emergence of the "new" Pakistan in 1972, the country's literacy status was as follows: overall literacy rate was 21.7 percent, urban literacy was 41.5 percent, rural literacy was 14.3 percent, male literacy was 30.2 percent, and female literacy was 11.6 percent. Rural female literacy was 4.7 percent.

The 1972 Population Census revealed literacy rates as follows:

	total	urban	rural
total	21.7	41.5	14.3
male	30.2	49.9	22.6
female	11.6	30.9	4.7

The Education Policy: 1972-80¹¹

The 1972-1980 Education Policy was drafted in a somewhat matter of fact tone and refrained from philosophical pronouncements. It aimed at “eradicating illiteracy within the shortest possible time through universalization of elementary education and a massive adult education programme” and at “equalizing access to education through provision of special facilities for women, under-privileged groups and mentally-retarded and physically-handicapped children and adults in all areas in general and the backward areas in particular.”

It declared that “education will be made free and universal up to Class X for all children throughout the country ... in both Government and privately-managed schools. Private schools will be suitably supported for the loss of fees incurred by them.” It was anticipated that “primary education up to Class V will become universal for boys by 1979 and for girls by 1984” and further that “elementary education will become universal up to Class VIII ... for boys by 1982 and for girls by 1987.” The earlier objective of compulsory education was discarded. The Policy proposed to construct 61,000 additional class-rooms for primary classes, train 150,000 teachers, and recruit an additional 75,000 teachers through the National Literacy Corps.

The 1972 Policy identified 40 million adult illiterates in the country and declared that a "massive literacy programme will be undertaken in every town, and village (and) literacy centres will be established all over the country in schools, factories, farms, union council halls and other community places." A target of establishing 276,000 literacy centres to educate 11 million persons was fixed for the period 1972-80.

The 1972 Policy was overtaken somewhat mid-stream by the military coup d'etat in 1977, leading to significant shift in priorities. The egalitarian principles enunciated by the ousted government had yet to see the light of the day in practice. However, they were literally "expunged" under the new dispensation. The Fifth Five Year Plan was prepared and launched a year later. However, the new education policy was not announced until two years later in 1979.

11. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, *The Education Policy*, 1972.

Fifth Five Year Plan: 1978-83¹²

The Fifth Five Year Plan also lamented the past neglect of primary education thus: "As a consequence of neglect of primary education, Pakistan has a high illiteracy rate (78 per cent of population above 5 years was illiterate in 1971). Illiteracy has been a major factor contributing to economic and social backwardness." It, therefore, claimed to mark "a fundamental reordering of national priorities in favour of primary education" and aimed at "a comprehensive approach towards primary education, which would include not only the augmentation of physical facilities but also measures to reduce the drop-out rate, improvement in the quality of teaching and better supervision."

The Plan proposed to earmark 33 per cent of the development expenditure for primary education. It also proposed to raise per capita expenditure on education from Rs. 43 in 1977-78 to Rs. 88 in 1982-83 and, thereby, increase the outlay on education from under 2 per cent to 3.1 per cent of GNP by 1982-83. It aimed at "increasing enrolment at primary stage so that all boys of Class I age, are enrolled by 1982-83 and universal enrolment for the entire age group (5-9) is attained by 1986-87. An essential feature of the plan is reduction in the drop out rate from 50 per cent to 40 per cent."

High priority was also given to rapid expansion in girls education. It stated that "enrolment of girls is expected to increase at the rate of 9.6 per cent per annum as against 7 per cent for boys. Girls' schools will receive priority in the programme for construction and improvement of schools. All schools will be open for admission of girls and separate girls' schools shall be opened where essential". As a result, "enrolment of girls will be increased by 9.95 lac or from 33 per cent to 45 per cent", it said.

To accommodate the proposed additional enrolment, the Plan provided for:

"renovation and expansion of 17,166 existing schools. In addition, 12,641 new primary schools would be opened ... In about 10 per cent of the new schools, furniture will be provided as an experiment to determine whether seating helps to improve school performance ... The selection of new schools would be based on detailed survey and mapping to ensure optimum locations. To ensure that schools are within the easy walking distance of small children, village and mohallah mosques will be utilized to teach primary classes both in areas where existing schools are not suitably located, and in areas which are without schools. Buildings in urban areas will be more intensively utilized by increasing double shift working which is particularly important if targets for increased enrolment of girls is to be realized. It was also estimated that about 75,748 teachers -- 45,054 male and 30,694 female -- will be required to cater for the additional enrolment. To resolve the problem of non-availability of teachers for schools in the rural area, it stated that "a beginning shall be made towards construction of residences and 5,800 units will be constructed during the Plan period."

National Education Policy and Implementation Programme: 1979¹³

The 1979 Education Policy was presented one year after the launching of the Fifth Five Year Plan, with a change of target dates. While the Fifth Plan proposed to enrol all boys of Class I age by 1982-83 and

12. Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, *Fifth Five Year Plan: 1978-83*, 1978

13. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy and Implementation Programme*, 1979

achieve universal enrolment for the entire age group (5-9) by 1986-87, the 1979 Policy proposed to achieve the same by 1987 and 1992, respectively. In other words, within one year the government had shifted forward the two targets by 4 and 5 years, respectively.

The Policy was presented as “the first in recognizing the great potentials of our indigenous institutions and patronizing them for bringing about greater educational development”. It claimed that “deviation from alien models and building up on what we already have, will make a great impact”. The Policy aimed at providing “a minimum acceptable level of functional literacy and fundamental education to all citizens of the country particularly the young, irrespective of their faith, caste, and creed in order to enable them to participate productively in the total national effort”.

It repeated the lament that "nearly half of nation's children and two thirds of girls do not go to primary schools". Inter-provincially, the enrolment ratio was stated to be 32 percent in Balochistan, 52 percent in NWFP, 59 percent in Sindh, and 56 percent in Punjab. In rural areas, the enrolment ratio was stated to be 30 percent in Balochistan, 50 percent in NWFP, 42 percent in Sindh, and 48 percent in Punjab. Among rural girls, the enrolment ratio was stated to be 10 percent in Balochistan, 14 percent in NWFP, 16 percent in Sindh, and 29 percent in Punjab. Low enrolment was said to be further aggravated by high drop-out, estimated at 50 percent overall and higher for girls on account of in-school and out of school factors.

The Policy presented a 9-point statement of "National Aims of Education" and a 12-point implementation strategy. The Implementation Programme was ambitious and proposed to:

1. achieve universal Class I enrolment of boys by 1987 and of girls by 1992.
2. eliminate wastage to achieve 60 percent retention rate by 1983 and 100 percent thereafter
3. reconstruct/improve 17,000 existing primary schools
4. open 13,000 new primary schools, mainly in rural areas
5. establish 5000 mosque schools for boys
6. provide equipment to 12,000 existing schools
7. supply text-books to all students at the primary level
8. supply at least one teaching kit to all existing and new schools
9. experiment with different mixes of inputs to determine direction for large scale investment in primary education
10. carry out a nation-wide school mapping exercise to evolve a process of school location planning
11. undertake a nation-wide survey to determine repair needs of existing primary schools and launch a programme of repairs

In addition to the 5000 Mosque schools for boys, the Programme also envisaged opening 5000 Mohalla schools for girls, and 1000 Village Workshop schools to impart training in “mother trades like carpentry, masonry and agriculture” and focus on “appropriate skill development linked with community needs”. The anticipated problems and difficulties and resource allocation needs were also detailed in the Programme.

The importance of institutional, organizational and administrative arrangements was again recognized with the acknowledgement that “even with the fullest government commitment and allocation of required financial resources, the objective of universal primary education cannot be achieved in the stipulated time without effective mobilization of community resources and participation ... (which would) necessitate the creation of strong management capability at the local levels.”

The Policy also provided for an elaborate adult education programme. It again lamented that “since the establishment of Pakistan, no serious attempt seems to have been made to launch a viable programme of adult education in the country, although almost all previous policies and plans have claimed to attach importance to this issue”. The programme proposed to set up 10,000 adult literacy centres to be sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Pakistan Television Centres, IRDP markazes, Allama Iqbal Open University study centres, and social welfare centres. The possibility of a student volunteer corps, comprising bachelors and masters level students was also envisaged. It was claimed that the programme will raise literacy levels from 24 percent to 35 percent by 1983 and attain 100 percent literacy by 2010.”

The 1981 population census results regarding the literacy status of the country constituted an evaluation, without comment, of the educational policies and plans over the three decades since independence in 1947. The literacy status revealed that overall literacy had increased about half a percentage a year since 1972 from 21.7 to 26.2 percent. Over the same period, urban literacy had increased from 41.5 to 47.1 percent, and rural literacy from 14.3 to 17.3 percent. In gender terms, male literacy had increased from 30.2 to 35.1 percent and female literacy from 11.6 to 16.0 percent. Rural female literacy increased from 4.7 to 7.3 percent.

1981 Census literacy rates:

	total	urban	rural
total	26.17	47.12	17.33
male	35.05	55.32	26.24
female	15.99	37.27	7.33

The 1980s was a decade of a series of initiatives in the field of education and literacy. The Literacy and Mass Education Commission (LAMEC) was established in 1981, the 10-point education programme was announced in 1983, the Sixth Five Year Plan with an ambitious educational component was launched the same year, and the two year National Literacy Plan was launched in 1984. In 1985, the Literacy Ordinance was promulgated, the Iqra Tax was levied, and the Drop-in Schools Programme was launched. The following year in 1986, the Nation-wide Literacy Programme was launched and, in 1988, the Seventh Five Year Plan with an equally ambitious educational component was unveiled.

Literacy and Mass Education Commission: 1981

The Literacy and Mass Education Commission (LAMEC) was established in 1981 under the federal government through a notification¹⁴ to pursue its policy goals of achieving mass literacy. The notification stated:

Whereas Islam assigns great importance to the acquisition of knowledge and makes its pursuit incumbent upon every Muslim;

And whereas the literacy ratio in Pakistan is so low as to preclude the possibility of benefits from learning accruing to the people of Pakistan;

And whereas in the programme designed to commemorate the advent of the fifteenth Hijra Century the launching of a literacy drive is listed as an item of high priority on the agenda of national endeavour;

14. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, The Gazette of Pakistan, Part III, February 17: 1981

And whereas the establishment of a Literacy and Mass Education Commission with sufficient powers is expedient for the purpose of promoting literacy in Pakistan;

The functions specified included among others:

1. to evolve strategies of formal and non-formal mass approaches for the purposes of eradication of illiteracy and promotion of functional literacy;
2. to develop plans on literacy and non-formal mass education commensurate with the needs of the target population and make recommendations to the Federal Government;
3. to organize and launch regular campaigns for the purposes of eradication of illiteracy and promotion of mass education;

In 1989, LAMEC was reconstituted as National Education and Training Commission and in 1995 it was renamed as the Prime Minister's Literacy Commission. LAMEC commenced with a budget of Rs 1.03 million. It reached its peak in 19?? with a staff of 17,000 and a budget of Rs ???. Its current staff strength stands at about 7,400 persons with a budget of Rs 160.94 million.

The 10-point Programme: 1983¹⁵

In 1983, the Chief Martial Law Administrator addressed a National Workshop on Female Literacy and announced a 10-point education programme, as follows.

1. An annual drive every summer for literacy and mass education be institutionalized as part of the national movement for literacy and mass education. All the various educational institutions in the country and all agencies dealing with education, as well as other agencies such as the Armed Forces, non-Government organizations such as Guides and Scouts welfare agencies etc. should participate in this drive.
2. University degrees at the Graduate and the Postgraduate level should not be awarded to the candidates who have completed the requirements for these degrees and passed requisite examinations, until they have imparted for this purpose may be the basic Quranic Qaida such as the "Yassarnal Quran".
3. All Government organizations must arrange to impart literacy to their illiterate employees.
4. Illiterate prisoners who learn to read and write or those of the educated ones who appear and qualify in the public examination next higher to the one which they had already qualified, should be granted remission in their sentences.
5. Arms Licenses, Driving Licenses and similar other licenses and permits should be granted only to literate persons.
6. incentives and rewards be given to the communities i.e. villages, wards or mohallas which achieve hundred percent literacy, e.g. preference in the allocation of roads, dispensaries/health centres or provision of electricity.
7. Rewards and incentives such as trophies and shields be given to the persons with outstanding achievement in the field of literacy and mass education. Outstanding work at the national level be recognized through Civil Awards or Pride of Performance medals.
8. Governments grants to all social welfare institutions be made conditional upon their undertaking literacy/adult education programmes.
9. All deeni madaris should be requested to provide education at least in the understanding of the Quran in addition to reading the Quran nazra.

15. Khwaja, Sarfraz, *Eradication of Illiteracy in Pakistan: An Analysis 1947-87*, Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Government of Pakistan, 19??

10. The media, that is the radio and the T.V., be used more often and more effectively in the service of education in general, and of adult education in particular.

Sixth Five Year Plan: 1983-88¹⁶

The same year, the Sixth Five Year Plan was launched which proclaimed: "Education is the most vital investment for any programme of socio-economic development. Its neglect can cost generations. No uneducated society has ever achieved the heights of economic and political power. No educated society has ever been left behind in the relentless march of history." Incidentally, almost the same statement had also been made in the Second Plan.

Reviewing past performance, including that of the predecessor Fifth Plan, it again repeated the lament that:

"thirty-five years after independence, Pakistan has a literacy rate below 25 per cent and less than half the primary schools going age children are in schools. These indices place Pakistan amongst the least developed nations ... At the scale at which it persists, illiteracy is a blot on our social image and the chief impediment to our long-term economic and technological advance."

Continuing the lament, it said that: "Except for the Second Plan, the performance of education sector in the planned and non-plan period ending 1977-78 remained utterly deficient." In the Fifth Plan period, "despite higher investment ... enrolment increased only marginally. Worse, the participation rate actually declined from 54 per cent in 1977-78 to 48 per cent in 1982-83 and the female participation rate remained far less than the coverage. The share of government expenditure on education as a proportion of the GNP also declined from 1.8 per cent in 1977-78 to 1.5 per cent in 1982-83."

The Sixth Plan claimed to approach primary education:

"with the earnestness and urgency that it has always deserved but never received. Serious efforts will be made to institute universal education by ensuring that all boys and girls of the relevant age group get enrolled in class-I latest by the terminal year of the Plan. The timing for the attainment of this goal in various parts of the country will however, depend on the present level of enrolment in the respective areas and their state of preparedness towards the attainment of this goal. A minimum of five years of schools will be made obligatory to begin with and the tenure will gradually be raised to 10 years."

The Plan targeted to raise the participation rate of children in primary schools from 48 per cent in 1982-83 to 75 per cent in 1987-88. This implied that over 5 million additional children were to be provided with primary schooling, an increase of over 80 per cent over the base year enrolment of 6.8 million children. Larger increases were planned for the more neglected sections for rural areas and for the girls.

Mass literacy received special attention as in the earlier policies, but for the first time in a five year plan. "A marked, short-term improvement in literacy would necessarily require programmes covering the mass

16. Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, *Sixth Five Year Plan: 1983-88*, 1983

of the illiterate population which has already gone past the primary school age”, it stated. It announced the launching of a mass literacy programme, aimed at “a coverage of 15 million persons, the greatest concentration of which would be on women in rural areas.”

A sum of Rs 7.8 billion was provided for primary education and mass literacy programmes, compared with an outlay of Rs 1.4 billion during the Fifth Plan period; an increase of five and half times. Fifty per cent of this amount was to be provided under the programmes of the Provinces and other executing agencies, while the remaining fifty per cent was earmarked for Special Development Programme of Primary Education. It was expected that “through the proposed Federal grants for Special Primary Education Programme the momentum for the expansion of primary education will gain the desired impetus.”

The major components of the programme were:

1. utilization of mosques to accommodate Classes I to III of new schools and over-crowded existing schools;
2. provision of school buildings both for existing and shelterless schools and for classes IV and V after completing class III from mosque schools;
3. construction of sheds/buildings in urban areas to supplement the space available in the mosques for opening new schools;
4. introduction of the system of mixed enrolment in all new and existing schools in classes I to III;
5. provision of separate girls schools wherever mixed enrolment is not possible;
6. provision of two teachers in each mosque school including the Imam, and one teacher each for class IV and V in all schools against the present system of one
7. or two teachers for all five classes;
8. creation of a separate implementation agency for primary education at Federal, Provincial and subsequent levels.

National Literacy Plan: 1984-86¹⁷

One year after the launching of the Sixth Plan, an ambitious 2-year National Literacy Plan: 1984-86 was launched at a cost of Rs 317 million to make 2.2 million persons literate and raise the literacy rate from 26.2 to 33 percent. The plan envisaged opening over 25,000 literacy centres, which were to be implemented federally by LAMEC with assistance from the Provincial Literacy Council concerned, and non-government voluntary organizations. Projects launched included:

1. Afternoon School projects.
2. Iqra projects
3. Razakar Muallim projects.
4. Mosque projects.
5. NGOs Volunteer Literacy Corps projects
6. Sipah-e-Idrees projects.
7. Social Welfare Agencies Literacy projects
8. Literacy Village projects.
9. Azafi Literacy Centres projects

17. Government of Pakistan, Literacy and Mass Education Commission, *PC-1, National Literacy Programme 1984-86*, 1985

1. Afternoon Literacy Centres were afternoon classes in existing schools. One thousand such centres to cater to 120,000 participants were opened in selected districts at a total cost of Rs.9.25 million.
2. Iqra Centres were opened in selected katchi abadis, in all the jails in the country, and in nationalized and private industrial units. The administrative responsibility of the centres rested with the Provincial Literacy Council in each province, while the coordination of the programme lay with LAMEC and its field staff. LAMEC was also responsible for the payment of salary at Rs 250 to the teacher at each of the centres. In all, about 170 centres were to be opened to benefit 12,800 persons at a total cost of Rs. 3.08 million. About 50 centres were to be opened in katchi abadis, 70 in jails, and 100 in nationalized industries. In all, about 4000 persons in katchi abadis, 4800 persons in jails, and 4000 persons in nationalized industries were expected to be made literate. In the first year, 1984-85, 99 centres were opened where 6122 persons were made literate. These comprised 22 centres in katchi abadis, 39 in industrial units, and 38 in jails. The number of participants were 463, 1932, and 3727, respectively.
3. Razakar Muallim Centres were to be set up by in-service and retired teachers and other educated persons in their respective villages. Minimum qualifications for registering as Razakar Muallim was matriculation, they were paid Rs. 250 per month, and they were required to teach a least 20 persons. A total of 4000 such centres were to be opened with a target of rendering 240,000 persons literate at a total cost of Rs. 26.0 million. In the first year, 1984-85, 1150 centres are claimed to have been opened; of which 1000 were in Punjab and 150 in the other three provinces.
4. Mosque Literacy Centres were to be set up to run integrated Urdu-Arabic literacy courses by the mosque imam, who was to be paid a monthly honorarium of Rs. 250. A total of 4000 such centres were to be opened to cover 240,000 persons at a total cost of Rs. 26.0 million. The programme was to be managed by the Auqaf Department under the coordination of LAMEC. In the first year, 1984-85, 850 centres are claimed to have been opened.
5. NGO's Volunteer Literacy Corps covered youth and women's organizations, such as, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Farm Guides, Janbaz Forces, National Cadet Corps, Women Guards, All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), and Pakistan Air Force Women's Association (PAFWA), which were to organize regular literacy campaigns through their respective organizations. A total of 5050 such centres were to be set up to benefit 159,000 persons at a total cost of Rs. 7.30 million in the first year, 1984-85, 356 centres are claimed to have been opened with a coverage of 9350 participants.
6. Sipah-e-Idrees was to comprise ex-soldiers and members of Janbaz Force to promote literacy through 16000 centres to be controlled by General Head Quarters and district Soldier Boards. A total of 640,000 persons were to be made literate at a cost of Rs 67.6 million to be borne by LAMEC.
7. Social welfare agencies registered with the provincial Social Welfare departments were to set up 2000 literacy centres to cover 175,000 persons at a total cost of Rs. 5.65 million. in the
8. first year, 1984-85, 139 social welfare agencies are claimed to have joined the programme, benefitting 3811 participants.
9. Literacy Villages were to be set up in selected areas to impart literacy to all inhabitants so as to achieve 100 percent literacy therein. These villages were to serve as model Literacy Villages. A total of 240 such Literacy Villages were planned to cover 28,800 persons at a cost of Rs. 2.22 million.
10. Azafi Literacy Centres were to be set up by public and private agencies with financial assistance from LAMEC. A total of 1000 such centres were to be opened to cover 120,000 participants at a cost of Rs. 9.25 million

A number of other heroic schemes were also included and financial allocations made for them. These were Literacy Trade Centres, on all the roads of the country; Open Air Schools under "the shade of a tree"; and Students Literacy Drive, which lasted from June to August 1984 and is claimed to have been participated in by 116,000 students. The Plan was a failure and even LAMEC's Chairman admitted that "it

had to abandon the first ever attempt to implement National Literacy Programme prematurely because of its conceptual inadequacies and improper supervision system."¹⁸

In 1985, the Literacy Ordinance¹⁹ was promulgated prohibiting an illiterate person from obtaining a passport or a driving license. The Ordinance was never enacted and lapsed after 120 days. The same year, the federal Budget for the year 1985-86 introduced a new tax, called the Iqra Tax, as a 5 percent charge on all imports to finance education and literacy projects. More often than not, the funds generated through the new tax were diverted to other (usually non-productive) expenditures.

Evaluation of Iqra Pilot Project²⁰

An official evaluation of one of the schemes, the Iqra Project, provided a damning account of its results. It stated:

“The major aim of the project was to literate people through direct relationship between the teacher and the taught at any suitable place and time of their own choice. The teachers were given the incentive of Rs 1000/= as honorarium provided the neo-literate could qualify a literacy test conducted by the LAMEC ... The project was introduced between 1986-87 and the LAMEC claimed that approximately 18882 illiterates became literate through the project.”

The analysis of data obtained through a survey of 10 percent of neo-literates showed that:

“65% of the people could not provide any evidence prescribed by the evaluation team of their illiteracy status prior to joining the project ... 1503 registration forms out of a total sample of 1635 were checked ... 356 cards had either incorrect names or numbers. The Form-B of the registration form which indicates the literacy status of the wards of the parents could not be traced out for 306 cases. 429 identity cards of the learners had signatures. National identity cards of 122 persons could not be traced out ... This leads to the assumption that only 27.48% were found to be really illiterate before joining the IPP and the remaining 72.52% were probably already literate because they had signed their names on registration forms ... 82% neo-literates could read and write the minimum level prescribed by the evaluation team but as 65% enrolled in the programme (were) assumed to be (already) literate, hence the literacy ratio of neo-literates is not more than 17%. Through another source 72.52% were assumed to be already literate according to the information provided by District Registration Office, which means that only 9.48% ... were made literate under the project.”

Commenting on the validity and reliability of the data, “majority of the researchers reported that:

1. Most of the neo-literates could not prove their identity.
2. As the literacy tests were conducted through written material, the tests were leaked before time.
3. Interview could not take place in privacy because of interference of the LAMEC staff.

18. Government of Pakistan, Literacy and Mass Education Commission, *Progress Report*, 1988

19. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, *Gazette of Pakistan*, March 1985

20. Government of Pakistan, Academy of Educational Planning and Management, *Evaluation of Iqra Pilot Project*, 1989

The findings of this study provide all the necessary evidence that:

1. The project was not properly implemented and serious deficiencies were found in its monitoring. As a result, the achievements claimed by LAMEC are far below the proclaimed figures. The LAMEC claimed that 18882 adults were made literate under the project whereas the number of literates before launching the Evaluation of Iqra Project and through the checking of record found out to be 16350. The actual number made literates through the project at best was 17% of 16350 i.e. 2780. It can be stated that with a total investment of Rs. 1635000 (Rupees 1.635 million) only 2780 persons could be made literate. This mean that one illiterate acquired literacy skill on average cost of Rs. 5881/-.
2. Under the National literacy plan (1984-86) a three year model project continued the work till 1986 and was implemented in nine districts all over the country. The first year target was to make half a million people literate. When the project was evaluated it was found out that only 18,000 were made literate during the first year. As a result that achievement level was only 3.6% and project fell 96.4% short of target. The actual expenditure to make one person literate under the National literary plan came to over Rs. 3000/- instead of Rs. 147/- as reflected in budget estimates.”

Drop-in schools: 1986-89²¹

In 1985 again, a new three year programme called "Drop-in Schools" was approved for the period 1986-89 as a follow-up to the failed two year 1984-86 National Literacy Plan. The new scheme was also to be executed in nine selected districts by LAMEC at a cost of Rs 208 million. The scheme was justified in the following words:

"In the past, no less than three educational policies had been formulated to universalize primary education but none of those could materialize in the given time frame work. In the absence of such a viable policy, the rate of Drop-out and those staying out of schools, rapidly attained an alarming proportion. Presently 0.8 million children drop-out while 1.1 millions stay out of the schools."

It also claimed that:

"If the Drop-In-School system succeeds, nearly 100% UPE may be achieved in a short time without incurring any capital expenditure on infrastructure and equipment. The Drop-In-Schools may be an innovation which may provide Pakistan a break-through out of the stalemate created by limited participation and high drop-outs in the formal system of education."

The objectives of the scheme were specified as follows:

1. To provide an opportunity to school leavers and out of school children specially children of low income strata to complete primary education.
2. To impart lower secondary education through non-formal methods to 2,25,000 children and enable them to join formal upper secondary classes by 1989.
3. To improve overall literacy rate in the nine selected districts from 30.0 percent to 32.56 percent by 1989.
4. To increase overall participation rate in the nine selected districts from 54.37 percent to 67.73 percent by 1989.
5. To evaluate the socio-economic benefits of the project for its replication.

21. Government of Pakistan, Literacy and Mass Education Commission, PC-1, *Drop-in Schools*, 1986

Nationwide Literacy Programme: 1986-90²²

Within a few months of its launching, the Drop-in schools scheme was overtaken by the Nationwide Literacy Programme launched by the newly inducted Junejo government in December 1985. The following justification was provided for the new scheme.

"The achievement in increasing the literacy rate is ... far less than the stipulated rate of 48 percent proposed in the Sixth Five-Year-Plan. (Thus) a Nation Wide Literacy Programme 1986-90 is presented, (which) will supplement present endeavours in spreading literacy and mass education. It will not only reduce the extent of illiteracy, but also provide about 2,000 jobs on full time basis and 115,000 - 150,000 jobs on part-time basis to the educated people. Thus a National Literacy Corps of educated people will be formed to increase the literacy rate up to 53.53% in the period of four years and six months up to June, 1990"

The new programme was to run from 1986 to 1990, with the objective of making 14 million persons literate and raising the literacy rate to 53 percent by 1990 at a total cost of Rs. 2657 million. The scheme was to be implemented by LAMEC through the Provincial Literacy Councils and Union Council Literacy Sub-Committees. Literacy Centres were to be opened in villages and towns with concentration of illiterate population and were to cover 89 districts in the provinces, 7 agencies in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), 3 districts in Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA), and 4 districts in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Nai Roshni Schools: 1986-90²³

The Nationwide Literacy Programme was also overtaken by another scheme called Nai Roshni Schools to be implemented over the period 1986-90. It was justified as follows:

"At present the Literacy activity is being staged under an approved National Literacy Programme costing Rs 317.016 millions for 1985 to 1988. This programme at its preliminary evaluation has not shown any worthwhile results. There are very little prospects of improvement because the very concept/approach lacks rational. Since National Literacy Programme failed to make any head way, the very reason for Nation Wide Literacy no longer exists. The prime minister of Pakistan in his Five Points Manifesto has committed to the nation to raise the literacy percentage to 50%. This calls for planning on a larger scale to cover the segment of society whose responses to education are likely to be positive and whose coverage will yield rewarding results."

As usual, hopes for success were expressed in laudatory terms. LAMEC's Chairman claimed that "it would not be a wild guess to make that country is, God willing, on the threshold of a break-through in the long persisting menace of illiteracy."²⁴

22. Government of Pakistan, Literacy and Mass Education Commission, *PC-1, Nationwide Literacy Programme*, 1986

23. Government of Pakistan, Literacy and Mass Education Commission, *PC-1, Nai Roshni Schools*, 1986

24. Government of Pakistan, Literacy and Mass Education Commission, *Foreword, Progress Report*, 1988

The Nai Roshni scheme, covering the period 1986-90, was actually an extension of the earlier Drop-in schools with similar objectives. Specifically, its approach was non-formal education providing a condensed course equivalent to formal primary education and raise the literacy rate to 31 percent by 1990. Nai Roshni schools were to be opened in all the districts and were to be run in the afternoon in the existing school buildings. The scheme was to be implemented by LAMEC through the Provincial Literacy Councils, provincial development and administrative departments, and urban and rural local bodies at a total cost of Rs. 3,153.2 million.

The objectives of the programme were stated as:

1. To provide an opportunity to school drop outs and those not obtaining admission in formal primary school, to make up for the loss of time and continue if desired with higher education or to take up vocational education after achieving primary level standard.
2. The Drop out and others who could not get admission, shall be given two years of condensed course curricula, with the help of specially trained teachers in non-formal system of education.
3. The project will cover 1.65 million children, preferably in the age group 10-14 years.
4. The literacy percentage will rise by 5 percent (including 1.8 percent increase of inter-censal years) improving the overall rate to 33 percent.
5. The "Nai Roshni" will stimulate semi-literates and illiterate population of all age groups to become literate and is likely to increase admission in formal primary school.
6. Provide liberal opportunities for jobs to educated un-employed and thus increase their participation in Nation building activities.

The project aimed at the following results:

1. To enable 1,650,000 children to receive level of education up to class 5.
2. To introduce a system of non-formal primary education in order to universalize learning environment in the country.
3. To reduce drop-out population/out of school children.
4. To provide employment opportunities to educated unemployed people.
5. To agitate the minds of populace towards the importance of literacy.

Seventh Five Year Plan: 1988-93²⁵

The Seventh Five Year Plan was launched in 1988. It opined that:

“the education system suffers from chronic deficiencies. About 40 per cent of the children do not have access to education. This has perpetuated a high rate of illiteracy. Primary education facilities are available to only 60 per cent of the children in the age group of 5 to 9 years. Primary schools lack physical facilities; about 29,000 primary schools have no buildings and 16,000 schools have only one class room. The target of one teacher and one room for every class, the minimum essential requirement for quality education, appears difficult to achieve even in the next few years.”

and further that: “Rural primary schools are beset with a shortage of trained and qualified female teachers and teacher absenteeism is high. In rural areas, enrolment of girls is about one third of that of boys ... An unattractive school environment has resulted in poor retention and a high dropout rate.

25. Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, *Seventh Five Year Plan: 1988-93, Chapter 29, 1988*

Reviewing the Sixth Plan, it highlighted the fact that the levy of Iqra surcharge on all imports yielded additional resources of Rs. 13.1 billion. The focus of the Plan was:

“on the expansion of primary education and a reduction in illiteracy. To achieve these objectives, 40,000 new mosque schools were to be opened and 15 million persons were to be made literate during the plan period. These targets could not be attained. Only 17,193 new mosque schools could be opened while the literacy programme could not make much progress due to the absence of an appropriate strategy. Enrolment in classes I-V could only increase by 2.6 million, raising the participation rate from 53 to 64 per cent ... (and) hardly 0.8 million illiterates were made literate through non-formal programme.”

The Seventh Plan acknowledged that "the Sixth Plan experience has shown that ... there is no substitute for formal education." As such its strategy was to increase the literacy rate through improvement and expansions of primary education. It was estimated that the literacy rate will rise to about 40 per cent by 1992-93 and to 80 per cent by the end of the century. The Plan proposed to provide every child in the age group of 5 to 9 access to a school within a radius of 1.5 kilometers by 1992-93, "so that no child is deprived of basic education due to unavailability of a school within a reachable distance." It was also proposed to introduce legislation for compulsory primary education up to Class V for all localities where a school is available within a radius of 1.5 km. It stated: "Almost 100 per cent of the needed infrastructure facilities will be provided under the plan. This will include buildings for about 75 per cent of the shelterless schools, opening new schools and addition of classes in existing schools. Efforts will also be made to reduce disparity in availability of school facilities for boys and girls in both rural and urban areas."

The Plan also aimed at:

“improving the physical as well as human resource infrastructure by providing buildings to shelterless schools, and by adding class rooms in over-crowded schools. Every primary school will have at least three teachers and two class rooms with a veranda ... A comfortable sitting posture amongst students is an important determinant of effective learning. In most of the rural primary schools small children undergo the inconvenience of sitting on the floor in all seasons. The Seventh Plan will provide simple and locally manufacture furniture in all new primary schools.”

It further stated that:

“Detailed school mapping will be undertaken to identify the localities where educational facilities do not exist. It will be ensured that new educational facilities are geographically well spread so that a school is accessible to every child. Mosque schools will be opened for small settlements. A primary school will be established for every settlement of 500 persons or more. On the basis of the total number of children in the settlement, if separate schools for boys and girls are not feasible, then a girls school will be opened.”

And furthermore,:

"Recruitment will not be restricted to candidates with a primary Teaching Certificate (PTC). In addition to existing trained teachers, intermediates and graduates will be recruit as primary teachers. Primary school teachers will be give salaries to match their

qualifications ... Part-term employment for girls' primary school teacher on a contract basis will be allowed and their salaries indexed to recruitment will be abolished for local candidates. They will also be given preference over other candidates. It will be possible to appoint middle-pass candidates as assistant teacher if PTCs are not available. Similarly, retired personnel will be appointed in girls' schools if qualified female teachers are not available."

National Education Policy: 1992²⁶

The 1992 Education Policy began thus:

"Policy initiatives for guiding educational reforms were proposed as early as 1947. More comprehensive documents on restructuring of education were those of 1959, 1972 and 1979. The reforms have appeared in four areas: educational, social, economic and institutional. This caused a ten-fold increase in educational facilities. Yet, the limitation of financial resources, poor appreciation of educational priorities, inadequate delivery system, and population pressure have never allowed a full expression of the desired change. As a social artifact education, so far, has not been able to assure good life for the individual and best arrangements for society. Its ability to build human capital which could provide high rates of return to society, has remained minimal."

And further that:

"The participation rates at various levels of education are low. The progress in the direction of universalization of primary education is far from satisfactory. At primary level, the drop-out rates are in the vicinity of 50 per cent. The women participation in education is minimal. The policy on the medium of instruction has vacillated. The quality of public instruction continues to deteriorate; the system has not responded to the inputs made. The curricula, apart from being overloaded, have not kept pace with the advancement of knowledge. So are the textbooks which do not promote self-learning."

It continued the lament thus:

"Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the region currently estimated at about 34 per cent. The national average accordingly to the 1981 census was 26.2 per cent. However, the wide disparities presented even a discouraging scenario. It ranged from 57.8 per cent among the urban male population of Sindh to 1.75 per cent among the rural females of Balochistan. In absolute terms, the number of illiterates in the ten plus age group, which stood at the daunting figure of around 43 million, has risen to an estimated 50 million."

Continuing the lament, it said:

"It is generally recognized that a rather low participation rate of about 66.3 per cent at the primary schools level combined with a high wastage rate estimated at 50 per cent,

26. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy*, 1992

including drop-outs and repeaters, is the major cause of our low literacy rate. The literacy ratios have been further aggravated because of the absence of meaningful literacy programmes and a rapid population growth. Consequently, all children who are not enrolled, and those who drop-out early, join the multitude of illiterates every year. Even the neo-literates relapse into illiteracy due to the non-availability of appropriate post-literacy reading materials.”

“The problem of illiteracy is formidable both in its size as well as in its complexity. From a socio-cultural perspective, the traditional prejudices against educating females still linger on, particularly in the tribal and rural milieu. In the economic context, the opportunity cost discourages poor families from sending their children to schools. Non-availability of suitable reading materials in the regional languages poses further difficulties for a multi-lingual society. These difficulties are compounded by the non-availability of resources ... Even if the target of attaining universal primary education by the end of the next decade is achieved, the existing huge backlog of 50 million people cannot be abandoned to the fate of perpetual illiteracy.”

Citing the Constitutional provision that “the state shall remove illiteracy... within minimum possible period”, it emphasized that the "need for an effective literacy policy is therefore clearly indicated." Ignoring the existence of LAMEC, it also bemoaned that: “At present there is no national programme of adult literacy. A number of government and non-government organizations are running programmes for adult literacy and education of various types in different parts of the country. However, the effect of these programmes on general literacy situation in the country is only marginal.”

It proclaimed:

“These considerations, among others, ... prompted the Government to reshuffle the priorities, restate the policy, revise the strategy, and re-examine the fabric of education. In doing so, a series of educational conferences were held in the Provinces which were attended by a large number of educationists and educational administrators from the primary to the university level. Also, a national conferences were held at Islamabad in April, 1991 under the chairmanship of the Federal Education Minister in which a cross section of the society comprising scholars, writers, newspaper editors, scientists, teachers and lawyers, discussed proposals which could be used for preparing the dynamics of the Education Policy. A large number of proposals on educational parameters were received from intellectuals and educationists in response to a letter written to them by the Education Minister. The basic principles of the policy framework were discussed by the Education Minister with the Education Committees of the Senate and the National Assembly. The problems identified, and the solutions presented at the conferences and meetings have been discussed in the inter-provincial ministers meeting and modified in deference to the recommendations of the Provinces. This policy proposes to suck into its lap the pristine, the mundane and the modern after arranging relative educational priorities in a sequenced time frame. The target is the creation and implementation of educational programmes from which the nation, hopefully, will be able to draw inspiration in its march towards the twenty-first century, and in its effort to meet the challenge posed by knowledge explosion.”

The Policy document contained a 17-point conceptual framework and a 15-point statement of objectives. As its primary objective, the Policy stated thus: "Basic education for all shall be pursued not merely as a sectoral target, but as an integral part of human development plan. The ultimate aim is to eliminate disparity -- the drama of under-development ... The raising of the collective ego of the nation through a facilitated, efficient and effective educational system remains the primary goal of the policy." It hoped that the "measures ... will lift the system to a respectable level of excellence during its growth in the next 10 years." Specifically, it proposed "to ensure 100 per cent participation of children in education at the primary level by the year 2002, and to eradicate illiteracy through formal and non-formal methods." It also proposed to "increase the literacy rate to 70 per cent by the year 2002." Primary education was to be made compulsory.

A major shift in strategy also occurred, in the sense that it proposed to shift most of the adult education programmes to non-governmental organizations, to be supported through 'incentive' grants from provincial and federal Education foundations. The Policy proposed what it called innovations as "a tool for quantum jump towards excellence." Key elements of the Policy were:

1. opening non-formal education to non-governmental organizations;
2. achieving 100% literacy in selected districts;
3. setting up model schools (male and female) in rural areas;
4. introducing compulsory social service for students;
5. using general schools as technical schools in the evening shift to capture the drop-outs of general education.

Eight Five Year Plan: 1993-98²⁷

The Eighth Five Year Plan was launched in 1993. It proclaimed once again that "education is an indispensable ingredient of development and a fundamental right of every individual", but opined that "almost half of girls and one-fifths of boys of the relevant age group (5-9) are not enrolled in primary school; the adult literacy rate is still barely 35 percent." Reviewing past performance, it stated that:

"the National Educational Policies and Five year Plans of Pakistan have emphasized universalization of primary education at the earliest possible, improving the relevance of curricula, reforming the examination system ... and enhancing the quality of education in general. Despite substantial growth in the number of educational institutions, the desired goals could only be partially achieved ... A large number of educational institutions were started without proper infrastructure. The condition of the existing educational infrastructure has deteriorated and dilapidated in the absence of proper maintenance. About 35,000 primary schools are without any shelter ... A large number of schools lack essential facilities such as latrines, potable water, teaching aids etc. The standard of our education is far from satisfactory. The curricula lacks relevance. Methodologies of instruction and testing are outmoded. There are gender and rural-urban imbalances both in availability and quality of educational facilities. The dropout and failure rates, particularly at the terminal levels, continue to be quite high."

The Eighth Plan claimed to focus on "universalization of primary education, both for boys and girls over a minimum period of time ... as the main instrument for achieving mass literacy in the long run." It

27. Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, *Eighth Five Year Plan: 1993-98* 1993

proposed to “provide primary education facilities at a reachable distance for every boy and girl of the relevant age group. Buildings will be provided for the existing shelterless schools and classrooms will be added to the existing over crowded schools”. It further added that “facilities in the primary schools will be improved by providing adequate shelter, furniture, potable water, latrines, teaching aids etc.” The capacity of existing facilities were proposed to be better utilized by starting Trade Schools as evening shifts for imparting income generating skills such as poultry, mechanical skills, farm skills, embroidery, carpet weaving, silk worm, etc.

The Plan also proposed to undertake a detailed school mapping exercise and stated that “a primary school will be established for a settlement of more than 300 population (1981 census), whereas a mosque school will be opened for a smaller settlement having minimum of 25 primary school age children.” It also provided for purchase of land/buildings in big cities where land could not be made available free of cost. Legislation was also proposed to be introduced to make it obligatory for all public and non-profit private housing schemes to provide land for primary level educational institutions free of cost.

To increase the utilization of existing schools, specially those of girls schools in the rural areas, “strong motivational campaign will be launched for parents to persuade them to send their children to schools. This will be accompanied with legislation for compulsory enrolment for children of 5-9 years age group, wherever primary education facilities become available within a reachable distance.” The Plan, thus, proposed to enroll 5.5 million additional primary school children, including 3.4 million girls and raise the primary participation rate for boys from 84.8 to 95.5 per cent and for girls from 53.7 to 81.6 per cent. It also aimed at increasing literacy from 35 to 48 percent by the end of the Plan period.

Considerable attention was also given to quality of instruction, drop-out rates, etc. It stated:

“Activity oriented instructional material will be developed and provided to teachers to make the learning process interesting. Quality of teachers will be improved through better pre-service and in-service training, ... wastage at primary school level will be minimized by reducing the drop out rate and improving the efficiency of the system through better supervision and with the involvement of local community.”

The importance and urgency of female education was repeatedly stressed with statements like: “Efforts will be made to reduce the disparities in availability of the schooling facilities for boys and girls, both in rural and urban areas”, “highest priority will be given to opening of girls primary schools in all such villages where there is a boys school but no girls school,” “In order to remove the imbalance of male, female enrolment ratio, 65 per cent of all new schools established during 8th Plan will be for girls. Wherever feasible, co-educational primary schools will also be established in which female teachers would be appointed. In order to increase girls participation at primary level, text books will be provided free of cost to all girls of the rural areas in grade I,” “To increase the girls participation, textbooks will be provided free of cost to all girls of grade I in the rural areas,” and so on

National Education Policy: 1998-2010²⁸

The 1998 Education Policy acknowledged that “Education is now universally recognized to be the prime key to moral, cultural, political and socio-economic development of a nation. Nations taking bold

28. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy: 1998-2010*, 1998

initiatives in this regard, have made revolutionary reforms and performed miracles during the last two decades.” It, however, lamented that “We have an unprecedented history of producing excellent documents of plans and policies which could not be implemented.” It opined that

“The 1951 census brought to light that the literacy ratio had declined to 13 percent compared to that at the time of Independence of Pakistan. The present rate of literacy is estimated to be 38.9 percent signifying that literacy rate is gradually increasing at the rate of half a percent during the last fifty years. Consequently, Pakistan stands at 142nd position among 160 countries, and among SAARC countries, its position is 6th. It is certainly a depressing scenario.”

Continuing the lament, it said:

“In Pakistan, the overall strategy, during the period from 1947 to 1997 has remained one of expansion of the existing system and efforts have been directed solely to the establishment of more of the existing type of formal institutions ... After spending scarce resources we have come to the conclusion that our approach of mere expansion has been very simplistic In spite of the huge investment made, the successive failure of the loud promises made in every plan and with every educational policy and putting off the well marked out deadlines, has created a credibility gap.”

The Policy further bemoaned: “The Eighth Five-Year Plan (1993-98) allocated Rupees 1.750 billion (US \$ 43.75 million approx.) for Adult Literacy Programs to make 16.86 million people literate. This comes to about Rupees one thousand per person to become literate. For the attainment of the objectives and the targets of this policy in letter and spirit, a comprehensive pragmatic, realistic, and well-monitored plan of operation should have been prepared”; implying that it was not done.

Taking stock of the present situation, it stated that:

“there are 145,000 primary schools in the public sector, including about 37,000 mosque schools. One third of primary schools are female schools. In addition, 7,177 Non-Formal Basic Education Schools are run by the Prime Minister’s Literacy Commission. The shortage of physical facilities and equipment is critical. About 25,000 primary schools are without school buildings ... Most of the one room schools in the rural areas are made of a mixture of mud and wood ... Majority of the schools do not have toilets and water facilities. There is also a shortage of desks, chairs and some schools do not even have mats for the pupils to sit on ... Teaching kits were developed and distributed to 30 per cent of primary schools in early eighties but it was found that these kits were locked in the Headmistress’s/Headmaster’s room and were never used.”

The Policy recalled provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), whereby it is stated: “Elementary education is the fundamental right of all people, men and women, of all types of areas and places, irrespective of gender, sect, religion or any other denomination. Everyone has the right to education” and The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that the child has a right to education and it is the State’s duty ensure that primary education is free and compulsory. It also recalled Pakistan’s international commitments, such as the World Declaration on Education For All (1990) and the Delhi Summit Declaration (1993), to double the rate of literacy by the year 2000. A unique feature of the 1998 Policy is the massive involvement of foreign donor agencies in the education and

literacy effort. Agencies providing assistance in elementary education projects and programmes include the World Bank, ADB, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, DFID, JICA, NORAD, GTZ, OPEC, EU, and others

While the Seventh Plan had specifically rejected non-formal education and opted unambiguously for formal education, the 1998 Policy reinforced the strategic shift in the 1992 Policy towards non-formal education with a virtual condemnation of the formal education system. It stated that “millions of children have been deprived of elementary education not because institutional facilities did not exist but primary education clashed with their jobs, since it was organized only as a full-time program during the day.” Promoting the idea of non-formal education, it stated that

“The idea is certainly not a new one. The practice is almost perennial. The consciousness that learning has to be co-existent with life is as old as mankind. All traditional societies had, in one way or the other, some learning practices within all periods of one’s life and as part and parcel of one’s overall activities. It is only in the more recent times that learning and education became time-bound and space-bound, mostly limited to some age groups, predominantly professionalized, institutionalized and sociologically and pedagogically programmed. This reflects in reality the basic trends in the global evolution of our contemporary societies, which are increasingly over organized and over structured, leaving less and less scope for creativity, imagination, choice and peoples real participation ... The increased emphasis on non-formal learning stems from the awareness that institutionalized, time and space-bound education does not correspond to the requirements of today’s societies. The concept of non-formal education is based on an integral educational philosophy rather than the piecemeal and diffused practices stimulated by working or living exigencies. Hence, the non-formal learning concept today is comprehensive answer to the identified needs.”

The Policy relating to elementary education policy was based on agreed themes and strategies of Social Action Program, such as improving the quality, expanding access for out of school children, especially disadvantaged groups, improving management and supervisory services, capacity building, institutional development and financial sustainability. The major issues and challenges of elementary education were identified as:

1. More than 5.5 million primary school age (5-9) children are left-outs.
2. Approximately 45 percent children drop-out of school at the primary level.
3. Teacher absenteeism is a common malady in schools, specially in the rural areas.
4. Instructional supervision is weak at the elementary level.
5. About one-fourth of primary school teachers are untrained and the present training infrastructure does not appear to improve the quality of instruction.
6. Learning materials are inadequate and of poor quality. Teaching methods are harsh and uncongenial for learning and motivating pupils.

The Policy proposed to construct 190,000 new formal primary schools, 250,000 non-formal basic education centres, and 57,000 mosque schools, upgrade 60,000 primary schools, begin double shifts in 20,000 existing primary schools, and recruit 527,000 additional teachers. Necessary resources were also been pledged at the highest level to raise the expenditure on education from 2.2 to 4 percent of GNP.

It also proposed to launch:

“a massive Non-Formal Basic Education Program on a war footing ... to provide access economically and expeditiously to all the 5.5 million primary school age (5-9 year old) children who are at present out-of-school. The 10-14 year old adolescents and youth who have missed primary education will be given a second chance through a crash condensed course to enable them to complete primary education cycle in 2-3 year time.”

It, thus, expected that “by the year 2002-03, 90 percent of the children in the primary age group (5-9) will be in schools and by the year 2010, the gross enrolment will rise to 105 per cent. Consequently, the promulgation and enforcement of Compulsory Primary Education Act will be possible by 2004-05.”

The Policy also recognized that the current literacy rate is estimated at 38.9 percent, 27 percent for females, and 8 percent for rural females and proposed to raise the literacy rate to 55 percent during the first five years and 70 percent by 2010. The implementation strategy is as heroic as that of the abortive National Literacy Plan: 1984-86. The Policy proposes to launch a National Literacy Movement on an emergency basis in every village, tehsil and district, increase the existing Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) community schools/centres from 7000 to 82,000, utilize mosques as one of the means to provide non-formal basic education to increase literacy, render it mandatory for all industrial units and federal and provincial agencies, like WAPDA, Pakistan Steel, OPF, PTV, PBC, etc., to make their employees and their dependents literate, put Boy Scouts and Girl Guides at the service of literacy programs, establish Literacy Corps comprising of College/University students/teachers for literacy programs during vacations, issue driving and ammunition licenses only to literate persons, condone, accordingly, the duration of a prisoner’s term of imprisonment if s/he becomes literate, utilize radio and television for social mobilization and promotion of the cause of basic education, particularly amongst rural females, and for imparting skills to neo-literates, require Khakahs/Mazars to donate a portion of their earning to the literacy fund, and link development grants to local governments with literacy programmes.

Conclusions

Over the 50 year period since independence, efforts to increase enrollment and literacy have not been scarce. Beginning with the national education conference in 1947, seven national education policies, eight five year plans and about half a dozen other schemes have been prepared and launched and a dozen or more conferences, seminars, workshops and other moots on education have been held. The earlier policy and plan documents displayed a fair degree of pragmatism and identified the constraints and problems facing the task. For example, the 1951 Education Policy stated that the first five years would be devoted to planning, recruitment of teachers, and to training and the task of spreading literacy and universalizing enrollment would be undertaken thereafter. The language too was matter of fact, indicating a sincerity of purpose.

The sincerity of purpose did not produce results, however. The literacy rate remained constant over the first ten years of the nation's life. Thereafter, verbiage began to replace substance. Subsequent policy and plan documents were drafted in a language that became more and more flowery and bombastic and the plans and schemes became more and more heroic and fanciful over time. The one exception was the 1972 Education Policy after the defeat in the 1971 war and emergence of the "new" Pakistan. The 1972 Policy document refrained from philosophical pronouncements and proposed modest targets in a matter of fact tone. That these modest targets were also not met is besides the point.

Verbiage virtually replaced action from 1979 onwards. The 1979 Policy was presented as "the first in recognizing the great potentials of our indigenous institutions and patronizing them for bringing about greater educational development." The 1980's was the decade of a series of educational initiatives. Such was the pace and speed of these initiatives that a new programme or scheme would be floated before the earlier one was completed. For example, the National Literacy Plan was launched in 1984 as a two year programme, but was abandoned mid-stream and replaced by the four year Nationwide Literacy Programme, and which was itself overtaken by the Nai Roshni schools scheme. The 1992 Education Policy touched the limits of verbal gymnastics when it stated: "This Policy proposes to suck into its lap the pristine, the mundane and the modern after arranging relative educational priorities in a sequenced time frame."

The striking common feature of all the policies, plans, programmes, and schemes is the philosophical pronouncements about the importance of education. For example, the Second Five Year Plan stated: "No uneducated community has progressed far in the modern world, and no educated community with initiative and leadership has remained backward". This statement was again repeated a quarter of a century later in the Sixth Five Year Plan thus: "No educated society has ever achieved the heights of economic and political power. No educated society has ever been left behind in the relentless march of history." Another common feature is the repeated admission of failure. Each policy commenced with a lament about the failure of past efforts, including the immediately preceding ones, to achieve the targets. Each plan reviewed the performance of the previous plan and opined about its failure to achieve its targets. Each PC-1 of an education scheme provided justification for the project in terms of the failure of past schemes. Yet another common feature is the unfaded optimism of the particular policy, plan, programme or scheme to achieve the targets. The philosophical pronouncements about the profound importance of education, lament about past failures, and glowing optimism about impending success form a pattern across all policies, plans, programmes, and schemes.

A final common feature of all policies, plans, programmes, and schemes is that all of them, with the sole exception of the Second Five Year Plan, failed to achieve their objectives. The Third Plan placed a target of 70 percent primary enrollment rate; yet the same at the beginning of the Fifth Plan was 54 percent. The Fifth Plan set the target at 100 percent by 1987, which was pushed forward to 1992 by the 1979 Education Policy; yet the same was 60 percent at the beginning of the Seventh Plan in 1988. The Seventh Plan set the target at 100 percent by 1993; yet the rate in 1998 was 39 percent. The 1992 Education Policy pushed forward the target of 100 percent to 2002, while the 1998 Policy lowered the target to 90 percent by 2003.

The case on the literacy front is similar. The 1959 Education Policy set the target of 100 percentage literacy by 1975; yet the same was 21.7 percent in 1972 and 26.17 percent in 1981. The 1979 Education Policy set a target of 35 percent literacy rate by 1983; yet it was 26.2 percent in 1984. The National Literacy Plan and the Nationwide Literacy Programme set the target at 33 and 53 percent by 1986 and 1990, respectively; yet the rate was 34 percent in 1992. The Seventh Plan lowered the target to a modest 40 percent by 1993 and the Eighth Plan targeted for 48 percent by 1998; yet the rate in 1998 was 39 percent. Earlier, the 1979 Education Policy had set the goal of 100 percent literacy by 2010; but the 1998 Education Policy lowered the target to 70 percent

The shifting sands of educational priorities was not limited to enrollment and literacy targets alone. The basic approach to education also suffered sharp swings. For example, the Seventh Plan (1988-93) categorically rejected non-formal education as a method of spreading education and literacy, whereas the 1992 Education Policy resurrected non-formal education, at least for adult education, and the 1998

Education Policy virtually condemned formal education and called for non-formal approaches to providing primary education.

A review of the history of educational planning in Pakistan shows that setting targets, bemoaning the failure to achieve the same, and setting new targets with unqualified optimism has been a continuing game policy makers have played *ad nauseam* and at great public expense over the last 50 years. Differences in the hues and shades of various governments -- be it civilian or military, elected or otherwise, socialist or Islamic -- has made little difference to the manner in which the game has been played. The results in all cases have been the same. And the results show that there has been a signal lack of political commitment to literacy or education.

SDPI is an independent non-profit research Institute
on Sustainable development

Mailing Address: PO Box 2342, Islamabad Pakistan

Street Address: 3rd Floor, Taimoor Chamber, 10-D West,
Fazal-ul-Haq Road, Blue Area, Islamabad.

Telephone: +(92-51) 2277146
2278134 2278136 2270674-6

Fax: +(92-51) 2278135

URL: www.sdpi.org e-mail: main@sdpi.org