

**THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SCHOOL  
EDUCATION IN POST-18TH AMENDMENT  
BALOCHISTAN**

*Rafiullah Kakar, Muhammad Saleem & Bilal Sarwar*

(CGP #02-120)

**2<sup>ND</sup> RASTA CONFERENCE**

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> & Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

*Marriot Hotel, Islamabad*

*This document is unedited author's version submitted to RASTA.*



**RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION & ADVANCEMENT**

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics

Islamabad



## ABSTRACT

In the wake of devolution of education to provinces through the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, there has been a noticeable increase in public allocation and spending on school education. Moreover, certain reforms have been introduced in education planning, management and monitoring. These measures have enhanced availability of physical infrastructure and reading and writing material for schools and improved education monitoring. There is also evidence of marginal improvements in overall literacy rate and reading and arithmetic skills.

Notwithstanding the limited gains, the reforms and increased public spending have not translated into commensurate improvements in schooling and learning outcomes. Analysis of proximate causes indicates that learning outcomes aren't improving because the various elements of education system are not aligned around the goal of learning. In contrast, expansion of schooling appears to have remained a strategic objective of education delivery but it hasn't experienced significant improvement either because of the existence of serious policy incoherence among various elements of education system. Major inefficiencies in education management practices combined with ineffectiveness of accountability mechanisms across the education delivery chain have undermined the system's ability to ensure timely and reliable provision of all inputs necessary for enrolling and retaining children in school.

Application of 'political settlement' lens reveals that education outcomes aren't recording major improvements because elite interest is aligned with neither learning nor access. Instead, elite interest is aligned more around patronage politics. Education delivery is driven by short-term, clientelist, political objectives, which are in turn shaped by the highly fragile, exclusive, fragmented and personalized nature of political settlement.

*Keywords:* school education, devolution, political settlement, politics of education, elite commitment.

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## INTRODUCTION

*“I was inducted in this school as a teacher in 2002. Since then, I have been asked questions about attendance and school environment only on two occasions i.e. 2014 and 2021. Other than these two occasions, nobody in the education department has inquired about my performance or achievements of the school. When somebody asks me questions about my performance, I will have some incentive to demonstrate performance. When nobody is holding me accountable, what incentive do I have to perform?”* (Head of a Middle School in Killa Abdullah)

The adoption of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan in 2010 is arguably the most important political development in the recent history of the country. Among others, the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment devolved many important functions to the provinces through the abolition of the concurrent list, including health and education (Shah, 2012). All key subjects related to school education came under the exclusive legislative and executive jurisdiction of the provinces (I-SAPS, 2012).

The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment ignited a debate on the utility and extent of devolution. Skeptics argued that provinces lack the capacity to perform the devolved functions efficiently and effectively. Twelve years on, the debate has lingered on, with some quarters expressing fresh skepticism about the impact of the devolution on social sector service delivery and governance (Warraich, 2018). This debate came under the spotlight more sharply during the Covid-19 pandemic where an urgent, uniform and coordinated response was required on the part of the national and sub-national governments (TABADLAB, 2021).

Most available studies indicate that provincial governments have introduced reforms in education management and enhanced financing for education but these have produced partial results at best (Nawiwala, 2016). This study aims to review, understand and analyze the impact of devolution on education delivery and politics around it in Balochistan.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Decentralization has become a commonly advocated tool for managing diversity and improving service delivery in low and middle income countries (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993). Many countries have devolved a large number of administrative, fiscal, and political functions from central government to sub-national governments. The motivation behind decentralization has varied across socio-political contexts. In some contexts, decentralization was a response to rising ethno-regional tensions whereas in other cases decentralization was meant to improve the delivery of basic services (World Bank, 2005). In ethnically diverse countries like Pakistan, decentralization efforts are typically introduced to improve national cohesion through better management of social diversity (Lijphart, 1997).

The available theoretical and empirical literature on the impact of decentralization on public service delivery is mixed. Proponents argue that decentralization may lead to more responsive public service delivery and result in stronger accountability at the local level (Faguet, 2001). A number of studies indeed reveal that decentralization led to the advancement of poverty alleviation goals, improvement in social sector outcomes especially health and education, alignment of public service delivery with local preferences, and reduction of intra-regional disparities (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2003; Habibi et al, 2001; Faguet, 2001; Fredriksen, 2013). Opponents of decentralization maintain that it does not lead to significant improvement in public service delivery. Instead, decentralization, the argument goes, may hinder public service delivery, widen inter-regional disparities, and increase corruption and rent-seeking by local elites (Azfar and Livingston 2002; Rodriguez-Pose et. Al, 2009; Gonzalez-Alegre, 2010; Ahmed et. Al, 2005).

In case of Pakistan, most available studies have assessed the impact on service delivery of the local government system introduced in early 2000s (Aslam and Yilmaz 2011; Shah 2010, Cheema et. Al, 2005). There is a dearth of research work on how the devolution of social services through the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment has affected the performance of these devolved sectors. Haroon (2021) has analysed and compared the growth recorded in education outcomes and found that improvements in education outcomes was slower in the post-18<sup>th</sup> Amendment period compared to the pre-18<sup>th</sup> Amendment period in all provinces except Balochistan where more improvement was observed in the post-18<sup>th</sup> Amendment period. The findings of the said study indicate a correlation and therefore can't be attributed to decentralization per se. Zaidi et. Al. (2019) assessed health sector planning, financing and management across provinces in the post-18<sup>th</sup> Amendment period and found that devolution led to increased health allocations, better planning and innovations in governance.

There are two major weaknesses in the available literature on decentralization and education delivery. Firstly, most existing empirical evidence is weak and inconclusive. There is little robust systemic or comparative evidence on whether decentralization leads to improvements in the provision of health, education, sanitation and other services. The available evidence draws mostly on examples from single countries and sectors. The lack of cross-sectoral and cross-national data makes it difficult to make broad generalizations and causal claims (Robinson, 2007).

Secondly, most traditional approaches seeking to assess the impact of decentralization on sectoral performance focus on the characteristics and capabilities of that sector alone while ignoring deeper determinants such as the role of informal institutions and de-facto sources of power. Furthermore, they often treat deficits in service delivery as technical problems in

organizational design and implementation that can be addressed through sound technical interventions (Aiyar et. al, 2021). However, there is a growing consensus that the deep causal determinants of poor performance of a sector, especially in the case of education, lie not in the policy domain of that sector alone but also in the wider socio-political environment in which it is embedded (Kaffenberger and Spivack, 2022).

Recent scholarship, led by political economists, recognizes that the roots of educational crisis lie in both technical and political factors (Wales, Magee, & Nicolai, 2016). The World Bank Development Report (WDR) 2018 reveals that the intractability of education reforms, particularly those related to learning, is explained primarily by the prevalence of unhealthy politics around education that leads to a misalignment between education policies and practices and the goals of learning (World Bank, 2017). Politics largely determines whether or not enhanced fiscal and administrative autonomy will result in adoption of reforms aimed at improving learning outcomes. Political economy literature has identified a number of structural factors that may possibly shape the politics around decentralized management of education, including but not limited to the quality of prevailing formal and informal institutions (Easterly, 2001; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012), social heterogeneity of population, degree of dominance of social groups (Collier, 2000), and strength of relationships of accountability between citizens, service providers and service-users in the education delivery chain (World Bank, 2005). While a critical analysis of nearly all the afore-mentioned factors is important to understand the politics of education, an approach that integrates these factors into a proper conceptual framework is warranted.

In this regard, an increasingly influential political economy approach is the analytical framework of political settlements advanced by Mushtaq Khan (2017). Khan's approach has proven helpful in understanding how political context can shape the opportunities and barriers for improving education outcomes (Wales et. al, 2016). Furthermore, it has also brought to the fore the powerful insight that reforms in the formal institutional processes (such as decentralization) alone are not enough to improve education outcomes in developing countries. Instead, it suggests that informal forms of politics and deeper power relations also need to be factored in as the latter tend to (mis)shape and influence reforms in formal institutional structures and processes (Hickey and Hossain, 2019). Lastly, the 'political settlement' approach also provides an understanding of the extent to which elites operating at different levels in the education delivery chain can commit to implementing reforms related to expansion of schooling and improvement in learning outcomes (Hickey and Hossain, 2019).

The new but growing body of literature on political settlements indicates that the impact of decentralization and other governance reforms on educational outcomes will be determined primarily by the nature of political settlement. Wales et. Al. (2016) applied the political settlement analysis to study education systems in eight countries. They classified these countries into three broad groups depending upon the nature and type of political settlement: developmental states, mixed hybrid states and spoils-driven hybrid states. The study concluded that while major improvements in access can be achieved across all three types of political settlements, the prospects for improving education quality are the strongest in developmental states and the poorest in spoils-driven hybrid states. This study found that increased education financing may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for improving learning outcomes (Wales et. al, 2016). Similarly, Hickey & Hossain (2019) employed the political settlement lens to examine the politics of learning crisis in six developing countries—each of which represented a particular type of

political settlement—and found that the commitment and capacity of elites to improve educational outcomes was systemically related to, and shaped by, by the type of political settlement. Problematizing the widely-held notion that electoral democracy might be sufficient for creating pressures on governments to adopt much-needed reforms in education, this study concluded that, in societies characterized by strong patron-client networks, formal forms of politics (institutions of political competition) often interact with informal (clientelistic) politics to generate incentives that undermine, rather than support, elite commitment to better educational outcomes. In contrast, political settlements characterized by greater political dominance or lesser elite cohesion and where institutions are organized more along impersonal lines are more conducive for implementation of reforms aimed at improving learning outcomes.

## METHODOLOGY

This study followed a mixed-method approach with a heavy tilt towards qualitative research.

Primary data was collected through face-to-face, semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with respondents involved in school education delivery. Purposive sampling was applied based on the characteristics of participants, the nature of the phenomena, and the nature of the study.

The researcher approached the Key Informants, and the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. Consent was taken from the key informants to obtain primary data through semi-structured interview questions. The interviews were recorded first and then transcribed into a word document.

For secondary data, this study relied primarily on official data, budget figures, plans, and reports of the Secondary Education Department and other relevant departments of the Government of Balochistan. Moreover, education sector plans and other policy documents prepared and approved by the Government of Balochistan were also reviewed. Besides, official notifications about reform initiatives were reviewed and studied as well. The list of key secondary sources consulted for this study is provided in Bibliography section. Moreover, research papers and books on education delivery and management were reviewed. Lastly, English and Urdu news stories covering education in Balochistan were used.

Lastly, the insights and observations made by the Principal Investigator of this study, who was involved as a participant in various education sector reforms, were also reviewed and analyzed to understand the informal processes and norms affecting education service delivery.

Given the complex and multi-dimensional nature of education service delivery, the single **case study** design was adopted as it allows for an intensive and detailed examination of a complex set of factors.

### 3.1 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to identify trends and analyze quantitative data on school education's inputs, outputs, outcomes, budgetary allocations, expenditures, and other indicators.

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the primary data of qualitative nature derived from the transcripts of KIIs and FGDs. Interviews recorded in local languages, i.e., Urdu and Pashto, were translated into English and were sorted into different sheets. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze data by identifying, evaluating, and reporting themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings of thematic analysis of primary data were triangulated with the help of secondary data and participant observations.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

### **4.1 Socio-economic Context**

Balochistan has enormous locational and natural resource potential. The economic growth potential of the province, however, remains untapped. The province has the lowest per capita income and weakest growth performance over the past decades compared to other provinces. According to the Pakistan National Human Development Report (2020), Balochistan is the only province to have recorded a decrease in per capita Gross Regional Product (GRP) between 1999 and 2019. Furthermore, the report also indicates that the gap between Balochistan and rest of Pakistan is widening on nearly all indicators of growth and socio-economic development. Among the others, underdeveloped human resource base is one of the most important drivers of weak economic performance.

Balochistan accounts for nearly 44% of Pakistan's total land area but is home to only 6% of the country's total population. According to the 2017 Population Census, the province has a population of 12.34 million, which is scattered over a large swath of arid, inhospitable and mountainous terrain. Nearly 72% of the total population lives in rural areas. Balochistan has the lowest population density of all provinces (36 per sq km compared to the national average of 261 per sq km). The province has a very young population. Every three out of four people (75%) in the province are below the age of 30, indicating that the province is experiencing a large youth bulge. Similarly, the number of school-age children is 4.34 million approximately, accounting for more than one-third of the province's total population.

Balochistan's large youth bulge represents both an opportunity and a risk for school education system. On the one hand, it offers a window of opportunity to develop human capital and boost economic growth by ensuring the delivery of quality education and skills to a large number of children, which in turn will help them become productive members of labour force. On the other hand, a youth bulge also means that the education system will have to cope with the entry of a great number of children in schools. If the education system fails to equip children and young people with the skills required by the labour market, then a large number of children may leave schools and young people may remain unemployed and under-employed. In the latter case, the youth bulge may become a demographic time bomb (PNHDR, 2017). Thus, it is vital that education policy and planning accounts and prepares for the underlying demographic changes.

### **4.2 Political and Fiscal Context**

The political, fiscal and administrative governance structure of Pakistan underwent a fundamental change in 2010 with the adoption of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan. Among others, the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolished the concurrent list and devolved nearly all important social subjects to the provinces, including notably health and education (Shah, 2012). All key subjects related to school education that were previously in the concurrent list came under the exclusive legislative and executive jurisdiction of the provinces as a result of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. These subjects included education policy, curriculum, syllabus, planning, centers of excellence, standards, and Islamic education (Hickey and Hossain, 2019). Prior to 2010,

provincial governments had responsibility for delivering education but major powers with regards to policy, planning, resource allocation and curriculum design rested with the Federal government. Besides, the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment also enhanced the responsibility of provinces through the insertion of Article 25A in the Constitution, which obligates the State to provide free and compulsory elementary education to all children (I-SAPS 2012).

In addition to devolving social subjects, the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment also enhanced fiscal space for provinces by providing constitutional protection to the vertical distribution formula agreed in the 7<sup>th</sup> National Finance Commission (NFC) Award. The 7<sup>th</sup> NFC Award not only increased and fixed the share of provinces at 58% but also revised the erstwhile population-based formula for horizontal distribution of resources to include factors such as poverty, revenue generation, revenue collection and area. Additionally, the 7<sup>th</sup> National Finance Commission (NFC) Award excluded General Sales Tax (GST) on Services from the jurisdiction of the federal government and devolved it to the provinces. Balochistan was among the major beneficiaries of the 7<sup>th</sup> NFC Award as its share increased from 5.11% of the total federal divisible pool taxes to 9.09%

The enhanced fiscal space made available by the 7<sup>th</sup> NFC Award and the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment had significant implications for education financing. The fact that it coincided with administrative autonomy meant that provincial political leadership were empowered to back up potential reforms and new initiatives in education with increased resource allocation. Provincial political elites had a great opportunity to align education policy, planning and financing with local preferences and needs.

# OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND FINANCING IN THE POST-18<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT PERIOD

## 5.1 Administrative Structure

Balochistan has an elaborate institutional structure for managing education at the provincial, divisional, district and sub-district levels. Within education, the primary and secondary education is managed primarily by the province whereas higher education is managed jointly by the federal and provincial governments despite it being devolved to provinces after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. At the provincial level, the Secondary Education Department (SED) is the principal administrative department responsible for policy formulation and strategic planning, coordination and oversight of the overall education system. The SED comprises a Secretary, three Additional Secretaries and their staff and the Policy Planning and Implementation Unit (PPIU), which is also headed by an Additional Secretary.

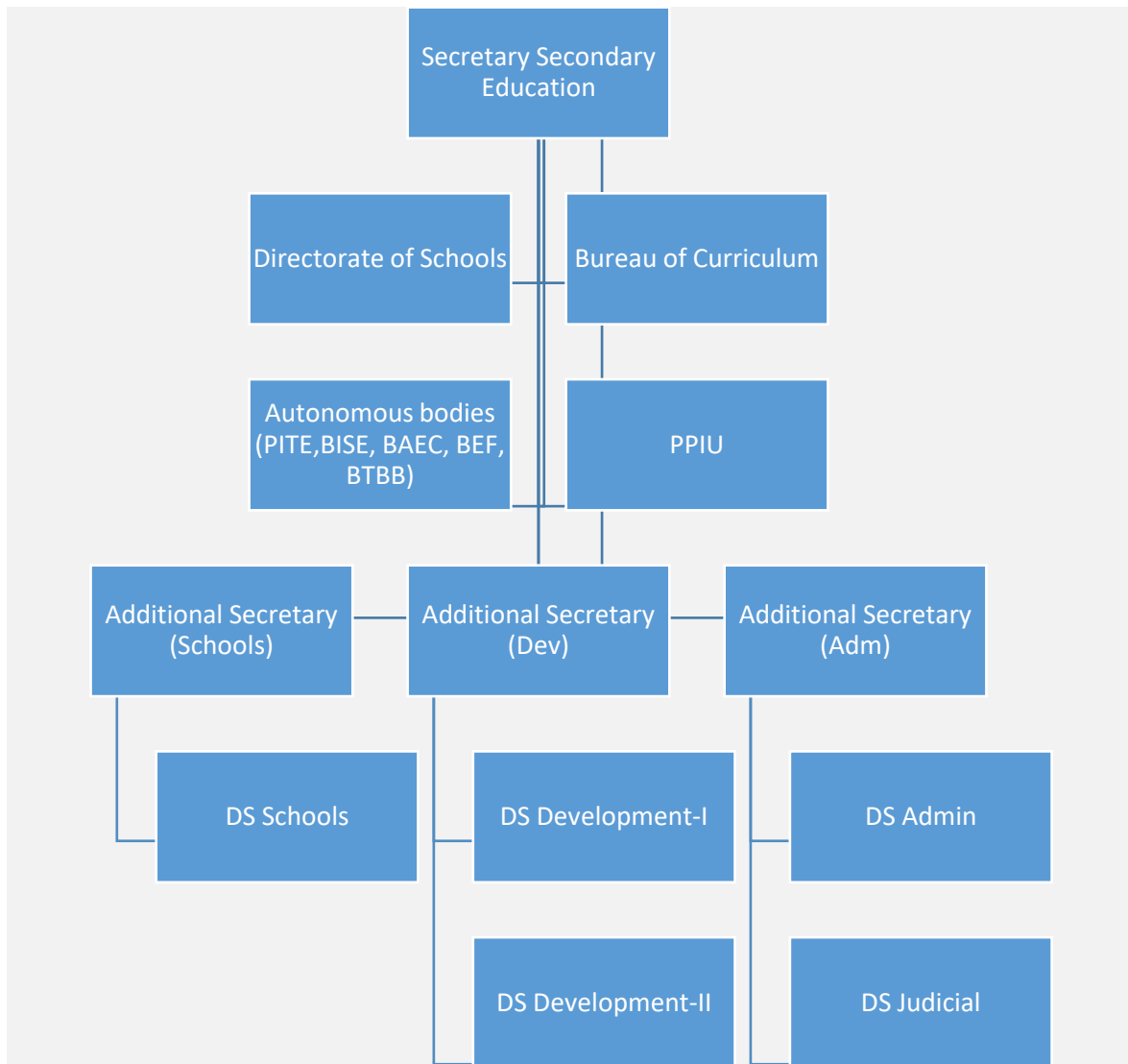
The SED is supported by a number of attached bodies that assist in the management of teachers, data collection, teacher training, curriculum development, textbooks, literacy, and private and religious schools. While the SED is responsible for setting strategic direction and policy priorities, the Directorate of Schools is the key executing body responsible for ensuring the timely availability of all inputs of education at the school level. Other attached organizations look after their specific thematic areas such as curriculum, assessments and teacher training.

The Directorate of Schools is supported by six Directorates of Education at the Divisional level. The Divisional tiers, in turn, are supported by the District tiers, which is headed by the District Education Officers (DEOs). Each DEO has the support of two Deputy DEOs, one each for male and female schools. DDEOs are supported by Assistant DEOs at the sub-district level.

In the post-devolution period, a new administrative entity called the “Policy Planning and Implementation Unit (PPIU)” was established in the Secondary Education Department to steer policy planning and coordinate and supervise reform initiatives. Similarly, the Bureau of Curriculum (BoC) and Provincial Institute for Teacher Education (PITE) were reinvigorated to effectively carry out the devolved functions related to curriculum development and teachers training. Furthermore, a new statutory body, known as the Balochistan Assessment and Examinations Commission (BAEC), was set up in 2016. BAEC was given the responsibility to conduct diagnostic and scale examinations for students of primary and middle levels.



**Figure 1: Administrative Structure**



## 5.2 Education Policy and Legal Framework

In the post-18<sup>th</sup> amendment period, the Government of Balochistan province introduced a number of reforms in education policy and legal framework. To begin with, GoB, with the support of development partners, developed and approved five-year sector plans to provide strategic roadmap and direction for education delivery in the province. By ensuring the availability of a need-based medium-term plan to guide the provision of education, the sector plans improved strategic planning framework significantly.

In addition to changes in the policy framework, GoB adopted a number of Acts in line with the spirit of the post-18<sup>th</sup> amendment governance framework. In this regard, the most notable law was the Balochistan Compulsory Education Act 2014 that calls for provision of free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 5 and 16. Moreover, certain other new

laws were introduced to give legal cover and mandate to specific bodies involved in education service delivery.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.3 Governance and Management Reforms

In addition to changes in policy, legal and administrative framework, the post-devolution period saw the introduction of a number of reforms in the management of school education. Key reforms included the devolution of certain financial and administrative powers to district and sub-district tiers and introduction of a data-driven monitoring system. Major reforms are as follows:

#### *Delegation of Powers to District and Sub-District Levels*

In 2014, certain management functions that were previously exercised by the provincial tier were delegated to district and sub-district levels. As part of this effort, new bodies were notified and operationalised at sub-provincial levels: District Education Authorities, District Education Groups and School Clusters.

- **District Education Authorities (DEAs):** District Education Authority was created in each district to exercise powers pertaining to implementation and monitoring of education affairs. Major management functions such as decisions about teacher training, recruitment, transfer postings up to Grade 16, leaves, non-functional schools and teachers' absenteeism were delegated to the DEA. District Education Officer (DEO) was made the Chairman of the Authority.
- **District Education Groups (DEGs):** District Education Group was constituted in each district to coordinate and synergize inputs for operational planning, implementation and monitoring at district level. It is primarily a stakeholder forum that includes members of education, health, treasury and social welfare departments and representatives of teachers, PTSMCs, local NGOs and civil society. DEG is headed by the Deputy Commissioner (SED, 2013).
- **Cluster-based Procurement System:** The function of procuring education resources like reading and writing material, furniture, and mats for schools was devolved to a newly created sub-district management entity called 'cluster' (Alif Ailaan, 2018). All existing primary and middle schools were categorised into groups on the basis of geographical proximity and were linked with adjacent high school. The procurement function for primary and middle schools was placed at the disposal of Local Education Purchase Committees headed by Principal/Headmistress of the High School, who also acted as the head of the cluster (SED, 2014). Previously, the process of procurement was centralized,

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<sup>1</sup> Key acts enacted are: The Balochistan Introduction of Mother Language as Compulsory Additional Subject at the Primary Level Act 2014; The Balochistan Child Protection Act 2016; The Balochistan Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education Act 2019; The Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission Act 2018; The Balochistan Private Educational Institute Registration and Regulation Authority Act 2015; The Balochistan Technical Education and Vocational Authority Act 2011; The Balochistan Essential Education Services Act 2019.

resulting in mismanagement and embezzlement of resources and limited redressal of needs of schools.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Establishment of Performance Management Cell (PMC)***

In order to improve monitoring, the education department, in line with the recommendations of the BESP 2013-18, established a 'Performance Management Cell' to collect, process and analyse data related to key education inputs and outputs. The PMC comprised three pillars: introduction of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Real Time School Monitoring System and Complaint Management System (CMS) (SEDb, 2014).

- ***Education Management Information System (EMIS)***: EMIS is primarily responsible for data gathering and management in education sector. EMIS has created a rich data-base with reliable information on enrolment, number of schools, state of school facilities, and detailed profiles of students, teachers and non-teaching staff in government schools.
- ***Real Time School Monitoring (RTSM)***: In order to ensure and improve monitoring of schools, the education department, with support from UNICEF and GPE-BEP, implemented an android-based, real-time school monitoring system, which provides quick update and feedback about key educational inputs to education managers. Through this initiative, each and every school is now monitored in real time. It monitors schools on multiple indicators including presence of teaching and non-teaching staff, student attendance, availability of basic facilities and infrastructure, status of cluster-based procurement and school learning environment (SEDb, 2014).
- The Education Department also set up a ***Complaint Management System (CMS)*** that accepts complaints about education facilities, teacher and staff absenteeism, education managers, financial matters and student admissions. Progress against these complaints can be tracked online. These complaints are processed and stored in a centralised database.

### ***Establishment of Community Engagement Forums***

In order to engage parents and community in affairs of schools and promote social accountability, a number of stakeholder forums were created. These forums included Local Education Group (LEG), District Education Group (DEG), Local Education Council (LEC), and Parent Teacher School Management Committee (PTSMC) were respectively created at the provincial, district, cluster, and school levels (SED, 2015; SEDb, 2015; ). These forums involved parents, civil society representatives, school heads, officials of education department and other relevant government officials.

## **5.4 Education Financing Trends**

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<sup>2</sup> In FY 2011-12, RS 400 Million were allocated and spent on reading and writing materials for schools. There were serious reports of misappropriation and an inquiry had to be conducted by National Bureau of Accountability (NAB). For details, see Procurement Policy 2014.

The introduction of reforms in policy, legal and management framework of school education were supplemented and backed by increased budgetary allocations for education. A basic review and analysis of education financing trends is as follows:

The overall education budget of Balochistan has recorded a substantial increase in the post-devolution period. In nominal terms, the education budget of the province has increased nearly seven times between 2009-10 and 2021-22, increasing from PKR 13.8 Billion to PKR 90 Billion approximately (Graph 2). The highest annual growth rate of 43% was recorded in 2013-14 when a newly-elected government came into power through what were the first general elections to be held post-18<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

The percentage share of education in the total budget of Balochistan has also increased. The average share of education in the overall provincial budget has averaged 18.24% during the period 2013-2021 compared to the 14.57% share between 2007 and 2012 (FD, 2008-2021).<sup>3</sup> The share of education in actual public spending at the provincial has remained marginally higher (19%) than budgeted allocations (Graph 2).

Current budget, which consists of salary and non-salary expenditures, has traditionally accounted for a major chunk of the education budget. Comparison of the pre-devolution (2007-12) and post-devolution (2013-21) budgets reveals that the percentage share of recurrent component in education budget dropped by 6% percentage points in the latter period, declining from 86% to 80% on average (Graph 3). The most substantial fall was recorded in 2013-14 & 2014-15 when the share of current budget was reduced to 70% and 71% respectively (FD, 2008-2021).

The salaries of education employees have also increased significantly over the past ten years. For details, please see Graph 4.

The development budget for education follows the same pattern as the overall education budget. In nominal terms, the development budget of education has increased eight times between 2009-10 and 2021-22, increasing from PKR 2.3 Billion to PKR 17.93 Billion (P&DD, 2008-2021). In terms of share of education in the total development budget allocations, it hovered around 11% during 2007-12 and rose to 14% on average during 2013-21. The share of education in actual spending is even greater in the post-devolution period, increasing from 9% to 16% on average between 2007-12 and 2013-20. The highest allocation for education was recorded at 24% and 23% in FY 2013-14 and 2014-15 respectively (Graph 6).

The utilization rate of development expenditures on education has also improved in the post-devolution period, indicating enhanced capacity to spend allocated budget. The average spending rate of development budget has increased from 83% during 2002-2012 to 92% during 2013-2020 on average. While the cumulative average shows improvement in public financial management capacity of the province, year-wise figures show that spending capacity continues to be constrained. The lowest rate of spending was observed at 47%, 68%, and 71% respectively in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2013-14. This is partially explained by weak, unrealistic and politicized public financial management practices and partially by issues of litigation and political instability.

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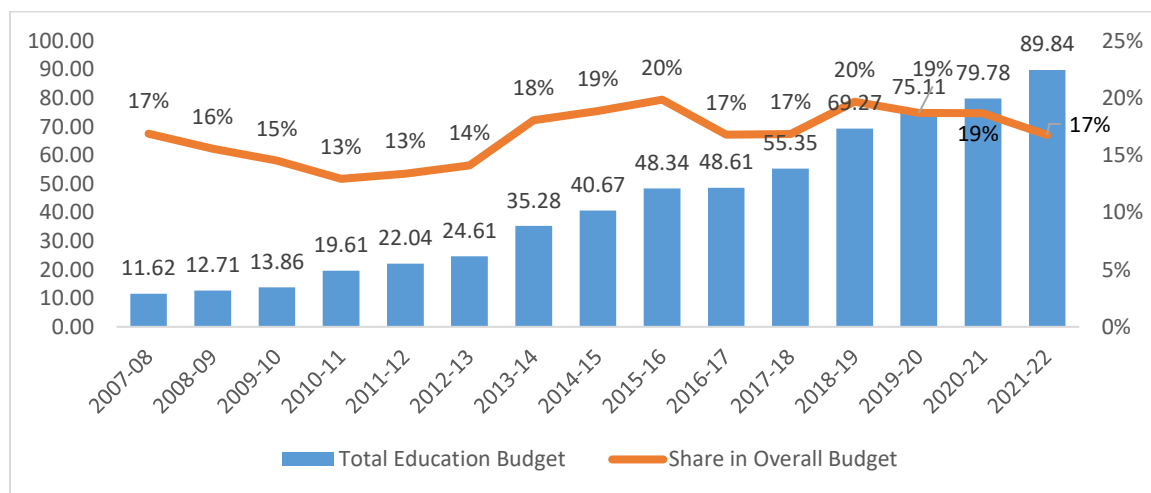
<sup>3</sup> 2012 has been chosen as the cut-off year as the first general elections under the post-devolution governance structure were conducted in 2013. Besides, data is not available for pre-2007 period.

Graph 5 looks at the allocated and spent development budget for education from 2002-03 to 2020-21.

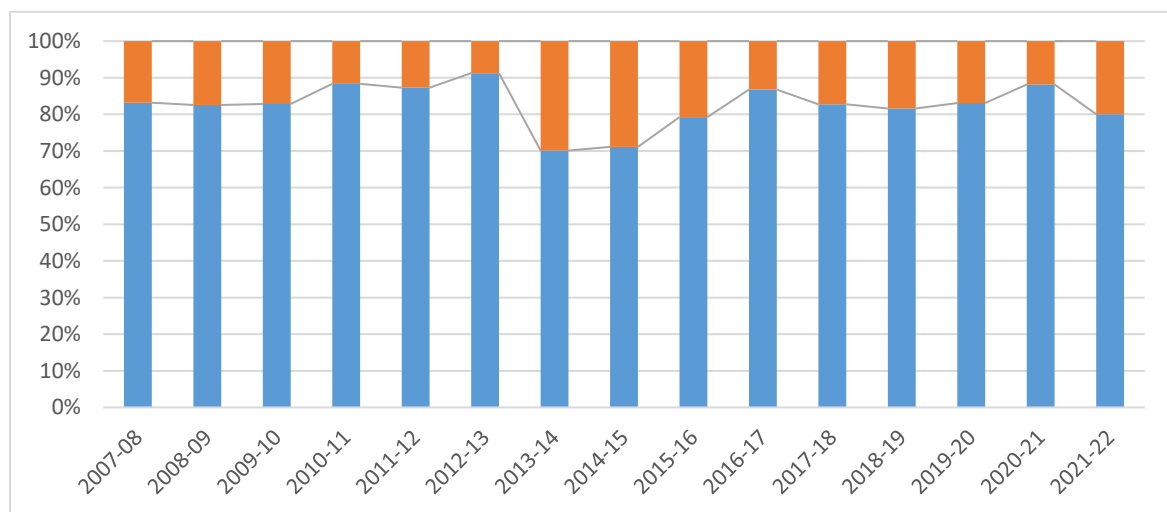
### 5.4 Comparison with Global Education Financing Benchmarks

The increased allocation for education post-2012 indicates the willingness of the provincial political leadership to invest in education. This level of spending on education is not far from the global financing benchmarks for education set by the international community for achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 04. According to the Education 2030 Framework for Action, governments should allocate at least 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education (Mundial, G.B. & UNICEF, 2016). In 2018-19, for example, the share of education spending in the total budget in low-income countries was around 15 percent (World Bank, 2021).

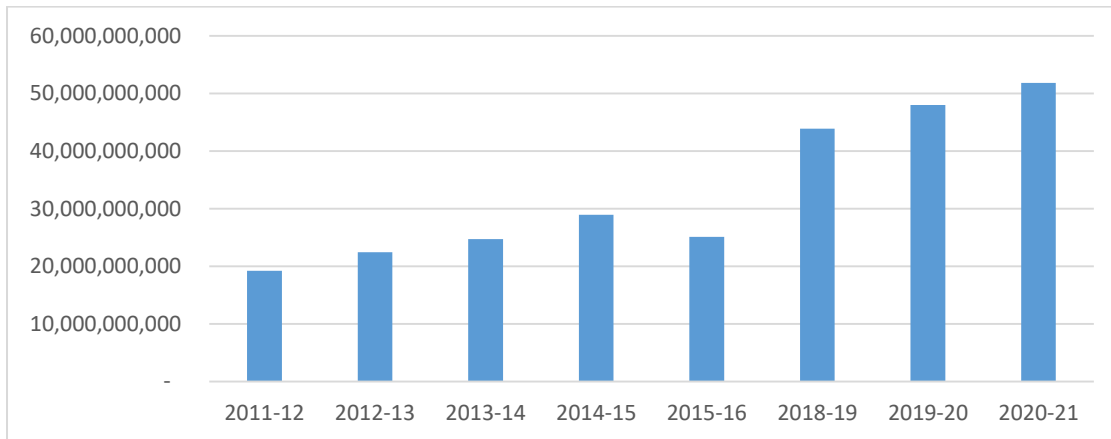
**Figure 2. Share of Education Budget in Total Provincial Budget**



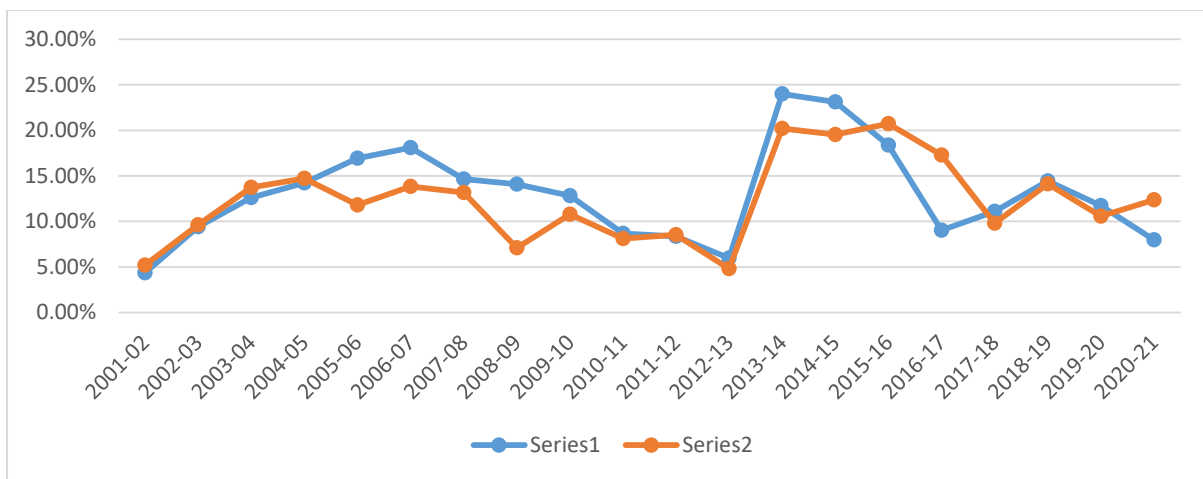
**Figure 3. Share of Development & Non-development Component in Education Budget**



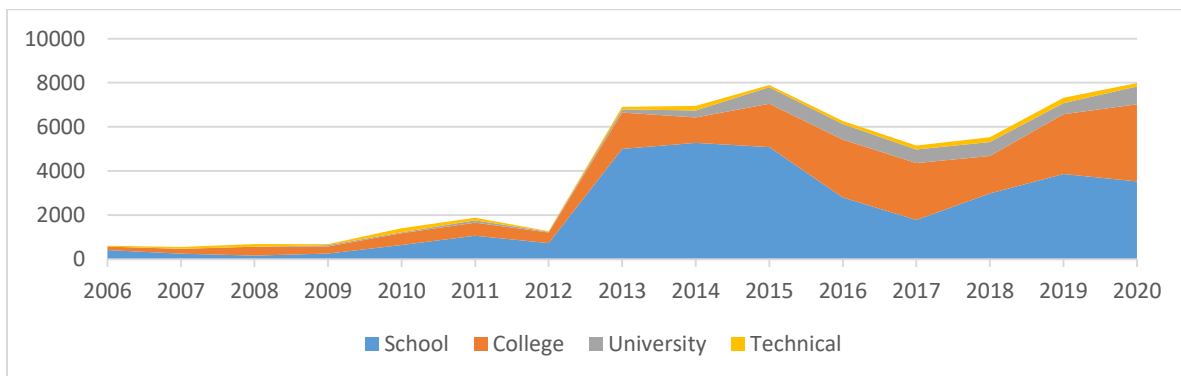
**Figure 4. Salary Budget of Employees of Secondary Education Department**



**Figure 5. Share of Education in Total Development Budget (BE & RE)**



**Figure 6. Sub-sectoral breakdown of Development Budget**



## **REVIEW OF EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN POST-18<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT**

### **6.1 Access and Attainment Indicators**

Over the past few decades, the world has seen a dramatic expansion in access to schooling and attainment for children. Even the majority of low-and-middle income countries have been able to ensure schooling for nearly all children (World Bank, 2018).

While education systems across the world have almost successfully addressed access-related issues, Balochistan continues to face an alarming schooling as well as learning crisis. According to calculations of the authors based on data of the Population Census 2017, Balochistan has 4.64 million children between the age of 5 and 16 years in 2020. Of these, only 1.70 million are enrolled in schools and madrassahs whereas as an alarming 2.97 million children remain out of schools, accounting for nearly two-thirds (63%) of the total number of children. The proportion of out of school children in Balochistan is highest than all other provinces of Pakistan. The situation is even worse for girls as more girls are out of school than boys. Low retention and school completion rates contribute to a large number of children remaining out of schools. Data on primary and secondary enrolments indicates that only 15 out of every 100 children enrolled in primary grades make it to grade 10 (SED, 2021).

Of the enrolled children, nearly 1 million are enrolled in public schools (SEDb, 2021) whereas 0.576 million and 0.125 million are enrolled in private schools and madrassahs respectively. In other words, the public schools, private schools and madrassahs respectively account for 59%, 34% and 7% of the total enrolment.

### **6.2 Learning Indicators**

The more alarming aspect of the education crisis is that the majority of the nearly two-fifth of children who do attend schools aren't learning either. For most of these children, schooling does not lead to learning. Notable manifestations of the learning crisis are a stagnant literacy rate and poor reading, writing and numeracy skills. The overall literacy rate of 10 years and older population is 46% in Balochistan compared to the national average of 60% as per PSLM data of 2019-20. Similarly, student learning outcomes are very poor. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2019, only 37.4 percent children in Grade 5 could solve Grade 3 level subtraction problems and 48 percent of Grade 5 children could read an Urdu story of Grade 3 level in rural Balochistan. There are wide gender disparities as more girls are unable to read, write and solve basic arithmetic problems than boys (ASER, 2019).

### **6.3 Trend of Education Outcomes over Time**

The increased public spending and reforms in education planning, management and monitoring in the post-devolution period have improved availability of physical infrastructure, reading and writing material for schools and data on school inputs. Consultations with heads of schools reveal that the devolution of procurement function to cluster has significantly enhanced availability of

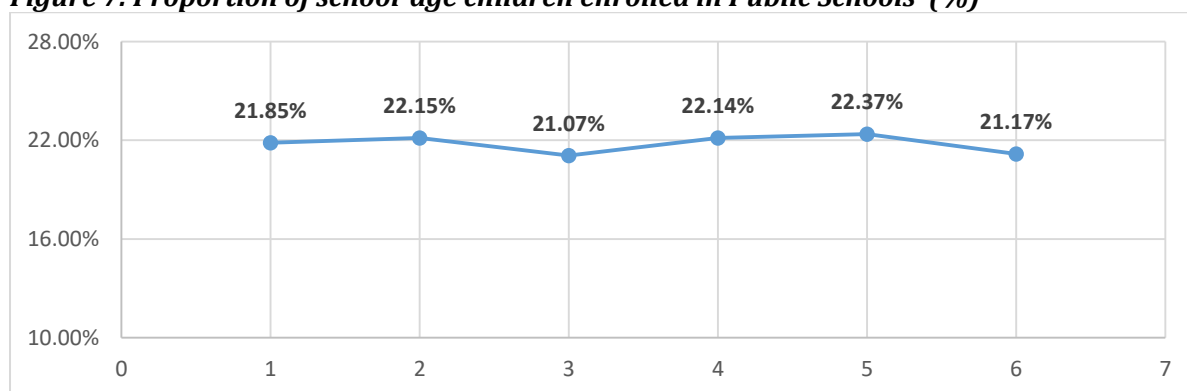
reading and writing material for schools although room for further refinement remains.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the strategic planning and data regimes have improved significantly.

However, these gains have not translated into significant improvements in access, attainment and learning outcomes.

**To begin with, most access indicators have either remained stagnant or recorded marginal decline with minor exceptions.** For instance: the *proportion of enrolments in public schools* as a percentage of total school-age children has remained stagnant around 22% between 2014 and 2019 (Graph 7). In other words, the share of out-of-government-school children has remained largely unchanged, averaging 78%. Similarly, the percentage of out-of-school children has not recorded any major reduction either. Moreover, *Gross Enrolment Ratio* for primary age has recorded a marginal decline from 74% in 2010 to 70% in 2019 (PBS, 2021). Similarly, *GER for metric* has also fallen from 38% in 2010 to 37% in 2019. Only *GER Middle* has increased from 35% in 2010 to 40% in 2019 (PBS, 2021). However, even for this indicator, the rate of progress remains higher in the pre-devolution period compared to the post-devolution period. Literacy rate (10 years and older) also has increased by 5 percentage points in the post-devolution period (PBS, 2021).

**ASER reports on learning outcomes of the past decade paint an encouraging picture of learning outcomes in rural Balochistan post-devolution.** These reports indicate that Urdu and local languages reading skills have improved at the primary and middle school levels. In contrast, English reading skills have registered moderate improvement at primary, middle and metric levels after 2010 (ASER, 2019). Similarly, arithmetic skills of students in rural Balochistan have recorded significant improvement at the primary and moderate improvement at the secondary level and deterioration at the metric level. The improvements in reading and arithmetic skills at the primary and middle is a positive sign. The stagnancy or even deterioration of learning outcomes in high schools is worrying. However, these findings need to be treated with caution as they are sample-based and include private schools as well.

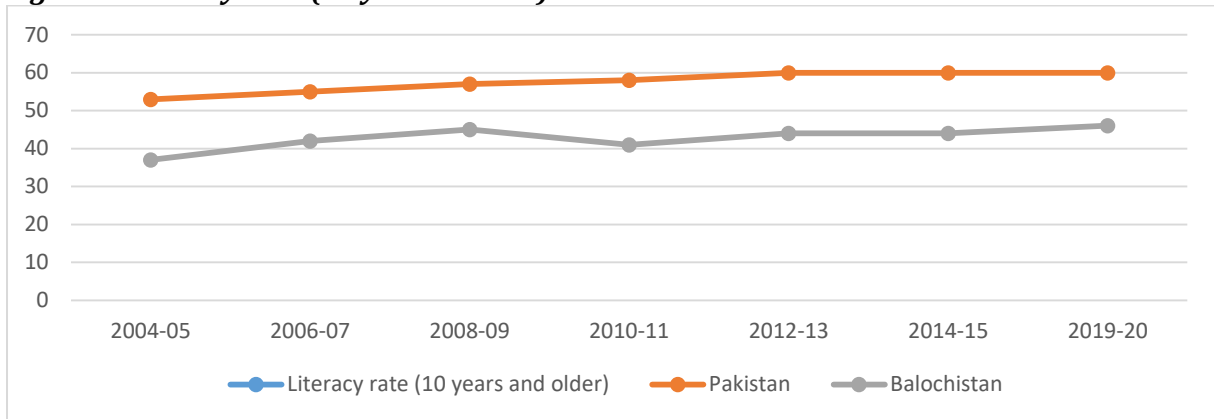
**Figure 7. Proportion of school-age children enrolled in Public Schools (%)**



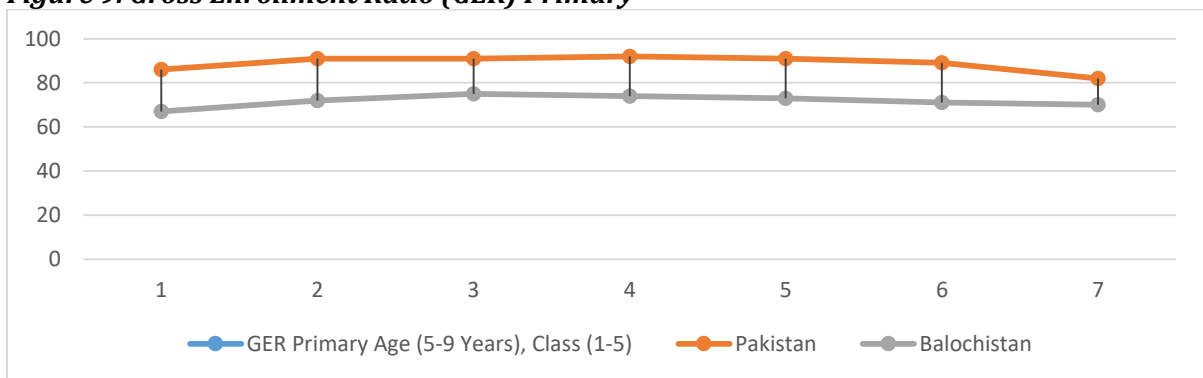
<sup>4</sup> Interviews with heads of middle and high schools in Killa Abdullah;



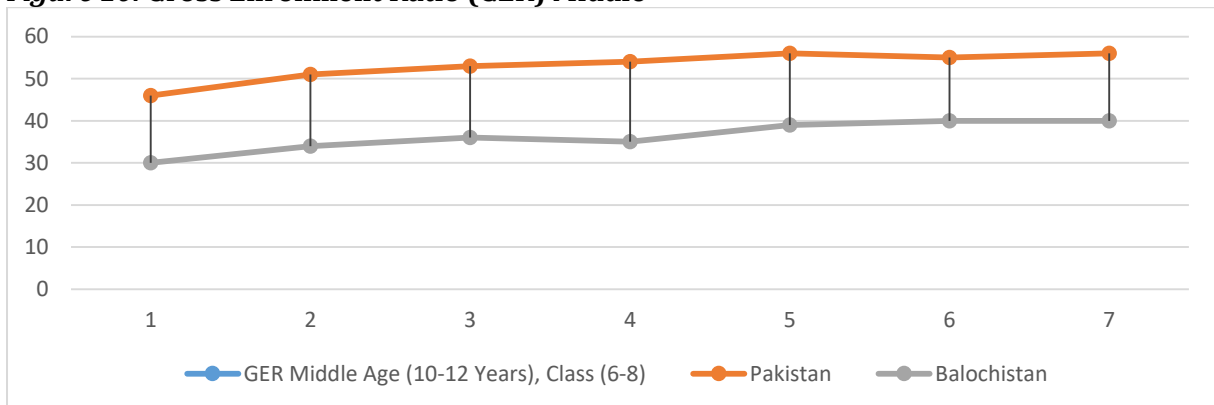
**Figure 8. Literacy Rate (10 years & older)**



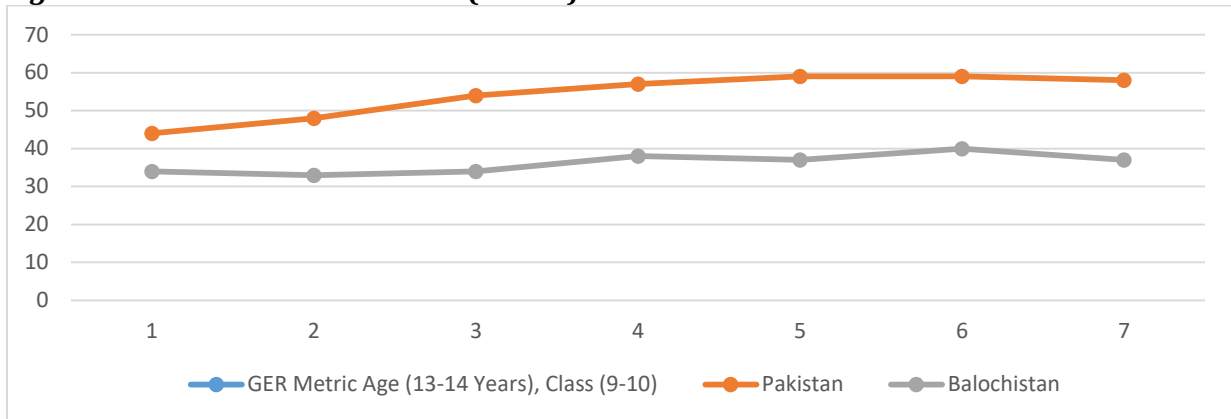
**Figure 9. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) Primary**



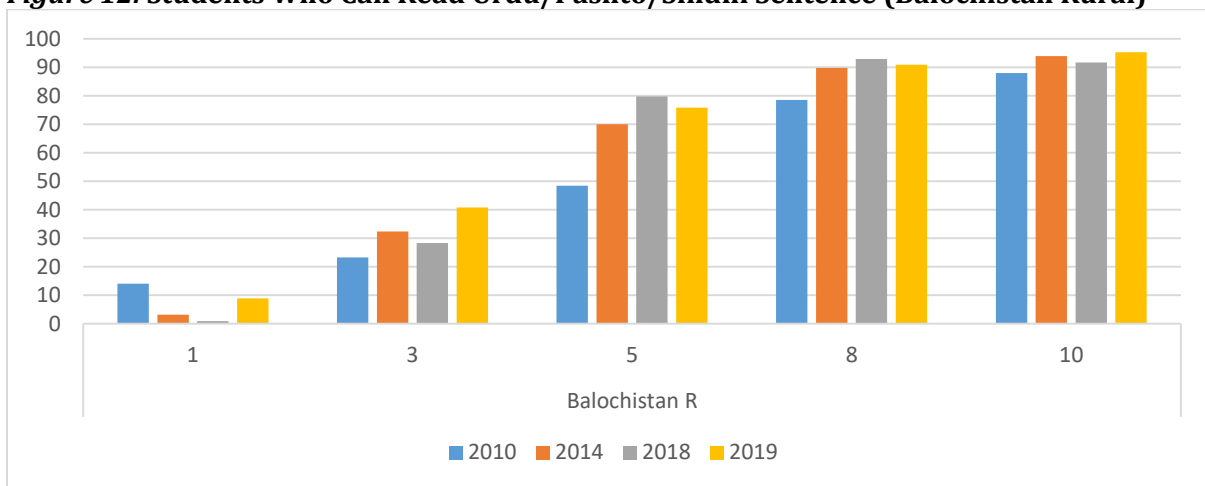
**Figure 10. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) Middle**



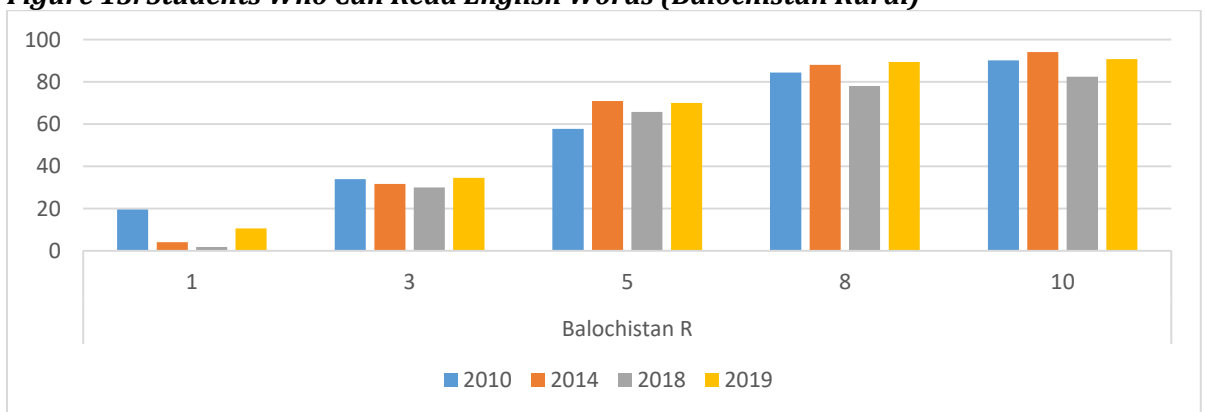
**Figure 11. Gross Enrollment Ratio (Matric)**



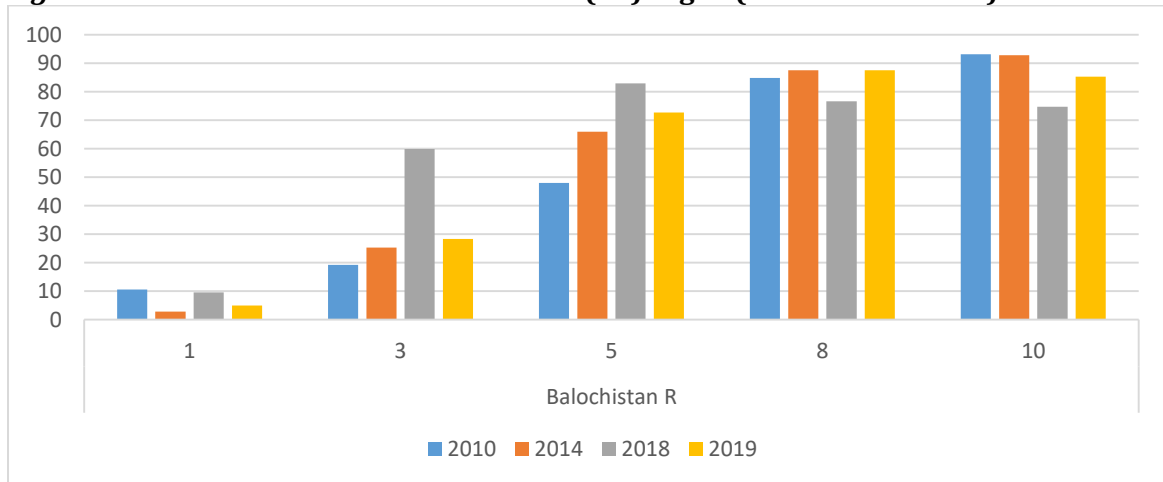
**Figure 12. Students Who Can Read Urdu/Pashto/Sindhi Sentence (Balochistan Rural)**



**Figure 13. Students Who Can Read English Words (Balochistan Rural)**



**Figure 14. Students Who Can Subtract Two (02) Digits (Balochistan Rural)**



## MAKING SENSE OF SLOWLY MOVING EDUCATION OUTCOMES: A SYSTEMIC AUDIT

This section highlights that the increased public spending and reforms in education management have not translated into commensurate improvements in access, attainment and learning outcomes. Nevertheless, limited gains have been observed in reading and arithmetic skills and overall literacy rate. Moreover, progress of national education indicators is even slower, making Balochistan a slightly better performer compared to rest of Pakistan. Low base and post-devolution prioritization of education probably explain the province's marginally-better performance in the post-devolution period.

Notwithstanding the marginal gains, Balochistan lags behind the rest of Pakistan on nearly all outcomes of education. There are two major explanations for this slow progress.

Firstly, learning outcomes aren't recording any significant improvement because **learning is not the objective of education policy and practice**. The factors elaborated from section 7.1 to 7.4 explain how various elements of the education system are not aligned around the goal of learning.

**Secondly, expansion of schooling appears to have remained a strategic objective of education policy and practice** but it hasn't experienced significant improvement either because **serious policy incoherence among various elements of education system** has undermined the latter's capability to ensure timely and reliable provision of all inputs necessary for enrolling and retaining children in school. The management of human, physical and financial resources available for education is too poor and inefficient to translate into major gains in schooling outcomes. Key proximate factors responsible for the inefficient management of education resources include but are not limited to weak policy and legal framework, ad hoc, centralized and politically-driven strategic planning processes, outdated and discretionary human resource management system, unavailability and opacity of data on performance of key actors, and ineffective accountability mechanisms at different levels in the education delivery chain. These factors are explained in sections 7.5-7.11.

A political economy analysis of education, instead, reveals, that the various elements of education are neither aligned around the goal of learning nor access. Instead, they are aligned around the goal of patronage politics. Education delivery is driven by short-term, clientelist, political objectives, which is in turn shaped by the nature of political settlement.

### 7.1 Poor Understanding of 'Learning'

Important stakeholders situated on the demand and supply side of education delivery have a very poor understanding of learning or quality education. Politicians often talk about education only in terms of a select number of inputs such as school infrastructure and number of teachers.<sup>5</sup> Senior bureaucrats also perceive education delivery mostly in terms of provision of buildings, classrooms and missing facilities and ensuring teacher attendance and timely availability of

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Minister Planning

textbooks.<sup>6</sup> School heads and teachers think about quality education in terms of availability of adequate facilities in school and punctuality and disciplined behaviour of students.<sup>7</sup> Parents, including those who are relatively educated, too have little understanding of learning or quality education. Most parents measure education quality in terms of marks in exams and proficiency in English language. This is one of the reasons why an overwhelming majority of parents prefer “English medium” private schools over public schools (SED, 2020).

## **7.2 Weak Alignment of Education Policy and Practice with the Goal of Learning**

Education planning, practice and resource allocation is not directed towards achieving the goal of learning. Improving classroom environment so that the child can learn is not the focus of education department.<sup>8</sup> Although official documents and education sector plans mention learning as one of the important objectives of education delivery in Balochistan (SED, 2021; SEDb, 2013) learning-related inputs hardly receive any actual policy attention and resources. In terms of policy recognition, both the Balochistan Education Sector Plans 2013-18 and 2020-25 review and analyse the poor state of learning outcomes and make extensive recommendations about standards, curriculum, textbooks, language, child preparedness, assessment, capacity development and teacher motivation and availability. However, an implementation review of BESP 2013-18 indicates that there was almost negligible progress on the recommendations pertaining to the afore-mentioned learning-related inputs (SED, 2020).

The reforms introduced in education planning, management and monitoring were also explained primarily by the fact that the entire process was led, pushed and financed by donors. The sector plans were also developed with donor support.<sup>9</sup> Donor-led efforts resulted in some gains because both the Chief Minister and Minister for Education between 2013 and 2015 were strong champions of education.

With the exception of the Chief Minister and Minister Education in 2013-15, the political and executive tier of the government appears to have been less enthusiastic about prioritization of learning. This is evident, among the others, in the education budgetary allocation and spending trends. For instance: the total development expenditures on education amount to approximately PKR 61 billion between 2011 and 2020 (P&DD, 2011-2020). Nearly 99% of this budget has been spent on “brick and mortar” component, which include provision of missing facilities, upgradation of existing schools and construction of new schools, colleges, universities and vocational institutes. There has been negligible expenditure from the development budget on the soft side of education delivery such as teacher trainings, assessments, standards, curriculum, managerial efficiency, and data and research. The limited resources spent on learning-related inputs such as teacher training and data, have often come from donors.

The only learning-related aspects of school education that attract significant attention of politicians and bureaucrats are language policy and history textbooks. In 2014, the Government of Balochistan enacted a legislative act to introduce mother languages as compulsory additional

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Special Secretary Education

<sup>7</sup> Notes from District Consultations conducted for preparation of Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020

<sup>8</sup> Secretary Education Former

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Special Secretary SED

subjects at the primary level. This Act recognized Balochi, Pashto, Brahui, Sindhi, Persian, Punjabi and Siraiki as mother languages of Balochistan. However, even this attention was not motivated by a recognition of the importance of language policy in learning design and needs of children. Instead, the focus on language and history textbooks was, and remains, driven mainly by the historical conflict between the dominant and minority ethnic groups of the country over nation-building objectives and manipulation of history to promote a particular ideological narrative.<sup>10</sup> This political nature of the focus on language explains why due attention and resources were subsequently not allocated for the effective implementation of the language Act, resulting in policy incoherences. Key follow-up measures required included ensuring the availability of trained teachers and devising a strategy for teaching mother languages in areas with diverse population.<sup>11</sup> More significantly, the political act of introduction of mother languages as additional subject rather than as medium of instruction has inadvertently increased burden on children by forcing them to learn a third language in addition to Urdu and English.

### **7.3 Learning Outcomes Are Not Measured and Monitored**

Owing to the limited policy recognition and prioritization of learning in actual education practice, learning outcomes don't get measured, monitored and reported in official data pertaining to education outcomes. Even the recently introduced Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Real Time School Monitoring (RTSM) systems don't measure and track progress on learning outcomes. Furthermore, the traditional organization and structure of secondary education department doesn't clearly and specifically assign the responsibility for improving and monitoring over-all learning outcomes to any particular section or office. Consequently, policy makers often remain unaware of the gravity of learning crisis and end up equating weak learning with inadequacy of resources.

The cumulative outcome is that learning remains missing from the agenda of politicians, bureaucrats as well as parents. Lack of reliable data on learning outcomes means that citizens, civil society organizations, media and governments can ignore the poor quality of education. Even the most active and well-meaning journalists monitor progress on education mostly in terms of number of schools, missing facilities and teacher attendance and availability. This is one reason why parents are not demanding better education quality from schools and governments.

### **7.4 Weak Regulatory Framework for Private Schools**

The framework for regulating private schools is weak and underdeveloped. The existing framework seeks to ensure the availability of required facilities and a minimum standard of quality in non-state schools and protect parents from exploitation and unfair fee hikes. However, there are two key issues. First, there is a lack of well-defined performance standards against which compliance can be monitored and ensured. Secondly, the existing regulatory framework focuses too much on monitoring and penalising non-governmental actors rather than treating

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with MPA, Balochistan & Ex-Minister Education

<sup>11</sup> Balochistan Education Sector Analysis 2020, p. 193.

them as partners in the delivery of education (SED, 2020). It lacks potential support mechanisms for the non-state schools.

## **7.5 Fragmented and Incomplete Legal & Policy Framework**

Twelve years since the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment was adopted, the Government of Balochistan still lacks an approved education policy. The current education policy framework comprises a mix of executive decisions, sector plan, acts and departmental notices. In absence of a holistic education policy, five-year sector plans have only partially filled the gap.

The legal framework governing the delivery of education also has serious gaps. Firstly, the Compulsory Education Act 2014 is too idealistic in scope and fails to consider the resource constraints of SED. Secondly, curriculum and standards were devolved to provinces but there is still no provincial legislation to govern them. The Single National Curriculum was adopted by the provincial government without any proper due diligence and despite strong objections from the Bureau of Curriculum.<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, in many cases, provincial legislation has been adopted but rules have not been framed. For instance: the rules of Compulsory Education Act 2014 and other legislative acts pertaining to Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission (BAEC), Mother Languages as Compulsory Additional Subject, and the Compulsory Education Act have not been approved yet.<sup>13</sup> This has not only created confusion regarding roles and responsibilities but also slowed down progress on their implementation.

## **7.6 Lack of Need-Based Systemic Planning**

The provision of education is not driven by meaningful perspective, medium and short-term planning. Although the development of sector plans has partially improved strategic planning, poor implementation has diminished their effectiveness. Joint Education Sector Reviews prepared by the SED reveal that only 25% of the targets of BESP 2013-18 were achieved (SED,2020). Similarly, the BESP 2020-25 was approved by the provincial Cabinet in December 2020. It took the Government another year to launch BESP 2020-25 in December 2021. By February 2022, the effective implementation of BESP 2020-25 had not begun.

Currently, the provision of necessary inputs of schooling, such as physical infrastructure, books, qualified teachers and teaching & learning material, is not driven by data-driven strategic planning, resulting in delays and misalignment between service provision and the actual needs of the education system.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Estimates of Need for School Infrastructure and Teachers***

Let's review and analyse public investment planning and teacher recruitment policy to assess the extent to which both are responding to actual needs of schools.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Head of Bureau of Curriculum

<sup>13</sup> Interview with, Ex-secretary SED

<sup>14</sup> Interview with School Headmaster in District Killa Abdullah

In order to obtain a comparative estimate of physical infrastructure needs of schools in Balochistan, the following three indicators are reviewed: children-school ratio, pupil-school ratio, pupil-classroom ratio.

- **Children School Ratio (CSR)** estimates the availability of schools for eligible age-children of a specific level of education. It is calculated by dividing the total number of eligible age children for a given level of education by the total number of schools for that level of education. Balochistan has lower CSR than Pakistan for all levels of education, indicating better availability of schools. For example: at the primary level, a school is available for every 185 children of primary age in Balochistan compared to 253 children in Pakistan (Figure 15).
- **Pupil School Ratio (PSR)**<sup>15</sup> indicates the degree of utilisation of existing school capacity. Comparative data indicates that Balochistan has significantly lower PSR values compared to the Pakistani average for all levels of education, implying that existing school capacity is significantly under-utilised. For school education as a whole, Balochistan has the lowest PSR compared to other provinces and regions of Pakistan (Figure 16).
- **Pupil Classroom Ratio** measures the availability of classrooms for enrolled students. A low pupil classroom ratio means that class size is small and that enough classrooms are available. Comparative data indicates that class sizes in Balochistan are smaller than those in Pakistan at all levels of school education(AEPAM, 2021).
- **Non-functional schools:** Data of SED reveals that there are approximately 2900 non-functional schools, including 2853 primary schools, in the province (S&GAD, 2022).

Balochistan's better school availability ratios and under-utilisation of existing capacity are explained primarily by the province's low population density. The province's highly dispersed population means that greater number of schools have to be built and higher number of teachers have to be hired to ensure schooling access to all population settlements. This has significantly enhanced the per-pupil cost of provision of education in the province. Vast distance from school is a particularly major issue after the primary level<sup>16</sup> as the province has drastically lesser number of middle and high schools.

The following two indicators provide a comparative overview of the state of teacher availability.

- **Pupil-Teacher Ratio** helps measure teacher workload and the amount of time and attention a child is likely to receive from teachers. A low PTR shows that a teacher on average has to deal with a small number of pupils and hence will be able to dedicate more time and attention to each student. Comparative data indicates that Balochistan has greater PTR at the primary level but much lower PTR than Pakistan at the middle and high school levels. There is a teacher for every 50 enrolled students at the primary level compared to 33 students in Pakistan (Graph 17). This indicates relative shortage of teachers at the primary level but more than optimal availability of teachers at the middle and high school levels.

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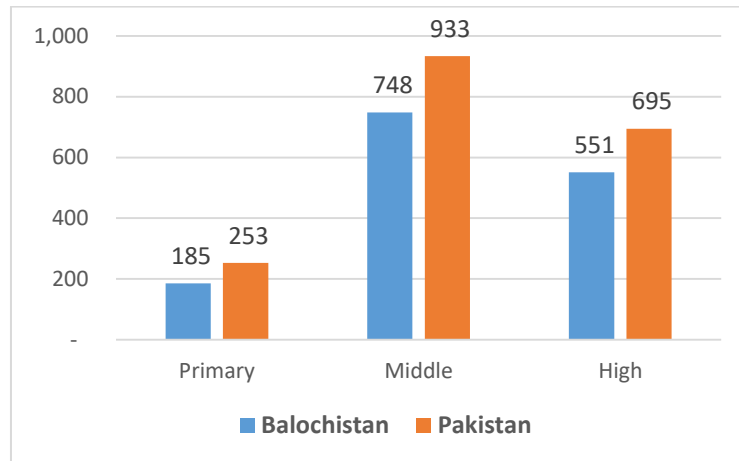
<sup>15</sup> PSR is calculated by dividing the number of enrolled students at a specific level of education by the total number of schools at that level of education.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Community Representative; Interview with Heads of Middle and High Schools,

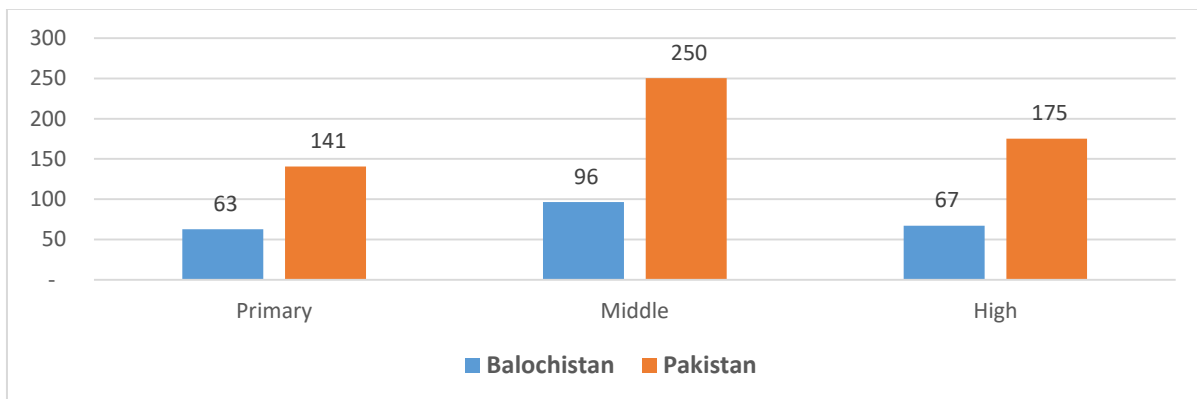


- Teacher-School Ratio** helps measure teacher availability in schools. High TSR indicates greater availability of teachers. Balochistan has one teacher available on average for each primary school compared to three teachers at Pakistan level (Figure 18).<sup>17</sup> This explains why over 40% of the total primary schools in the province are single-teacher schools (SEDb, 2021). At the middle and high school levels, the number of teachers per school in Balochistan and Pakistan is largely similar.

**Figure 15. Children School Ratio**



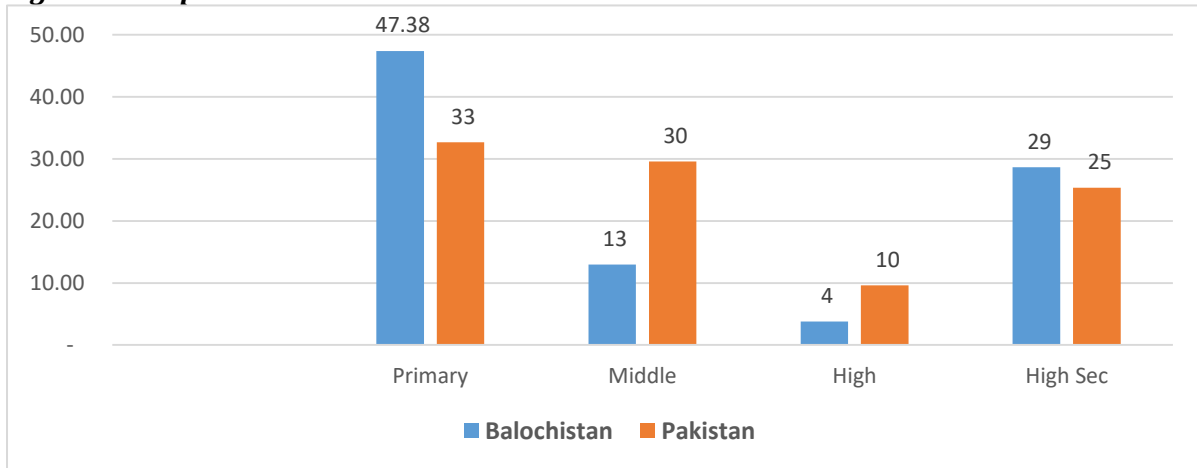
**Figure 16. Pupil-School Ratio**



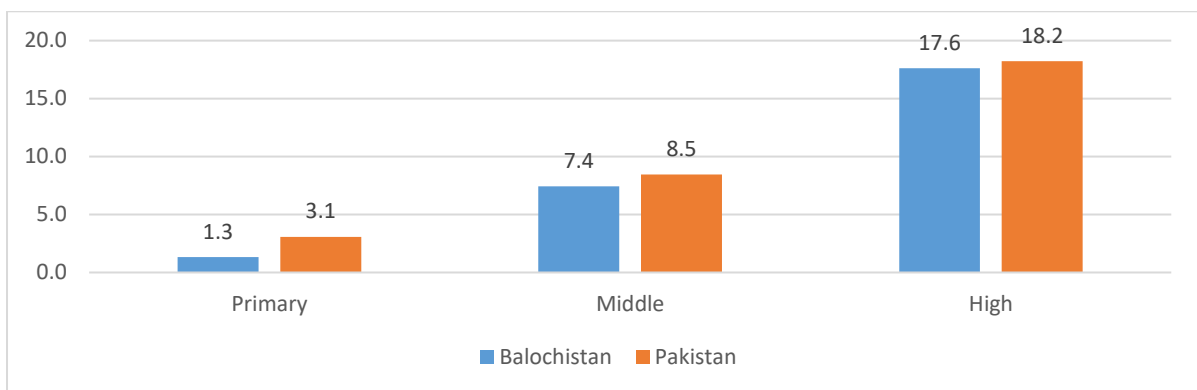

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<sup>17</sup> While teacher shortage is a genuine issue, the number of school teachers indicated by NEMIS and EMIS data is lesser than the actual number.

**Figure 17. Pupil Teacher Ratio**



**Figure 18. Teacher School Ratio**



The crux of the afore-mentioned data is that Balochistan fares relatively better in terms of availability of schools. Furthermore, data also reveals that existing school capacity in the province is significantly underutilised and that class size is above optimal at nearly all levels of education. Moreover, data also reveals that there is relative shortage of teachers at the primary level in Balochistan. Lastly, data also reveals that nearly one in every five schools is non-functional.

Findings of empirical data are also endorsed by community representatives and officials of the provincial education department. One of the most consistent findings of consultations conducted with community representatives, school heads and government officials is that new school buildings, especially at the primary level, are not needed in most parts of the province. Overwhelming majority of key informants consulted for this study and during preparation of last sector plan stressed that the government should prioritise ensuring availability of teachers, upgradation of existing primary and middle schools, provision of water and electricity to existing schools, provision of transportation and mobility support to address issues of vast distances, running well-designed enrolment campaigns, and provision of incentives to address demand-side issues related to poverty and cultural barriers (SED, 2020).<sup>18</sup> Participants also emphasised that non-availability of teachers, JV teacher at primary level and Science and Math teachers at middle

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with head of middle school; Interview with head of high school; Interview with community representative,

and high school level, is one of the biggest drivers of poor learning outcomes, low enrolments in public schools and existence of large number of non-functional and semi-functional schools.<sup>19</sup> Participants also highlighted the need for provision of basic utilities such as water and electricity.<sup>20</sup> This is also confirmed by empirical data. Only 12% and 15% primary schools in Balochistan have access to drinking water and electricity respectively compared to 68% and 61% in Pakistan (AEPAM, 2021).

Both empirical and qualitative data indicate that traditional approach of horizontal expansion of schools is not an economically viable option in Balochistan given the province's unique demography and terrain. Balochistan will have to shift to a more innovative approach to meet schooling needs of population. This may include use of digital technology tools as well as provision of transportation support to students and teachers.

### ***Actual Response of Education System to School Needs***

Despite evidence against construction of new schools and in favour of consolidation, operationalisation and efficient utilisation of existing schools, development budget of education continues to be spent mainly on building of new schools. A major chunk of development expenditures has also been targeted to ensure provision of missing facilities but this too has a strong bias towards hard infrastructure. For example: while the number of schools with toilet facilities has increased from 2,886 in 2014 to 5,867 in 2019 (SED, 2014; SED, 2020), most of these newly-built toilets remain without water and sewerage system (SED, 2020).<sup>21</sup> Between FY 2011-12 and FY 2019-20, GoB spent approximately PKR 61 Billion through the development component of the budget on expansion of educational opportunities in the province. This expenditure has translated into the following physical outputs:

- 3100 new schools
- provision of building to nearly 3,500 shelter less schools
- construction of toilet facilities in 2900 schools
- Construction of additional classrooms, boundary walls, water facilities and other missing facilities in public schools
- 02 new cadet colleges and 02 BRCs.
- Construction of new degree colleges
- Establishment of 02 medical colleges
- Establishment of sub-campuses of existing universities

The alarming part about singular focus on 'brick and mortar' is that even these expenditures are not targeted to the most needy. Schools are often built in areas where there is least need for them.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the decision to upgrade a school is also not informed by any data, actual need

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with head of high school

<sup>20</sup> Interview with head of middle school; Interview with head of high school; Interview with community representative,

<sup>21</sup> Interview with head of middle school KA;

<sup>22</sup> Interview with former Additional Secretary Education; Interview with head of high school KA, Interview with community representative;

or consultation with relevant stakeholders.<sup>23</sup> Most often, deserving schools get left out.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, a great chunk of the capital spending on education is consumed by elite public schools in the shape of the chain of Balochistan Residential Colleges (BRCs) and Cadet Colleges. While most of these boarding schools are delivering better quality of education, their impact in terms of numbers is very limited. The average total enrolment in these boarding schools is around 300-400 students in a given year but the per capita cost of building and maintaining these schools is significantly higher as compared to regular public schools.

In addition to public investment planning, the case of hiring of teachers is another glaring example of the poor responsiveness of education planning to actual needs of the system. Despite the serious lack of availability of teachers, the education system appears to have remained oblivious to the problem. Nearly 8,000 teaching posts lie vacant (S&GAD, 2022). The last major recruitment of teachers took place in 2014-15 when 5,000 teachers were hired through a merit-based recruitment system (Alif Ailaan, 2018). Since then, new teachers have not been hired. During the same period, at least 3000 new schools have been built and hundreds of teachers have retired.

### ***Why Is Education Planning Poorly Aligned with Needs of the System?***

The key reason for weak alignment of education planning with the most pressing needs of the sector is the discretionary, fragmented, centralized and politically-driven strategic planning.

The processes of formation of public sector development program (PSDP) are driven mainly by political considerations.<sup>25</sup> Development budget for education is prepared as per the wishes of Ministers and members of the provincial assembly. The SED has a limited say in formulating the development budget for education, let alone involving the attached units and divisional and district tiers. For example, in financial year (FY) 2018-19, around 395 development schemes were sanctioned in the development budget, out of which only 16 schemes were reportedly included on the recommendation of the department whereas remaining 380 schemes were identified by MPAs (World Bank, 2018). Within treasury benches, the more powerful ministers get to divert more funds to their constituencies. More recently, development schemes are also identified and proposed by the military and non-elected people known as 'notables'. The schemes identified by MPAs, the military and notables often don't go through any meaningful scrutiny and appraisal process.

In addition to politically-driven planning, the piecemeal approach to construction and operationalisation of new schools and upgradation of existing schools is also a major reason for growing ineffectiveness of development expenditures. The process of construction of new schools is not integrated with the process of hiring of human resources required for making newly-built schools functional.<sup>26</sup> The result is that the process of approval of posts for new schools (Schedule of New Expenditures) and hiring against the approved posts commences often after the completion of construction work. The processes of both approval and hiring are complicated and often face serious delays.<sup>27</sup> Among others, the existence of a relatively meritorious and rules-

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with head of school; Interview with community representative

<sup>24</sup> Interview with head of middle school KA,

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Chief of Section Education P&DD, Interview with Head of Middle School KA

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Special Secretary SED

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Special Secretary SED

based policy for hiring of teachers, which reduces room for discretion and manoeuvring, explains why there is lesser high-level push for recruitment of new teachers.<sup>28</sup>

The highly politicised education planning explains why many new and old school buildings remain non-functional or without required teachers for years. According to EMIS data, the number of non-functional schools has increased progressively over the past years, rising from 955 schools in 2014 to 2,902 schools in 2019. Most of these non-functional schools were built recently but remain non-functional due to non-availability of teachers.<sup>29</sup> These stats indicate that increased public investments on expansion of schooling are failing to achieve desired results.

### **7.7 Lack of a Rules-Based Workforce Management Framework and Specialized Institutional Mechanisms and Capacity**

SED lacks a rules-based and data-driven framework and specialized institutional arrangement for managing the large work force and assets of school education. In absence of a rules-based framework, the routine management of human resource takes place through notifications issued on an emerging need basis. The department lacks a well-thought-out transfer-posting policy. Consequently, decisions with regards to human resource management involve significant human discretion<sup>30</sup>, which has enhanced the education system's vulnerability to individual influences and external pressures.

Secondly, the nearly 74173 employees, who are spread across nearly every village and union council of the province, are managed through an outdated and inefficient manual system. Even routine tasks involve coordination between multiple parts of the system, which causes avoidable delays, raises transaction costs and makes it difficult to monitor performance. The EMIS has made an attempt to gather and compile data on teachers but this data remains incomplete. The absence of an automated human resource management information system has resulted in serious inefficiencies.

Thirdly, the secondary education department lacks a dedicated unit to look after the management and development of workforce, resulting in policy discontinuity and fragmentation, and discretionary management practices. Similarly, the education system also doesn't produce education specialists in areas of teacher training, textbooks, curriculum and examinations.

Lastly, the personnel managing the delivery of education also lack specialized management skills. Two types of personnel run the education system: generalist managers belonging to the federal and provincial civil services cadres and education managers, mostly from teaching cadre. Generalist managers look after the overall management of education in the Secretariat whereas personnel from the provincial education cadres (teaching and bureau) typically occupy senior management positions at the district and divisional levels and in the attached departments of SED. Generalist managers often don't have any background in education but they have broad management skills. Managers from education cadres receive no formal training in management either during their pre-service education or after induction as managers (SED, 2021). A key

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Ex-Secretary Education

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Special Secretary;

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Special Secretary SED; Interview with Heads of Middle & High Schools,

manifestation of the adverse impact of specialized managers on education management is the case of District Education Officers (DEOs), who come from the teaching cadre. Having remained part of the teaching fraternity for 15-20 years, a teacher is often unable to nudge and monitor the performance of former colleagues after becoming DEO. This is also a potential case of conflict of interest. The result is that DEOs are highly vulnerable to the influence and pressure of teacher unions and have understandably failed to curb teacher absenteeism and other issues at the district level.

In absence of an institutionalized rules-based management framework, most decisions about appointments, deployment, trainings, postings and tenures of employees are influenced by external actors, including politicians, bureaucracy, teacher unions and tribal leaders.<sup>31</sup> The high degree of politicization and vulnerability to external pressures has compromised the independence and impartiality of education workforce and adversely affected the provision of education to children. Key manifestations of the politicized and discretionary human resource management are:

**Frequent and abrupt transfer-postings:** Abrupt and frequent transfer postings of heads of key departments and organisations involved in the delivery of education at the provincial, divisional and district level has almost become a norm in Balochistan. For example, 13 officers have served as Secretary SED between April 2013 and Dec 2021, with the average tenure of a Secretary being eight months. Relative stability was observed during the two-and-a-half year tenure of Dr. Malik when the Secretary was changed only twice (Table 1). Similarly, the heads of attached departments are changed frequently and without any compelling justification. Furthermore, District Education Officers (DEOs) and teachers also face frequent, abrupt, and often politically-motivated, transfers-postings.<sup>32</sup> School heads and district education managers have no say in decision related to transfer posting of teachers. Consequently, schools in many rural and remote areas remain without teachers as the politically-connected teachers manage to secure transfers to urban centres.

- Similarly, quite often existing vacancies are filled through ad-hoc appointments or assigning of additional responsibilities to existing officers.<sup>33</sup> Recently, the Cabinet has given approval for hiring of intern teachers as a temporary arrangement to make non-functional schools operational(S&GAD, 2022). These ad-hoc practices have proven counter-productive for organisational capacity.

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Principal High School Killa Abdullah

<sup>32</sup> Interview with head of high school KA

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

**Table 1. Tenures of Secretaries SED**

S.No	From	To	Duration (months)
1	22/04/2013	12/05/2013	0.70
2	19/06/2013	24/10/2014	16.17
3	24/10/2014	25/06/2016	18.00
4	27/06/2016	09/01/2017	6.40
5	24/01/2017	12/06/2017	4.63
6	04/07/2017	20/07/2017	0.53
7	21/07/2017	19/01/2018	6.00
8	19/01/2018	25/10/2018	9.20
9	25/10/2018	11/02/2020	15.57
10	12/02/2020	17/08/2020	6.17
11	17/08/2020	05/08/2021	11.63
12	17/08/2021	06/10/2021	1.67
13	06/10/2021	Date	6.00

## **7.8 Weak School Management**

The major governance and management issues that have affected education delivery at the provincial and district level also exist at school level. Schools don't have management plans. Schools are run mostly as per the wishes of head teacher and are vulnerable to external influences.

## **7.9 Input-centric Monitoring Mechanism**

The introduction of the Real Time School Monitoring (RTSM) and EMIS have partially addressed data gaps and improved the monitoring capability of education managers. Between May 2016 and May 2019, deductions worth PKR 188 million were made from salaries of absent teachers identified through RTSM data.<sup>34</sup> Many chronically-absent teachers reportedly submitted premature resignations.

Despite improvement in data regime, serious flaws persist in education monitoring. First, there is a lack of holistic system-wide monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the education system as a whole and its various sub-systems. The current monitoring is input-focused mainly. Processes are monitored only occasionally. Outputs, learning outcomes and impact are not measured at all. Even the input-monitoring is restricted to only a few inputs of education such as number of schools, missing facilities and teacher attendance. Furthermore, while data gathering has improved, the capacity of PMC to analyse data remains significantly weak.

Secondly, there is limited follow-up action on whatever data is available. PMC is not yet fully integrated in SED. Action on the issues identified by RTSM is taken only when there is external pressure.

## **7.10 Failure of Accountability Mechanisms**

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<sup>34</sup> RTSM Data Sheet Shared by Secondary Education Department

Education system in Balochistan lacks effective oversight and accountability mechanisms, both at systemic and individual levels. Systemic accountability mechanisms are based on strong monitoring and evaluation systems, fed by robust information systems and oversight mechanisms that ensure remedial action.

Systemic accountability is nearly absent at all levels. At the highest level, there is no mechanism to review and monitor performance of ministers on a periodic basis. Similarly, ministers of secondary education have limited will and capacity to monitor the performance of bureaucratic tier. The Secretary SED also lacks a data-driven results-based system to measure and assess the performance of attached units. This has resulted in a school system where performance of key stakeholders is neither measured nor reported. The only component of school education that attracts significant high-level attention, and for which a relatively effective top-to-bottom accountability mechanism is in place, is the approval, implementation and execution of development projects of school education.

In absence of system-wide accountability, limited individual-level accountability mechanisms exist but they too are focused heavily on teachers. The two main instruments of individual-level accountability are the Real Time School Monitoring data and the Annual Performance Evaluation Reports. Both have serious deficiencies and enable limited accountability at best. RTSM mainly monitors teacher attendance only. The teacher-attendance-centric monitoring regime often ends up penalizing the already overburdened primary school teachers, most of whom manage all 6 grades of a primary school.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it also is based on the inaccurate assumption that teacher absenteeism is the biggest problem in school education. Beyond monitoring of attendance, there is no mechanism to measure performance of teachers, school heads, education managers, staff of attached organizations and policy-makers. The following quote from a middle school head master aptly captures the state of accountability:

*“I was inducted in this school as a teacher in 2002. Since then, I have been asked questions about attendance and school environment only on two occasions i.e. 2014 and 2021. Other than these two occasions, nobody in the education department has inquired about my performance or achievements of the school. When somebody asks me questions about my performance, I will have some incentive to demonstrate performance. When nobody is holding me accountable, what incentive do I have to perform?”*

Annual evaluations are conducted through Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) for those above grades 15 and through service books in case of gazetted officers of 16 and above. The system has more or less become ineffective. Adverse ACRs are rarely, if ever, written. Most supervisors are not even trained on personnel evaluation.

In addition to limited individual-level accountability mechanisms, several social accountability forums were also created as part of the implementation of BESP 2013-18. These forums included Local Education Group (LEG), District Education Group (DEG), Local Education Council (LEC), and Parent Teacher School Management Committee (PTSMC) were respectively created at the provincial, district, cluster, and school levels. The creation of these platforms has improved

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Representative of Teacher Union



community participation in school affairs to some extent but most remain non-functional as there is limited community interest as well as lack of sustained support on the part of the government.<sup>36</sup>

The proximate causes of limited systemic and individual-level accountability mechanisms include lack of clarity over the responsibilities of each actor in education delivery, lack of results-based operational planning, limited availability of information on performance of key actors, absence of high-level accountability forum, administrative discontinuity, and the declining importance of annual performance reviews (SED, 2021).

However, a deeper analysis reveals that unhealthy politics and tribal mode of social organization are among the biggest hurdles in accountability. For details, see Section 8.

### **7.11 Limited Public Access to Information on Various Aspects of Education Delivery**

Transparency can be instrumental in improving public access to information about the various aspects of education delivery. Increasing transparency is likely to amplify the public voice and enable them to function as an effective check on elected representatives. Currently, there is opacity of information about many aspects of service delivery. Organised citizen groups don't have adequate access to information on performance of education minister and the Secondary Education Department (SED).

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Heads of Schools

## UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION DELIVERY

Lack of sustained political support is a major hurdle in the governance and management of education. Excessive political interference in education has manifested itself across the value chain of education delivery. From politically-driven planning to abrupt and pre-mature transfers and non-merit based appointments, intrusive political interference has had a negative impact on education management.

This section deploys the analytical framework of political settlement advanced by Mushtaq Khan to interpret the findings of the previous sections (Khan, 2018). The political settlement framework can offer meaningful insights in understanding the interplay of formal and informal institutions and the de-jure and de-facto sources of power involved in education service delivery in Balochistan. The framework can help unearth the potential incentives of different stakeholders in a sub-optimal equilibrium of the system. Political settlement plays a critical role in shaping the capacity and commitment of elites to education delivery (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). It also shapes and influences if a particular reform is feasible in the short to medium term.

### 8.1 Nature of Political Settlement in Balochistan

A number of typologies have been prepared for political settlements. Each type of political settlement offers different incentives, opportunities and constraints for public service delivery. The manner in which formal and informal power is organised in Balochistan fits more closely with a fragile and predatory settlement characterised by high degree of political exclusion, fragmentation, competitive clientelism and personalised institutions. Key features of existing political settlement are as follows:

**High degree of fragility and exclusivity:** The current political settlement is marked by weak legitimacy and high degree of forced exclusion. There are two layers of exclusion. First, the pro-independence Baloch separatists contest the legitimacy of the State itself and are employing violence to change political settlement. Secondly, the more popular Baloch and Pashtun nationalist parties accept the legitimacy of the State but have been excluded from political settlement because of their relative reluctance to conform to the informal rules of the game set by the most powerful player in the ruling coalition i.e. the military (Riaz-ul-haq, 2021). The ruling coalition relies on repression and distribution of political power and development funds to stay in power.

The current political settlement, however, is **highly unsustainable** for two reasons. Firstly, the cost of keeping the loosely-bound ruling coalition intact is immense in what is a frail formal economy. Given that the most powerful actor in the ruling coalition lacks meaningful legitimacy and social support base and stands to lose the most from credible process of elections, there is a constant need to engineer formal political processes.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, since loyalty of artificial leaders propped up by the military can't be trusted once the former build sufficient independent support base, the military faces the need to constantly produce new, pliant leadership. This helps in keeping the coalition in tact through the credible threat of replacement of old-but-now-assertive

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<sup>37</sup> Sardar Akhtar Mengal Interview Aaj TV, 19 April

protégés with new ones. Secondly, the excluded groups enjoy greater and firmer popular support, especially among the chattering class. The social networks supporting the excluded groups include an overwhelming majority of youth and the educated middle class including professional groups and the bureaucracy.

**Political fragmentation and low elite cohesion:** The second defining feature of the existing political settlement in Balochistan is the obdurately high level of political fragmentation and low level of elite cohesion. The key sources of fragmentation are prevalence of tribal mode of social organisation, regionally-segregated ethnic diversity and the insignificant political weight of the province in Pakistan's majoritarian federal scheme.

Balochistan has a very comprehensive tribal system characterized by a clear leadership structure and lineage patterns, strong bonds of affiliation and well-defined dispute resolution mechanisms (Gazdar, 2007). Tribal social organisation is prevalent in most areas of Balochistan, with possible exceptions being Mekran division and urban centers such as Quetta. Tribal networks often act as the default units of political mobilization and management of collective action. The ubiquity of tribal social organisation has profound impact on politics and service delivery. Firstly, as a vertically-aligned social network, tribal social organisation has discouraged inclusive and horizontal class-based political mobilisation and encouraged the targeted provision of public goods through patron-client networks (Gazdar, 2007). Secondly, tribal norms of in-group solidarity, reciprocity and credible threat of social sanctions often shape individual behaviour in ways that may foster disregard for and poor compliance with formal rules and processes (Lambsdorff, Taube, & Schramm, 2005). This has serious implications for management and accountability processes associated with provision of public goods such as education. At the local level in particular, tribalism has weakened formal mechanisms of accountability (Gazdar, 2007).

Ethnic diversity in Balochistan has reinforced and magnified the impact of tribalism on development outcomes. While ethnic diversity has favoured ethnically-aligned political behaviour, the fact that the two major ethnic groups are also segregated regionally has incentivised political competition, bargaining and accommodation along ethno-regional lines. Secondly, ethnic diversity has made difficult the business of arriving at a consensus on major development priorities or public sector reforms (Gazdar, 2007). Thirdly, it has facilitated the 'ethnicisation' of major decisions pertaining to allocation of public resources, goods and services, jobs, and creation of new administrative units.

In addition to tribalism and ethnic diversity, majoritarian federal design has also contributed to political fragmentation in the province (Zahoor & Rumi, 2020). To begin with, it has made the province the least attractive constituency for country-wide political parties aspiring to come into power at the federal level, thus incentivising the growth of smaller regional parties. The tribal and ethnic fragmentation combined with majoritarian federal design have incentivised the growth and proliferation of small ethnic and regional parties whose appeal rarely transcends ethnic boundaries.

The low level of elite cohesion has been exacerbated by the progressively **rising inter-elite competition for access to power**, who face strong incentives to use institutions to distribute public goods among their patronage networks. The interaction of formal electoral processes with informal institutions of tribal social organisation has strengthened and deepened patron-client networks over the years. Fiscal and administrative decentralization has further intensified political competition among local elites over scarce public goods.

The cumulative outcome is that the prospects of a single party gaining majority in provincial assembly have effectively diminished and multi-party coalitions have become a structural feature of polity. Since its creation as a province in 1970, no party has ever obtained an absolute majority in the provincial assembly (Sujag 2020). Moreover, the number of coalition partners has also progressively increased over the past decades. Coalition politics makes agreement on a major policy shift or reform highly difficult. The head of each faction and party in a coalition typically acts as a veto player on key policy decisions and reforms. Similarly, virtually all treasury benchers need to be rewarded through share in PSDP and influence over transfer postings in order to retain their support for the government.<sup>38</sup> There is no political party that takes ownership of the province as a whole. Politicians are focused almost entirely on their immediate electoral constituencies. Coalition politics has also impeded and diluted accountability as responsibility for performance of public sector institutions can't be fixed or attributed to a particular party.

**Personalised institutions:** The third defining feature of the political settlement in Balochistan is the highly personalized nature of institutions. Political parties are controlled by individuals and dynasties, who also shape and determine party policy and strategy. Democratic mechanisms for decision-making exist nominally but haven't been institutionalized. Similarly, the provincial bureaucracy is highly politicized and governed according to personalized and informal rules shaped mainly by tribal and ethnic identity of the actor involved. The introduction of competitive electoral politics at a point in time when state capacity was not developed and provincial bureaucracy was relatively new helped consolidate patronage politics and facilitated elite capture of public organizations (Hickey & Hossain, 2020).

**Outsized importance of development funds in patronage politics:** The fourth important feature of the political settlement in Balochistan is the outsized status of the public sector development programme (PSDP). The deeply fragmented nature of polity combined with negligible presence of the private sector and limited size of formal productive economy mean that powerful elites have come to use budgetary resources acquired through fiscal transfers to buy and sustain political loyalties. In this regard, the development budget has acquired great political significance. The military uses development funds and the associated rent-seeking opportunities such as contracts and other procurement opportunities to expand its business empire, reward loyal supporters and cultivate new leaders. Civilian elites use these funds to keep the otherwise loose and fragile coalitions together. The bureaucracy uses them for corruption and rent-seeking opportunities. Furthermore, the limited level of capitalist development means that emerging entrepreneurs and businesses also focus on PSDP to accumulate wealth. They build alliances with politicians to secure construction contracts or divert public investments for their personal gains. The latter explains why a large majority of projects in PSDP are individual-centric rather than of collective nature.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, share in PSDP has become the most important bone of contention in inter-elite bargaining and often ends up in either litigation or break-up of coalitions.<sup>40</sup> This behaviour on display when opposition parties joined hands with dissidents of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) to bring a no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Jam

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Minister P&D

<sup>39</sup> [Only projects benefiting masses should be in PSDP: Balochistan High Court - Pakistan - DAWN.COM](#)

<sup>40</sup> [Balochistan opposition holds protest over new PSDP - Pakistan - DAWN.COM](#) ;

Kamal.<sup>41</sup> The agenda that brought the opposition parties and dissidents of BAP together was the commitment from the new Chief Minister, who also belongs to BAP, that MPAs of opposition parties will be given sufficient share in current and upcoming PSDP.<sup>42</sup>

The high degree of politicisation of PSDP has not only made rent-seeking and clientelist distribution of public resources a systemic feature of Balochistan's political economy but also adversely affected service delivery. Nearly the entire high-level policy attention, time and efforts are consumed by PSDP at the expense of soft side of service delivery. Progress on PSDP projects is the top priority of nearly all Cabinet, Ministerial and other senior-level progress review meetings held periodically.<sup>43</sup>

## 8.2 Implications of Political Settlement for School Education

**Short-term elite horizons and constituency-centric priorities:** The most important policy consequence of the highly fragile, fragmented and exclusive political settlement is the awfully short-term horizons of political elites. They are unable to make credible commitments and instead follow a predatory behavior to divert as many public goods to their patronage networks as possible. They have no incentive to invest in systemic education reforms as they are uncertain of their ability to secure gains from these long-term investments. Furthermore, since no political party has a support base that transcends ethnic boundaries, there isn't ownership of the province as a whole, which has discouraged introduction of province-wide programmatic interventions in education and encouraged constituency-specific targeted provision.

**Domination of public agenda setting and accountability discourse by issues of conflict & legitimacy:** One of the most important impact of the ongoing ethnic conflict on service delivery is that the public discourse and agenda setting space has been hogged/dominated by issues of conflict & legitimacy of ruling coalition. Service delivery issues remain low in agenda-setting as well as accountability debates. It is difficult for even the relatively popular and ideological parties to ignore the more pressing and visible issues of enforced disappearances and violations of human rights.

The military-led ruling coalition too is interested primarily in preserving order and political control and maintaining a semblance of stability. Their elected allies are also responsive and vocal mainly on the issues that the military prefers. Education delivery remains a secondary priority for the ruling coalition.

**Weak alignment of elite interest with expansion of schooling:** Balochistan lacks a critical mass of capitalist class that may exert pressure on the government to invest in education for producing skilled labour. The main incentive for elites to invest in education comes from the need to build, maintain and extend patron-client networks for electoral gains. This explains why short-term constituency-centric patronage politics shapes education provision.

Education is the biggest civilian employer in the province. Compared to other sectors, education can deliver both popular legitimacy and access to a great many public goods that can be

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<sup>41</sup> [Behind the scenes: Why did CM Jam Kamal Khan resign? \(geo.tv\)](#)

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Minister P&D

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Special Secretary SED

distributed directly to favored groups and regions. These public goods include schools, jobs, public procurement contracts and transfer postings at favoured positions and in favoured regions. The political pay offs of these tangible goods fit well with the short-term time horizons of ruling elites. In contrast, investment in learning-related inputs of education are invisible and can't possibly produce rapid returns. In given circumstances, there is almost complete misalignment of elite interests with gains in learning outcomes. There is, however, partial alignment with expansion of schooling but only insofar as it enables elites to divert public goods to their patronage networks. This explains why there is considerable policy incoherence even for access-related objectives.

Within elites, there is a qualitative difference among type of political parties. The relatively ideological and representative political parties have an interest in provision of education not only for building and maintaining patron-client networks but also for securing legitimacy among core supporters. This explains why, contrary to the nature of political settlement, education in Balochistan witnessed an unprecedented increase in public financing, merit-based recruitment of teachers and introduction of much-needed reforms in management and governance during the two-and-a-half-years tenure of Dr. Malik of National Party.<sup>44</sup> Most of these reforms survived the change of government but didn't receive the same level of support. In contrast, the relatively non-ideological political parties use education mainly for patronage politics. They have no interest in systemic reforms. Both elites have also prioritized education to get access to international development financing.

High political fragmentation and fragile nature of political settlement explains the half-baked and incoherent nature of reforms. These "occasional islands of success", however, have resulted at best in "institutional isomorphism and mimicry—institutional mimicking of what is considered "good bureaucratic practice" rather than real change in ground realities (Aiyar et. al, 2021).

**Strong power of teacher unions:** Teacher unions are organized and have the ability to block reforms that they perceive as an infringement on their core interests. Political parties across the spectrum have a tendency to surrender to pressure exerted by teacher unions. Political parties appease teacher unions because the latter are not only well-organized but also useful during election campaigns and on election day. Teachers play a crucial role in the conduct of elections as they perform a range of election duties.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, there is a close connection between teachers and political elites. Teachers can be influential constituents both as members of campaign teams but also as key influencers in their tribes.

**High degree of politicisation of education workforce:** The working and management of education workforce is highly politicized and influenced by informal institutions and negotiations. From selection of site for infrastructure project to appointment and postings at important positions, nearly all major decisions with regards to the planning, management and monitoring of school education are shaped largely by ethno-regional and coalitional politics at

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Special Secretary SED; Secretary SED, Chief of Section P&DD

<sup>45</sup> Interview with teacher union

the provincial level and tribal politics at the local level.<sup>46</sup> Formal arrangements function as intended only insofar as they are aligned with the interests of the powerful actors.

**Weak community ownership and engagement:** Consultations with heads of schools and government officials revealed 'lack of interest' on the part of parents in affairs of schools.<sup>47</sup> The disinterest of parents is explained by multiple factors. Firstly, the relatively educated and well-off classes have opted out of public schools and therefore are not concerned much about the state of affairs there. From school teacher to politician, nearly every stakeholder interviewed for this research had kids enrolled in private schools. Those who enrol their kids in public schools are often among the poorest segments of society. But even these people have a very pessimistic view of potential returns from enrolling kids in public schools. The pessimistic view of public schools combined with low literacy level of relatively poor parents discourage them from taking active interest in school affairs. The result is that there is a lack of an organised and powerful constituency to exert pressure on the education system at the local and provincial levels. Secondly, hierarchical tribal structures and social norms of in-group solidarity also prevent ordinary parents from engaging in school affairs and holding teachers or head of school accountable.

With regards to community engagement, two very intriguing observations were made during field research. Firstly, schools, especially middle and high schools, were observed to be functioning better in areas where there was strong ownership by community as a whole or local leader. In the two cases where community leader was pro-actively engaged in school affairs, the leader was not a traditional tribal elder. Instead, an ordinary political worker had risen to leadership position.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, the number of madrassahs in rural areas had increased over the years. Nearly all madrassahs were functional without any formal means of support from the government or a non-profit organisation. The biggest success factor was strong community ownership and support. Most community members viewed Madrassah not only through the lens of religion but also treated them as privately-owned ventures.

**Monopolisation of public policy space by PSDP:** The high-level policy attention, time and resources that should have been allocated to monitoring and improving of school education as a whole have been consumed by development projects. While meetings to monitor progress on PSDP projects are held almost every month at the level of either the Cabinet, Chief Minister, Minister or Chief Secretary, meetings to monitor the soft and mundane aspects of education delivery don't take place for months and even years.

These examples do not prove that providing more textbooks, higher teacher wages, or school improvement plans do not contribute to student learning. Instead, they show that attempts to address these individual problems without considering the wider system are likely to fail.

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Special Secretary SED; Secretary SED, Heads of Schools,

<sup>47</sup> Interview with heads of schools,

<sup>48</sup> Interview with head of school, Interview with Community representative.

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