



GIRLS’ PRIMARY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF QUETTA

¹Summra Hamid

²Asadullah Raisani

¹Research Officer, Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN), Quetta.

²Research Officer, Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN), Quetta.

Abstract

The study examines the quality of girls’ education in Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. Although the district is comparatively better off than other parts of the province in many respects, the state of girls’ education remains deeply compromised and falls below even average standards. Using a mixed-methods approach—combining interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and field observations across 40 schools in all parts of Quetta—the study identifies significant gaps between the policy commitments outlined in the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020–2025 and the realities on the ground. The findings reveal extreme negligence toward these schools, with students’ health, hygiene, and mental well-being adversely affected. Poor infrastructure, lack of funds, unjust distribution of resources, inadequate teacher training for the new syllabus, and, above all, the absence of basic facilities such as electricity, gas, and water further worsen the situation. Ineffective monitoring mechanisms, weak governance, and political interference continue to undermine the delivery of quality education. Schools in peripheral and low-income settlements face particularly harsh conditions, including the absence of counsellors, non-functional libraries and laboratories, and minimal parental engagement. Despite the involvement of NGOs, government support remains largely absent. The study concludes that improving girls’ primary education in Quetta requires political will, targeted investment, transparent governance, strengthened teacher training, community participation, and dedicated primary-level budgeting. It offers evidence-based recommendations to address these systemic challenges and emphasizes that without urgent reforms, girls in Quetta will continue to face barriers that hinder their learning, empowerment, and long-term socio-economic mobility.

Keywords: Girls’ primary education, Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP), Quetta, Education quality, Teachers’ training, Policy Implementation.

Article Details:

Received on 07 Nov, 2025

Accepted on 05 Dec, 2025

Published on 06 Dec 2025

Corresponding Authors*

Introduction

Education is widely documented to be a basic pillar and a key driver of socio-economic and political development, regardless of the wealth or poverty of a region. Education serves as a channel through which people acquire knowledge, enabling them to gain deeper insights into their community's values and culture, develop vital social skills, and obtain the essential training for several professions. The highest-performing education systems are those that combine equity with quality.

Gender priority is generally, but especially in Pakistan, restricted by cultural norms, socialization, and historical power dynamics that ultimately perpetuate unequal treatment towards inequalities against girl children. Their access not only to education but also to healthcare and opportunities is restricted, thus undermining the fundamental principles of human rights. Approximately 129 million girls worldwide are deprived of educational opportunities, comprising 32 million of primary school age alone. (UNICEF, 2024.) Although global primary and secondary school enrollment rates for boys and girls have grown closer to achieving parity, worse disparities persist in the lower-income countries, with only 26 percent of young men and 21 percent of young women completing upper secondary education.

In developing countries, particularly, individuals who receive education but do not attain a quality education are consequently failing to contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. This shortfall undermines the core principles of competitiveness and the overarching objectives of this particular SDG.

1.1 Overview of Education

Globally, education is divided into three parts that is, primary, secondary, and higher secondary or post-secondary. Primary education is the first and most important part and functions as the building block of the educational journey (UNICEF, 2023a), and if it lacks quality, it greatly influences secondary and higher education, leaving a spillover effect on individuals' confidence, beliefs, civic lifestyles, career choices, and financial well-being.

The impact of education on various economic sectors can be either positive or negative, contingent upon how education is managed and approached within a specific nation (Zubaida Zafar & Shoukat Ali, 2018). Therefore, ensuring access to quality education at the primary level is not just a fundamental right for children but also plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of any country.

1.2 Status of Education in Pakistan

Although Pakistan has taken legislative measures of upgradation of Article 35B to 25A and financial allocations to the education sector, the gap between policymaking and on-ground realities stresses the complexities and constant struggles in ensuring that every child, regardless of age or gender, can access quality primary education in the country. Pakistan's inadequate performance in improving education indicators has led to a low global ranking of 168 out of 193 countries in the 2025 report (UNDP's Human Development Report, 2025), where, in the General Knowledge Index, the country stands 120 out of 141 countries (Country Profiles | Knowledge For All, 2025). Despite failing to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for universal primary education in 2015, Pakistan has embraced the SDGs for 2030, emphasizing improvements in both quantity and quality indicators for education. Two key issues identified are:

- Merely attaining educational degrees does not effectively reduce socio-economic deprivation for a significant portion of the population.

- Despite an increase in literacy and enrollment numbers, unemployment levels show limited improvement, stressing the link between expanding human capabilities and higher productivity. In particular, the absence of skill development, many of the youth with higher degrees, such as Engineers, Doctors, M.Phils., and Ph.Ds. remains unemployed.

These challenges stress the need for education planning to focus on expanding human capabilities by ensuring quality education at primary levels, providing these adolescents firm grounds to pursue secondary and tertiary education. It is also important to recognize that the well-being of a society depends on effective education implementation and utilization, not just on achieving literacy targets.

According to the UNICEF global estimation, Out-Of-School Children (OOSC) make about 129 million, whereas Pakistan alone constitutes 22.8 million OOSC (UNICEF, 2023). Approximately 75 percent of children in Pakistan are OOSC, where statistically, around 10 million boys and 12.8 million girls in total are out of school (Juan D. Baron & May Bend, 2023). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has tried to draw attention to the fact that many developing countries are lagging when it comes to achieving quality education outcomes. World Bank report estimates that over 60 percent of students in developing nations complete their primary education without attaining fundamental competencies (World Bank, 2018). Due to the absence of fundamental competencies among the youth, Pakistan has the highest learning outcomes and unemployment rates.

1.3 Status of Education in Balochistan

Education and learning are inherently intertwined, with education serving little purpose without meaningful learning outcomes, interpreting it as a decadence of resources, time, and human potential. The quality of education provided in the government policies is essentially determined by the outcomes of learning. However, in the case of Balochistan, there seems to be an overwhelming focus on student quantity, which directly influences budget allocation to schools, diverting the focus on providing quality education in the institutes. Consequently, students often make minimal progress from one year to the next, and early learning deficiencies accumulate over time, leading to increased dropout rates and a lack of proficiency at the middle and higher levels, making them incompetent or less competent for their careers. Although the province has introduced a bill titled “Act on Free and Compulsory Education 2014”, which emphasizes ensuring quality and free education to all children residing in Balochistan, excluding the children of the tribal areas. The on-ground realities paint a different picture. In comparison to the rest of Pakistan, Balochistan is not only the lowest in HDI but also contributes to the highest unemployment rate at 9.13 percent, which is starkly underreported.

In Balochistan, numerous schools suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including substandard buildings, classrooms, and equipment. Essential amenities such as electricity and access to clean water are often lacking. Teachers are either not trained or there is a shortage of teachers due to multiple reasons, including absenteeism, false attendance, and the presence of ghost teachers. These deficiencies in infrastructure and quality of educators contribute to an unfavorable learning environment that has a direct and detrimental effect on the quality of education delivered to students.

Balochistan Educational Statistics (BES) reported by Balochistan Education Management and Information System (BEMIS), claims that there are a total of 15,096 schools in Balochistan (Quetta Education District Plan & Balochistan Education Sector Plan, 2016). Among these, 10,129 are designated for boys, 681 operate as co-educational institutions, and only 4,286 are dedicated to girls' education. Out of the total schools in Balochistan, as

reported by BEMIS in the BES, 3,152 schools are presently non-functional. This number includes 89 co-educational schools and 919 girls' schools that are not currently operational. The substantial decrease in the number of operative schools for girls in the province is alarming, as it poses a noticeable threat to female education. This reduction in educational opportunities for girls not only blocks prospects for women's empowerment but also weakens their potential to play effective roles in society.

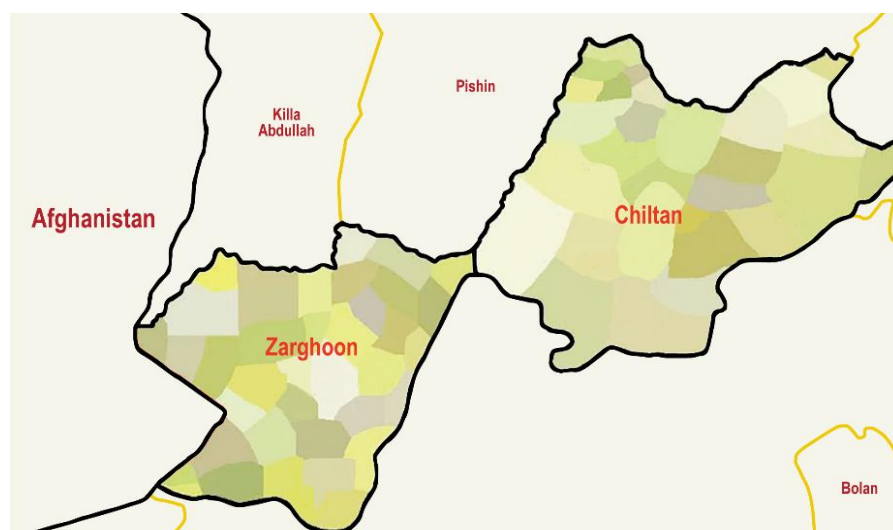
1.4 Status of Education in Quetta

Quetta district is the fourth smallest district in Balochistan by area, covering an area of 2,653 square kilometers.

Administratively, the district is divided into two tehsils: Chiltan and Zarghoon, further subdivided into 67 Union Councils (UCs). Quetta holds the highest poverty rate among all provincial capitals of Pakistan, with a headcount of 46 percent for multi-dimensional poverty and an Average Intensity of Deprivation (AID) at 46 percent, out of which the majority live in slums (UNICEF, 2020). Due to this high level of poverty within the provincial capital, the public relies more on the government's educational institutions, as they cannot afford to pay high fees in the private schools. Despite being relatively better off than other rural areas of Balochistan in terms of girls' primary education, the quality of education remains a concern in Quetta. The presence of political, tribal, and patriarchal dominance complicates the formulation of sustainable solutions for girls' quality education.

The 2017 report from the Federal Bureau of Statistics reveals that Quetta district, encompassing a total population of 2,269,473, comprises 1,190,476 males and 1,078,718 females (Federal Bureau of Statistics 2017, 2017). Being half in number and residing in the provincial capital, the women of Quetta are not considered as important stakeholders in the policies as the men, particularly in terms of educational opportunities. The available resources and opportunities of education for girls in Quetta lack quality, proper infrastructure, a shortage of teachers, and the absence of electricity, gas, and clean water. Given this, with no proper representation of females on higher levels, the situation of the schools remains compromised.

The total number of schools in Quetta is 447; among these, 304 are for boys, 22 are co-education, and 121 are for girls. Despite the lower numerical representation, 48 out of these 121 girls and 12 out of 22 co-educational institutes are non-functional in the provincial capital (EMIS, 2024). According to the statistics provided by the Quetta district plans report, the out-of-school percentage varies by educational level, with 49 percent of primary school-age children not attending school. The percentage increases to 70 percent for middle school and further to 75 percent for secondary school levels (Quetta Education District Plan & Balochistan Education Sector Plan, 2016).



Map 1. Map Zarghoon and Chiltan Tehsils

Source: Quetta Education District Plan

During the fieldwork conducted for this study, another aspect emerged regarding the process of school upgrades in the context of the BEMIS and the Directorate of Education Schools, Balochistan. Several schools within Quetta were not documented in BEMIS or the official records of the Education Directorate. However, despite their absence in official documentation, these schools not only existed but were also grappling with challenges for their survival. The concern raised was how these schools were functioning and receiving allocated resources when they were not formally listed in any official documents or on any official websites. The question also extended to the allocation of BEMIS numbers to these schools, as their absence in official records raised uncertainties about the mechanisms by which they were included or excluded from the system.

The parameters for quality of education were taken as government services delivering and outputs aimed at ensuring quality education, including teachers' training, availability of resources, a balanced teacher-student ratio, proper infrastructure, and creative learning methods.

Problem Statement

The ongoing challenge of providing quality education to girls at all levels, particularly at the primary level in Quetta, is a matter of significant concern. Despite its status as the capital, Quetta faces alarming educational obstacles for girls, prompting concerns about potentially worse conditions in other parts of Balochistan. The evident educational lag among girls in Quetta poses a substantial obstacle to their representation on significant platforms. While the government's intervention, as reflected in the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-2025, presents valuable policies, the ground realities tell a different story. Hence, there is an urgent need for targeted interventions.

Aim of the Paper

This study aims to find out the factors affecting the quality of primary education in Quetta District. The researcher took the parameters of the quality of education as proper infrastructure, availability of physical facilities, availability of resources, availability of competent teachers, training of the teachers, and overall environment of the school.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include:

- a) To examine the status of girls' primary education in Quetta;
- b) To identify and analyze the specific challenges and hurdles faced in providing quality education to girls in Quetta;
- c) To critically analyze the policies and initiatives outlined in the BESP 2020-2025, explicitly those with a focus on girls' primary education;
- d) To assess the effectiveness of the implementation of government policies in Quetta, highlight any gaps or discrepancies between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities;
- e) To propose specific interventions aimed at improving the quality of education for girls in Quetta, including measures to monitor teacher quality and ensure resource availability, and;
- f) To provide sustainable recommendations and future directions to the Education department and the funding agencies.

Research Methodology

Balochistan, being the least developed and least researched region, carries a lot of significance in the research field. The objective of this research was to identify the policy gaps and ground realities to ensure and suggest future directions for quality education at the primary level for the girls in Quetta. A comparative analysis of the policy gaps and ground realities is conducted



for more authentic data to convene an analysis. The study will contribute authentic and updated data to the existing knowledge on “girls’ education and the quality” provided in the metropolitan city, Quetta.

The research is conducted on the parameter of the mixed methodology, which includes using both Qualitative and Quantitative research techniques. This research is exploratory because of the unavailability of in-depth data on the topic. The center of the study was selected as the provincial capital of Balochistan, Quetta. The spatial stratified sampling method was used to collect data from North, East, South, West, and Center. The sample included Principals from 10 Primary schools selected from Quetta’s every zone mentioned above. For further enlightenment and perspective of teachers on the subject, 60 teachers all around Quetta were engaged through focus group discussions.

Data collection involved the use of judgment sampling for interviews, while simple random sampling was employed for questionnaires and focus group discussions. The primary data collection instruments included semi-structured questions for interviews, open-ended questions for focus group discussions, and closed-ended questions for obtaining data from parents and teachers. The research analysis prioritized quality by referencing existing literature and comparing it with data gathered through discussions, interviews, and surveys.

Table 1: *Summary of the overall fieldwork coverage, showing the number and types of schools visited across all zones and highlighting the two non-participating schools.*

Variables	Details
Total Schools Targeted -	42
Schools Visited	40
Schools That Participated	40
Non-Participating Schools	2
Non-participation Location	1 school in the East Zone, 1 school in the West Zone
Zone Distribution of Target Schools	North (10), South (10), East (10), West (10), Center (2)
Zone-Wise Schools Actually Visited	All visited except the two who did not participate
School Types in Fieldwork	Cluster (High) Schools (6), Middle Schools (24), Primary Schools (10)

1.5 Significance of the Study

The importance of women's education cannot be overstated, though historically, this importance was often overlooked. The consequences of neglecting women's education are profound and negatively impact societies in various ways. One critical issue faced by uneducated women globally is early marriage, with estimates indicating that 1 in 3 girls in developing countries is married before adulthood (Rehana Sardar & Usman Tobawal, 2019). This reduces their educational scope, leading to illiteracy and a lack of essential knowledge. The failure to secure employment due to the absence of education aggravates difficulties in providing for their families, perpetuating a cycle of poverty. Uneducated women also face a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, (Marla Spivack, 2020) contributing to increased infant mortality rates. This study makes an effort, which makes it significant, to make the policymakers and stakeholders realize how deep and alarming the neglect of the importance of girls’ education is and the need to address such neglect.

1.6 Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) for 2020-2025 – An Appraisal

This paper aims to analyze the BESP 2020–2025 to identify gaps and understand why similar policies have repeatedly failed in previous years. The research seeks to uncover systemic issues, structural constraints, and implementation barriers that continue to hinder the effectiveness of educational policies. In doing so, it focuses on recurring failures—such as poor resource allocation, weak accountability mechanisms, minimal user involvement, and insufficient political will. The purpose of this review is to evaluate how contextual factors, socioeconomic processes, and shifting education paradigms have influenced the implementation of policy. By highlighting these issues, the study strives to identify potential areas for improvement, propose evidence-based interventions, and strengthen policy formulation and implementation processes in the future. Before analyzing BESP 2020–2025, it is essential to reflect upon the inefficiencies of the earlier BESP 2013–2018. Developed by the Policy and Planning Implementation Unit (PPIU) with support from UNICEF and UNESCO, the previous plan aimed to address key challenges in the education system—quality, equity, inclusion, and geographical disparities across Balochistan. It emphasized improving educational quality as a means to enhance equity and sustainability, and highlighted the role of the private sector in the education transformation process. The plan covered primary education, higher education, literacy, non-formal education, and focused on access, equity, quality, relevance, governance, and management.

However, the BESP 2013–2018 also acknowledged the need for flexible, locally adaptable implementation strategies. Despite its comprehensive roadmap, the policy failed due to inadequate implementation, poor monitoring, and insufficient coordination among government bodies and partners. As a result, it largely remained a document on paper, with no meaningful impact on the ground. Financial resources allocated to it were wasted, and the education sector remained without any formal policy for two years. The primary reason behind this failure was the lack of political will.

The BESP 2020–2025, introduced after a two-year policy vacuum, marks the second education sector plan for Balochistan. Developed through extensive consultations and secondary research, the plan includes valuable insights and acknowledges its dynamic nature by committing to regular reviews during the five-year period. The core objectives of BESP 2020–2025 revolve around access and participation, learning, governance and management, and data and research. This review critically evaluates these policies by comparing the ground realities—particularly budget allocations and school needs in Quetta—with the plan's stated goals, with a special focus on primary education for girls.

Unlike its predecessor, BESP 2020–2025 places significant emphasis on *learning* as the key driver of change. Rather than focusing solely on teachers or textbooks, the plan challenges the entire learning design and includes a re-evaluation of the scheme of studies, curriculum, and textbooks. Recognizing the disconnect between educational design and children's lived realities, the plan underscores foundational skills such as reading, numeracy, and analytical thinking. It also adopts a more holistic approach by prioritizing child welfare—physical health, psychosocial development, and the overall treatment of children at school and within communities. Importantly, the plan highlights the inclusion of girls not only in access and participation but also in leadership roles, recognizing that empowering women in decision-making positions contributes to improved female education outcomes.



Table 2: Program-wise Budgeting and Commitment by the International Donors

Sr. No	Donors/Local Partners/International Partners/NGOs/etc.	Currency	Budget Euro/US \$ Million	in Total Pak Rs. In Million
1	UNICEF	USD	0.00	0.000
2	World Bank	USD	18.00	2,772.000
3	European Union	EUR	18.00	2,772.000
4	UNESCO (Malala Fund)	USD	0.139	21.406
5	JICA	USD	1.16	178.640
	Total	Rs		5,996.046
	Total	Rs in billion		5.996

Source: Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-2025

Table 3: Program-Wise Budget Required and Committed (Figures in Rs. Million)

Sr No	Program	Estimated Cost Non-Scale Factor	Scale Factor	Total	Committed from GOB	Development Partner Contribution	Gap
1	Learning Design	140.77	369.85	520.62	510.62	0.00	0.00
2	Effective Teachers	165.27	6,685.63	6,865.90	5,280.19	2,923.20	-1,352.49.
3	Assessments and Examinations	210.07	6,967.15	7,182.22	6,581.61	428.40	167.21
4	Child Care and Welfare	175.50	4,753.22	4,933.72	3,930.04	0.00	998.68
5	Access and Participation	1,422.30	29,521.43	30,948.73	17,439.35	1,208.05	12,296.33
6	Data and Research	305.09	6,721.17	7,026.26	3,469.00	428.40	3128.86
7	Governance and Management	763.26	14,465.25	15,228.51	7,979.76	1,008.00	6,240.75
8	Technical and Vocational Education and Training	46.26	0.00	46.26	86.26	0.00	0.00

3,268.52

69,483.70

72,752.22

45,276.83

5,996.05

21,479.34

Source: Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-2025

Results and Discussions

1.7 Status of Primary Education in Quetta

In reply to an inquiry about the state of primary education in Balochistan, particularly in Quetta, one of the schools' principals asserted that Quetta fares relatively better than other districts in Balochistan (Principal 1, personal communication, November 1, 2023). She noted that cultural and religious reservations are not as prominent in comparison to other tribal and underdeveloped areas of the province. The respondent also highlighted that the conditions of schools, both in Quetta and the rest of Balochistan, are deplorable. The educational system faces significant challenges, with a lack of facilities being a major issue. She emphasized that schools often lack basic amenities, forcing students to endure sitting outside in the sun due to excessively cold classrooms in the winter.

Regarding government support, the respondent expressed dissatisfaction, stating that there is no assistance whatsoever. Even after serving as the school's principal for five years, she noted that no government representative has ever visited the school or monitored the availability of resources for students. The lack of response from the government was emphasized when the school, despite writing official letters requesting the provision of Sui gas (Natural Gas for heating) and electricity, received no resolution to the issues raised. The provision of these essential resources is primarily needed due to the harsh weather conditions experienced in the province and the district (Principal 1, personal communication, November 1, 2023). In winters, temperatures often drop below freezing, stressing the critical need for such basic resources.

A respondent from one of the *Killis*¹ asserted that the school's functioning relies solely on her and her husband, highlighting the absence of facilities, such as natural gas, and an insufficient number of teachers (Principal 2, personal communication, November 3, 2023). The school, as per empirical observations, had only two teachers, with one serving as the school Principal. Schools located on the outskirts or in the *Killis* faced more challenges compared to those in the city center, particularly concerning infrastructure and facilities. The respondents noted that the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) tended to invest more in easily locatable or recognizable schools, exacerbating disparities.

During the field work, consistent responses regarding insufficient infrastructure and resource availability were reported by various respondents. A significant issue identified was the interference of local *Maliks* in school affairs. Respondents expressed concerns about them, who, having granted land to the government, often demanded a portion of the budget allocated to schools. This trend was particularly prevalent in schools situated on the outskirts or in poor areas. Moreover, a prevalent concern revolved around the quality of teacher training and appointments at the primary level. Principals argued that the appointment of incompetent teachers burdens the provincial economy and hinders progress. While there is a criterion for senior teachers to hold a B.Ed. or M.Ed., the selection of junior section teachers

¹ **Killi:** In the context of urban areas, especially in Quetta, Balochistan, a smaller administrative or residential unit within a city is called a Killi, often looked after by a Malik.

lacks specific criteria, where a simple B.A. and Diploma(s) are deemed sufficient for their appointments.

1.8 Infrastructural Limitations and Physical Facilities

One of the most common concerns stated by every single teacher and principal was the infrastructural flaws. Almost all the schools visited lacked the availability of water, gas, and electricity. The schools situated in the center of the cities were comparatively better than the rest, in terms of the infrastructure and physical facilities. Most of the schools contained only 2-4 classrooms, which were less spacious.

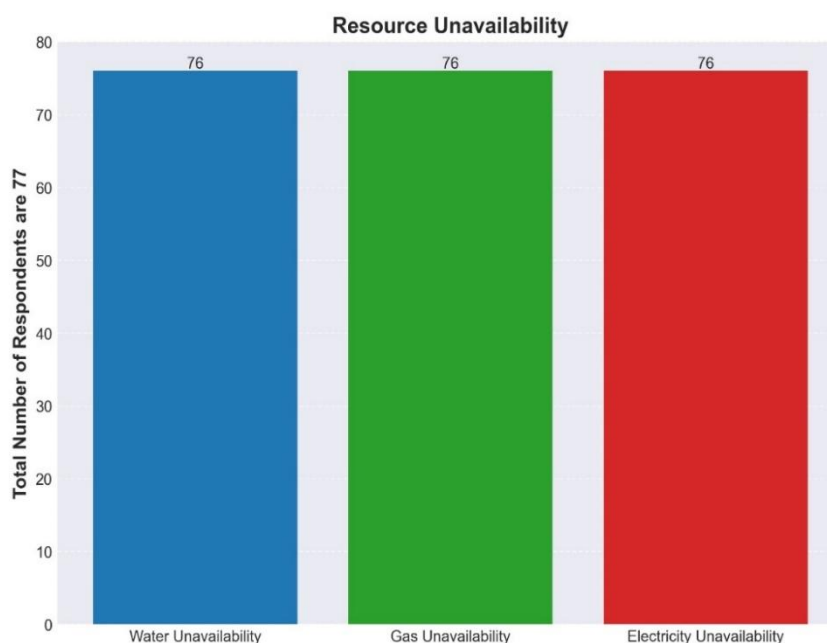
Due to this, the teachers were compelled to adjust students of different classes in a single room. It was obvious that having different syllabi being read in the same room diverted the focus of the students from their relevant subject.

Primary schools in the city, particularly those situated on the outskirts, face significant challenges. According to the research

data collected through fieldwork and observations, these schools (Primary and Middle) are often located in rented or structurally compromised buildings. According to respondents in Sariab, Aghbarg, Achozai, Killi Barech, Rindozai, Lower Karez and Killi Raisani, the conditions are severe, with limited rooms and no electricity, gas, and water. One of the respondents from Lower Karez stated that one section of a school recently collapsed due to its bad condition (Principal 3, personal communication, November 13, 2023). Another noteworthy issue observed pertains to the deteriorated state of the old buildings of the schools, resulting in significant leakage from the roof. One of the principals, who guided us through the school, mentioned that during rainy days, it is common practice to evacuate a section of the classroom due to the roof leaks, which pose a safety risk for the children, especially with open electric wires present.

Teachers, especially those from primary schools, have highlighted that many of these educational institutions operate in rented buildings, rented by the government, yet the rent is not consistently paid. These rented facilities barely consist of two or three rooms and the failure to pay rent results in disturbances from the landlords (Teacher 1, personal communication, November 13, 2023). This situation forces schools to frequently relocate from one place to another. Consequently, the constant shifting creates challenges for students who initially attended the school due to its proximity, leading them to discontinue attending or prompting their parents to cease sending them to school.

In some of the schools, bathrooms constructed by UNICEF or Mercy Corps were repurposed as classrooms due to space constraints. In some schools with a single washroom, it was observed that it was kept locked and reserved for teachers. Open ground at the rear was



Graph 1: The graph depicting unavailability of resources in the total number of schools visited during the Field

utilized as washroom facilities by girls up to the primary level, while those in the secondary section had to wait until they returned home. This, as a result, diverted their focus from the lectures delivered. The teachers mentioned that some girls in the primary section avoid using unsanitary washrooms, impacting their well-being and attention in class (Teacher 1, personal communication, November 13, 2023).

Additionally, the conditions of the washrooms in the majority were found to be appalling, with a shortage of water in all, and requiring the delivery of water by tanker, which increases the expenditure on the school, whereas the budget remains inadequate. A critical issue identified is the absence of maids, peons, and security guards in schools, which leads girls to take on cleaning duties and monitor access, resulting in compromises to their education. Teachers stated that students are given cleaning responsibilities on a rotation basis among classes from 1-5, impacting their learning time. In every school lacking a maid or security guard, the responsibility of opening doors falls upon the students. Consequently, whenever there is a knock at the door, these children divert their attention from the primary purpose of attending school, which is to receive an education, to open the door.

Some of the schools with bad infrastructure, lacking resources, are operational, while others with better infrastructure struggle to be functional, both due to the shortage of teachers. This disparity declares much of the complex educational landscape, where infrastructure alone does not guarantee effective schooling and quality in the schools. There were some instances where principals claimed resource shortages; observations revealed active NGOs installing solar panels for electricity and providing water dispensers. The presence of NGOs like UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Ideas, and Afghan Raha is evident in providing resources such as water dispensers and solar panels. However, actions and responses by the government were not noticed in schools on the outskirts and in *Killis* of Quetta.

A study reveals a correlation between school facilities and student achievement in secondary schools. It reveals that students exhibit improved performance in schools that have undergone recent renovations or are newly constructed, as opposed to older school buildings (Matthieu Yangambi, 2023). This needs to be taken seriously.

1.9 Governance and Management

Learning Coordinators (LCs), responsible for maintaining educational quality in the field, frequently lack the necessary skills for effective performance. Typically selected from senior teachers nearing retirement, these coordinators primarily rely on rote memorization methods and lack training in monitoring educational quality within schools. The majority of the respondents noted that monitoring teams rarely visit, and if they do, the schools are often informed in advance. One respondent mentioned a five-year tenure as principal without a single monitoring team visit (Teacher 2, personal communication, November 10, 2023). When asked about the criteria for evaluating educational quality, completion of courses was highlighted, indicating inadequate training for assessing the assurance and delivery of quality education (Principal 4, personal communication, November 10, 2023).

In Chashma Achozai, a respondent expressed a lack of government officials visiting and urged monitoring teams to convey their demands to authorities for infrequent visits (Teacher 3, personal communication, November 10, 2023). Another respondent from Killi Nasir, after eight years of service, received no response to letters written to government officials. She added that government-monitoring teams primarily focus on course completion rather than assessing educational outcomes and quality (Principal 5, personal communication, November 4, 2023). The practice of database monitoring and feedback is virtually non-existent. Although data is collected for the BEMIS at the district level, its actual utilization is rare. The current approach

to monitoring relies heavily on physical visits to schools, lacking a systematic method that involves comprehensive data collection and analysis. As a result, many vulnerable schools, particularly numerous primary and middle schools without school name plates, remain undocumented in both the Directorate of Education Schools Balochistan and BEMIS, leading to their neglect. The key elements of national governance standards, including accountability, efficiency, and transparency, play pivotal roles in shaping the development of educational institutions (Ali Gerged & Mohamed Elheddad, 2020) and ensuring the quality of education in public institutions.

1.10 Intersectional Political Involvement and Accountability of Teachers

The accountability model for principals typically revolves around monitoring teacher attendance and ensuring syllabus coverage, with a limited or no focus on students' learning. The emphasis on learning becomes more pronounced only during the transition from primary (5th class) to middle (6th class) levels, marked by examinations administered by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) for quality assessment. Unfortunately, the lack of attention to delivering quality education at the primary level often results in failures and dropouts at the middle level. There is no established procedure to ensure teachers' presence in the classroom beyond the outdated attendance system, which is susceptible to influence from political entities involved in the appointment or affiliation of teachers. Respondents from various areas around Quetta indicated that even teachers' training sessions and the selection of teachers are often influenced by their affiliations.

1.11 Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in BESP presents several strengths and challenges. The plan adopts a comprehensive approach by improving infrastructure, integrating literacy with skills, and setting quality standards for trainers. Emphasis on market-aligned curricula and capacity-building within BTVETA reflects an effort to enhance employability and shift perceptions of TVET, while increased youth and female participation aligns with national and global commitments to inclusive education and gender equality. However, major challenges persist, including low job-market absorption of TVET graduates, limited formal TVET provision, access constraints, and governance issues. A significant gap is the exclusion of in-service teachers from TVET programs—an inclusion that could strengthen instructional quality, foster practical learning, and support pedagogical innovation, particularly in primary education. Ultimately, the success of TVET reforms depends on effective coordination, adequate resource allocation, and sustained political commitment, as governance weaknesses continue to impede implementation.

1.12 Teachers Training and Single National Curriculum

Professional development is essential for improving the competencies of teachers and head teachers, yet in Balochistan, it remains largely ineffective due to systemic issues. Training initiatives are predominantly supply-driven, designed by organizations such as the Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) and the Bureau of Curriculum, based on donor funding rather than district-level needs. Respondents highlighted concerns that the selection of teachers for training is often influenced by political affiliations, undermining fairness and limiting access for deserving teachers. At the primary level, the situation is especially alarming—only 1 in 10 teachers has received any formal training since joining the service. This underscores the need for targeted training for Junior Vernacular (JV) teachers, who work with young children and require specialized skills in communication, patience, and child engagement.

Despite budget allocations, political interference continues at the district level, reflected in outdated PITE databases and training lists. In a survey of 37 schools, nearly all teachers reported receiving no training since the introduction of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), implemented in Balochistan in 2022. Teachers educated in Urdu-medium schools expressed difficulty teaching science and mathematics in English without adequate training, relying instead on informal peer support.

The SNC introduced significant curricular changes—including enhanced English language teaching, early introduction of Islamiyat, and redesigned subjects such as Religious Education, Social Studies, Math, and Science—requiring corresponding teacher preparation. However, implementation suffered due to a lack of training, affecting primary-level instructional quality. Approximately 70 of 77 teachers stated that the SNC does not suit Balochistan's context, citing mismatches between curriculum demands, local language needs, and available resources. Nonetheless, they emphasized that with proper training, especially for primary-level girls' education, these challenges can be addressed effectively.

1.13 Teacher Absenteeism

The unavailability, shortage, and incompetence of teachers have profound effects on the quality of education. When there are not enough teachers, the student-teacher ratio gets disturbed, making it challenging for educators to provide individualized attention and support to students. Schools may struggle to offer a diverse range of subjects or specialized courses due to a lack of qualified teachers in specific fields. A shortage of teachers often leads to educators being overburdened with large class sizes, multiple classes and subjects at the same time, and heavy workloads, diminishing the quality of instruction and feedback. Vacancies may remain unfilled, leading to a lack of continuity and consistency in education delivery. Incompetent teachers may struggle to deliver effective lessons, impacting students' understanding and mastery of subject matter. Poor teaching quality can result in students acquiring insufficient knowledge and skills, affecting their overall academic performance and their lives at later stages. Incompetent teachers may fail to inspire and engage students, leading to a lack of interest in learning (Jasmin Decristan et al., 2019).

Survey discussions with teachers and principals revealed major capacity gaps, as many could not understand the English questionnaire and required translation. Most untrained and underperforming teachers were at the primary level. A common complaint was severe teacher shortages; for instance, in a school, only 2 teachers were managing Classes 1–5 from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm, limiting interaction and pushing teachers to focus solely on syllabus completion. One teacher admitted to using corporal punishment due to pressure and a lack of awareness (Teacher 4, personal communication, November 14, 2023). Although teachers denied absenteeism, cases in Sariab and another school showed politically backed absentee teachers and even a 15-year-old girl teaching in place of her relative.

1.14 Absence of Counselling Desks

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds—especially those lacking literate family support or living amid violence and poverty—struggle academically and require structured psychological support. Fieldwork and focus group discussions revealed that none of the surveyed primary schools had counselling desks or safe spaces for students aged 4 to 10. Teachers reported relying on personal trust-based interactions when students faced psychological distress, which is insufficient for sustained well-being. Poverty further contributes to absenteeism, as many girls miss school to accompany their mothers to work; a 10-year-old balancing labour and schooling lacks the environment and energy needed for learning. Respondents noted that most students come from families of daily wage earners, jailed parents, or marginalized

communities, while wealthier *Maliks* do not send children to government schools. Without counselling services, students lack academic and emotional guidance, worsening stress, anxiety, behavioural issues, and overall learning capacity. Establishing counselling desks is essential for fostering emotional health, communication skills, and a supportive learning environment.

1.15 Teachers Shortage

Addressing teacher availability in the district is essential, particularly in subjects where shortages directly hinder learning outcomes. A subject-specific assessment of teacher gaps and demand projections is required, alongside coordination with provincial authorities to increase sanctioned posts. Teacher absenteeism must also be tackled by reforming inspection systems and introducing ICT-based monitoring tools that emphasize teaching quality. Fieldwork showed significant staffing disparities: most schools had only two or three teachers proficient solely in Urdu and English, yet responsible for all subjects, including math, science, and Islamic Studies. Some schools had just two teachers for five classes, while others served 50–100 students with limited staff. The core issue extends beyond numbers to inadequate teacher expertise and poor instructional quality. Although these concerns are acknowledged provincially, they remain insufficiently integrated into district-level practice and are not reflected in schools' teaching and learning conditions.

1.16 Availability of Libraries and Laboratories

The district faces significant challenges in the availability and use of libraries and laboratories. Most schools lack these facilities, and where libraries exist, they are heavily focused on religious texts like *Tafseer*, with few storybooks or materials promoting science, critical thinking, and personality development. This imbalance, particularly for girls aged around 15, limits exposure to broader knowledge and may distract from core subjects. Primary-level students also lack interactive books and puzzles necessary for early cognitive development. Science and computer labs are scarce, with only a few functioning computers found among 80 schools surveyed, hindering interest and skill development in crucial subjects. The limited commitment of district education managers has further delayed the utilization of these resources. Provincial authorities should ensure dedicated budgets for restocking libraries and laboratories to improve access, quality, and effective use of educational resources, thereby enhancing student learning outcomes, technical skills, and future opportunities.

1.17 Illiteracy Among Parents

The educational triangle of teachers, government, and parents is crucial for providing quality education to future generations. However, the impact of illiteracy among parents on the quality of primary education for girls is complex. This is another important factor that has not been discussed in the policies and therefore needs to be addressed. As these parents may face challenges in contributing towards academic support, they cannot monitor their daughters' progress and face financial constraints limiting access to educational resources. A non-literate home environment can obstruct exposure to reading materials and language development. Additionally, traditional gender roles enforced by illiterate parents may contribute to early marriages and premature withdrawal from school. The absence of literate role models at home can influence girls' aspirations and their perception of the importance of education.

According to a recent Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) report, only 57 percent of Quetta's total population is literate in both urban and rural areas, with 43 percent considered illiterate (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics & Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, 2021). However, youth literacy in the district stands at 76 percent. Illiteracy among parents also influences their attitudes toward the education of both

boys and girls. Active engagement with parents is crucial, yet field visits to district Quetta revealed weak community involvement in female education, particularly in Baloch and Pashtun areas. Cultural reservations were noted, especially in schools on the outskirts or linked to a population comprising mostly of Afghans. The research segment targeting parents for questionnaires encountered challenges, as they exhibited ignorance and a lack of basic understanding of the subject. Even after detailed explanations, their interest remained low. Out of 20 approachable parents, only 7 responded, hindered by the functionality issues of the Parent Teacher School Management Committee (PTSMC) in most schools. Regrettably, in a conversation with the Applied Academic for Excellence (APEX)² consultant, and despite acknowledging the existence of PTSMCs, the Principals revealed that the Committees are non-functional, existing merely on paper.

1.18 Interventions

In terms of Alternate Learning Pathways (ALPs), the district does not have a direct role in targeting out-of-school children through non-formal education or providing alternate learning pathways to prepare them for reentry into regular institutions more rapidly. The main interventions in this area are carried out by the provincial Balochistan Education Foundation (BEF), the federal National Education Foundation (NEF) and the Monitoring teams of UNICEF all around Balochistan ensuring the mechanism and procedural work of the ALP's. BEF supports community and private schools through a public-private partnership model and operates six community schools in the district with community assistance. Whereas monitoring and evaluation organizations like APEX ensure that the provided fund is utilized through proper channels for a needed thing. Although the district does not directly manage these programs, identifying out-of-school children in the district and creating a roadmap for targeting them through alternate learning paths or non-formal education can help streamline provincial and federal ALP programs.

Additional interventions included providing free textbooks for girls up to class 10, a concern echoed by many teachers who pointed out that the allocated funds were insufficient to cover books for all students. Cluster heads from various schools also noted that the book quality was so poor that they barely lasted two months, often tearing easily. Similar challenges were observed with uniforms, as teachers expressed that inadequate funds compelled them to purchase low-cost materials that do not withstand regular use. The issue extended to the point where girls, fearing punishment for not wearing uniforms, would stop attending school. Regarding shoes, one of the principal highlighted those teachers, through collective efforts, gathered funds to buy shoes for students who are unable to afford them. Furthermore, the "Dalda" program, which incentivized girls' enrollment by providing cooking oil, had been effective until it was discontinued. The head noted that, during that phase, many students from economically weak backgrounds enrolled, driven by the prospect of scholarships and oil (Principal 6, personal communication, November 15, 2023).

Another national intervention involved a monthly stipend for girls, ranging from Rs. 100/month in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for primary education to Rs. 200/month in Punjab

² **APEX Consultant:** APEX Consulting, a premier management consulting firm, has been active in Pakistan since 2002, headquartered in Islamabad. It maintains regional offices in Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi, alongside international branches in Afghanistan and Canada. This consulting team has been engaged as a UNICEF monitoring agency to oversee the implementation and costing of education policies in Quetta.

for girls in secondary schools (classes 6–8) in 16 districts, and the *Parha Likha Punjab* policy by the government of Punjab specifically aimed to retain students in primary schools. However, there is a notable absence of stipends or scholarships for girls in Balochistan and Sindh, where poverty prevalence is higher, and such support could be valuable and motivational. Corresponding to this story, Ganimian and Murnane reviewed more than 200 impact evaluation studies on different sets of education initiatives and argued that it takes components such as providing incentives to teachers, parents, and communities, and putting a monitoring system in place for such programs to translate such initiatives into better student performance (Alejandro J. Ganimian & Richard J. Murnane, 2016). This ultimately enhances the quality of education when a student is interested and motivated to come to the school.

1.19 Comparative Analysis of the Cluster Schools and Primary Schools

A comparative analysis of cluster schools³ and primary schools reveal a notable discrepancy in their conditions. The primary schools visited exhibited poor conditions. However, cluster-head schools, which oversee multiple middle and primary schools, are in better condition than the primary or middle schools under them. It was mainly because these cluster schools receive the school budget and subsequently divide it among the schools under their cluster. While the provincial government proposes to upgrade approximately 800 primary schools to middle and higher schools, only uplifting the status while retaining the same old buildings with limited infrastructure does not address the problem of insufficient rooms in primary schools. This compromises the overall quality of education.

Teachers from various primary schools contended that the government should allocate a separate budget to primary schools, stressing that their needs outdo the budget allotted to them, given the smaller student population. This assertion was substantiated by the evident contrast between the relatively well-maintained cluster schools not only in the center but also all around Quetta City. Whereas those under the same cluster were in suboptimal conditions. While cluster schools might primarily require maintenance funds, the focus and developmental needs of primary schools, with a greater emphasis on nurturing and developing young learners, were overlooked. The limited furniture for young girls, in such harsh winters, results in them having no choice but to sit on the floor, under the sun, while taking exams. Similarly, a significant number of schools under the cluster lacked sufficient furniture, in stark contrast to the adequately furnished cluster schools.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations include constraints faced during research that may have affected data collection, analyses, or interpretation. It is imperative to mention them for transparency, showing the study's scope. Mentioning limitations is crucial for addressing threats to internal and external validity. Acknowledging limitations provides context for findings, aiding accurate interpretation and identifying areas for improvement. Addressing them demonstrates methodological precision, improving research credibility and dependability.

The limitations include:

- a) Teachers initially hesitated to provide data about their schools. However, after reviewing the questionnaire, their responses were ultimately determined by the school principals' decision on whether teachers should participate.

³ **Cluster Schools:** One individual high school, designated as the head or cluster head of geographically proximate primary and middle schools, tasked to manage and be accountable for overseeing financial and administrative matters within the same geographical area. This responsibility encompasses economic, pedagogic, administrative, and political purposes.

- b) It was challenging to locate the schools, making it difficult for the researchers to conduct a detailed study within a limited time frame.
- c) Many schools lacked identification plates and were situated in rented buildings that appeared shaky.
- d) Parents showed a lack of cooperation and were generally unaware of their children's progress in school. Several teachers mentioned low attendance at parent-teacher meetings. This did not give a clear idea of the parents' perspective regarding the quality of girls' primary education in Quetta.
- e) Many school heads expressed apprehension in sharing the data without obtaining prior permission from the District Education Office, resulting in the exclusion of many schools from the study.
- f) The District Education Office was consulted twice on different days for such permissions, but the relevant authority was not present in the office on both days.
- g) Cluster schools with budget information were particularly hesitant to provide the required data.
- h) A few principals mistakenly believed that the researchers represented a funding agency, leading to instances of exaggeration about the school's situation. In one case, a teacher denied receiving any support, while during the visit, assistance from various NGOs was observed.
- i) Many schools were not accurately addressed in official documents, posing challenges for the researchers in locating and conducting the research.

Recommendations

- a) The provincial government should introduce a Minimum School Standards Framework (MSSF) that outlines the essential infrastructure and learning conditions required in every school. This framework should guide annual planning and prioritization of resources across all districts.
- b) The School Education Department (SED) should establish a School Infrastructure Emergency Cell to conduct regular structural audits and carry out rapid repairs. This unit should be equipped with a dedicated emergency fund to address high-risk school buildings, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Regular audits are important.
- c) The Finance Department, in coordination with SED, should create separate primary-level budget lines to ensure direct fund transfers to primary schools. This will prevent diversion of resources at the cluster level and improve school-level financial autonomy.
- d) The Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) should implement a mandatory one-year induction training program for newly recruited primary teachers. This program should combine intensive foundational training with year-long classroom mentoring to improve teaching quality.
- e) The SED should introduce Mobile Library and Mobile Science Lab Vans to reach schools that lack functional libraries and laboratories, especially in the outskirts of Quetta and remote settlements.
- f) The provincial government should launch a digital teacher attendance dashboard (biometric-based) accessible to district officials, school staff, and parents to promote transparency and reduce absenteeism. In the first phase, this system can be piloted in Quetta and its surrounding areas.
- g) The SED should reconstitute Parent-Teacher School Management Committees (PTSMCs) with updated membership and clear mandates. Performance-based grants should be introduced to encourage active community participation. As observed in the areas of

Marriabad, the main reason for comparatively better conditions was the involvement of the community in education affairs in that area.

- h) The District Education Office should deploy at least one guard in every primary school for gatekeeping school security. This will reduce the burden on teachers and improve school functionality.
- i) The provincial government should formulate a Winter Preparedness Policy that addresses Quetta's harsh weather conditions by providing insulated classrooms, safe heating options, carpets, and winter uniform support.
- j) The SED, along with the Social Welfare Department, should establish a rotational school counsellor program, assigning one counsellor to visit a cluster of schools each month to support student wellbeing and child protection concerns.
- k) The Textbook Board should enforce strict quality standards for textbook printing by mandating minimum paper GSM and laminated covers for early-grade books. Penalties should be introduced for publishers who provide substandard materials.
- l) The SED, in partnership with local government bodies, should create a community-supported school transport fund that provides shared vans, bicycles, or stipends to students living in distant settlements.
- m) PITE should launch a School Leadership Certification Program for prospective and current principals to build capacity in school management, budgeting, supervision, and community engagement.
- n) Measures should be implemented to regulate teachers' transfers and ensure their presence in the schools to which they are transferred.
- o) The policies need to be reviewed and the issue of any kind of political involvement should be countered for effective governance and assurance of the appointment of competitive teachers. This will also help with the budget and investment in the right things.
- p) Charges for the teachers' training should be deducted from the teachers' pay in case they do not attend them, for the annual or biannual teachers' training sessions, which will help them attend the sessions and actively participate in them too.
- q) Inspections in these schools should be a routine, unannounced, and robust.
- r) Optimizing and rationalizing the teacher-to-school and teacher-to-student ratios is equally crucial to enhancing the quality of education, particularly in Quetta's primary schools.
- s) In terms of monitoring, it is advisable for the government to constitute monitoring teams comprised of experts with specialized monitoring skills. The inclusion of retired teachers or those nearing retirement may prove ineffective in efficiently monitoring schools.
- t) Additionally, there is a need for a thorough review and overhaul of the existing methods of inspection and monitoring, with a shift toward incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-based approaches.
- u) Provincial authorities should formulate an all-encompassing plan to ensure the provision of a minimum budget for the replenishment of laboratories and the improvement of library facilities. Delegating these responsibilities to individual schools has proven to be both costly and inefficient.
- v) The adoption of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) can not only reduce the financial burden on the province but also help with the problems of political interference by ensuring a third body with no outside intervention in school affairs. The model of the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) in Pakistan sets an outstanding example in this regard.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reveals a stark disparity between the proposed measures outlined in the education policies for ensuring quality education in Balochistan and the harsh realities on the ground. The status of primary schools in the capital city of Balochistan, Quetta, is unacceptable, including the quality of teachers and the infrastructural conditions. The specific challenges identified range from inadequate infrastructure and resource shortages to the lack of government support for addressing the deplorable conditions of educational institutions.

The critical analysis of policies and initiatives outlined in the BESP 2020-2025, particularly those targeting girls' primary education, stresses the need for a more comprehensive and effective approach. While the government has drawn ambitious goals, the on-the-ground realities paint a different picture, revealing gaps and inconsistencies between policy intentions and implementation.

Girls' primary schools face deplorable conditions, with teachers lacking essential training since the introduction of the SNC, making it difficult for them to communicate effectively with primary school children. Political interference persists in school affairs, compounded by the disruptive involvement of local *Maliks* in budgetary matters, which doesn't allow school authorities to properly utilize the provided funds. Given this situation, the finance, which are supposed to be utilized by the school authorities in improving education, is divided between the *Maliks* and the school administration. Given the current absence of the municipal department, which oversees basic amenities such as gas, electricity, and water, it makes it difficult for the young girls to survive and focus amid such harsh weather conditions. Therefore, the government should ensure that these needs and issues are included and monitored well in education policies for a more comfortable learning environment for the students.

Another aspect, after reviewing policies and observing on-ground realities, reflected that the determination, commitment, and readiness of political leaders or governing bodies to prioritize, pursue, and implement education policies are deficient. The resolve and capacity of decision-makers to overcome obstacles, allocate resources, and act in pursuit of their educational goals in Balochistan, even in the face of opposition or challenges, are not promising. Political will is crucial for driving meaningful change, addressing societal issues, and achieving desired outcomes in various areas such as governance, public policy, and social development. Political will plays a pivotal role in driving the necessary changes and allocating resources towards improving girls' primary education. The absence of any educational policies for 2018-2020 further strengthens the argument of a lack of political will for successful educational policies. Even with critical policies and numerous suggestions to improve girls' primary education, their effectiveness is greatly dependent on political will. Without sincere commitment from political and community leaders, the implementation of these policies is unlikely to succeed.

The effectiveness of government policies in Quetta requires scrutiny, with a focus on bridging the divide between policies, speechmaking, and practical outcomes. Monitoring teacher quality and assuring resource availability appear as critical interventions to improve the quality of education for girls' primary schools in Quetta.

Adequate learning space is pivotal for quality education for the primary section, yet classrooms are often subdivided, weakening students' focus on specific subjects, particularly in primary schools. The absence of counselling desks in schools, especially in a region like Balochistan, which faces the challenges of conflict and a prevailing patriarchal system, is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. The insufficient access to books and uniforms poses a

significant barrier to the education process. As poor-quality books deteriorate quickly, worsening the problem, especially considering the poverty index, which indicates that these girls cannot afford to buy new books or uniforms. Consequently, there is a distinct gap for these girls to engage effectively with their studies, including practicing what teachers have taught and revising homework assignments. This situation leads to a decline in interest and motivation among the girls towards their education. Ultimately affecting the quality of deliverance of education for girls in Quetta.

Community engagement affects the quality of girls' education in Quetta, as communities like the Hazaras provide support, resources, and advocacy. Communities' engagement creates a conducive learning environment and holds institutions accountable, as noticed in private schools. This involvement raises inclusive practices, addresses barriers, and ultimately enhances educational outcomes for girls. Community engagement emerges as a vital factor, distinguishing areas like Marriabad, where active community involvement positively impacts female education. But areas, such as, Sariab, Aghbarg, Achozai, and other *Killis* marked by minimal community participation resulted in compromised educational conditions. While the government has proposed PTSMCs to address community involvement, their effectiveness is troubled by a lack of proper monitoring.

Other than just monitoring, the government must include proper procedures for checks and balances over the institutes, teachers, and active community engagements. The prevalent conditions in the capital city of Quetta highlight the magnitude of the issue. If the capital city, with its resources and infrastructure, is neglected, one can only imagine the situation in the rest of Balochistan. Girls in Balochistan already encounter numerous obstacles in accessing education. The lack of community engagement and effective oversight intensifies the challenges, resulting in substandard educational experiences. To address this, rigorous efforts are required to substitute meaningful community involvement, implement robust monitoring mechanisms, and prioritize quality education for all girls in Quetta and beyond in Balochistan. The struggles facing girls' primary education in Quetta are not just statistics—they are the quiet stories of thousands of young girls whose dreams are put on hold every single day. These challenges demand compassion, urgency, and the courage to act. Every girl deserves a classroom that nurtures her mind, protects her dignity, and fuels her hopes. With genuine political will, shared responsibility, and unwavering commitment, we can transform these difficult realities into opportunities. When we choose to stand with these girls—when we choose to invest in their futures—we are choosing a Quetta where every girl can dream freely, learn confidently, and rise with the education she has always deserved.

References

- Baron, J. D., & Bend, M. (2023, March 5). *Facing the challenges of girls' education in Pakistan*. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/facing-challenges-girls-education-pakistan>
- Country Profiles | Knowledge For All. (n.d.). Knowledge4All. <https://www.knowledge4all.com/country-profile?CountryId=1083>
- Decristan, J., Decker, A.-T., Büttner, G., Hardy, I., Klieme, E., Kunter, M., & Fauth, B. (2019). The effects of teacher competence on student outcomes in elementary science education: The mediating role of teaching quality. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, 102882. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102882>
- Education Management Information System. (2024). *Balochistan education statistics 2021–22*. http://www.emis.gob.pk/Uploads/BalochistanEducationStatistics/Balochistan_Education_Statistics_2021-22.pdf

- Federal Bureau of Statistics. (2017). *Area, population by sex, sex ratio, population density, urban proportion, household size and annual growth rate*. <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/population/2017/results/12301.pdf>
- Ganimian, A. J., & Murnane, R. J. (2016). Improving education in developing countries: Lessons from rigorous impact evaluations. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(3), 719–755. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315627499>
- Gerged, A., & Elheddad, M. (2020). How can national governance affect education quality in Western Europe? *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 21(3), 413–426. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-10-2019-0314>
- Pakistan Bureau of Statistics & Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives. (2021). *PSLM 2019–2020 Pakistan social and living standards measurement survey district level* (pp. 140–146). https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//pslm/publications/pslm_district_2019-20/PSLM_2019_20_District_Level.pdf
- Principal 1. (2023, November 1). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Face-to-face interview].
- Principal 2. (2023, November 3). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Principal 3. (2023, November 13). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Principal 4. (2023, November 10). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Principal 5. (2023, November 4). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Principal 6. (2023, November 15). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Quetta Education District Plan & Balochistan Education Sector Plan. (2016, February 19). *Quetta District Education Plan for 2016–2017 to 2020–2021*. Education Management Information System. <http://emis.gob.pk/Uploads/QUETTA%20DISTRICT%20EDUCATION%20PLAN%20FOR%202016-2017%20TO%202020-2021.pdf>
- Sardar, R., & Tobawal, U. (2019). An analysis of problems faced by the primary education system in Quetta, Balochistan. *Pakistan Studies English/Urdu Research Journal*, 10(2), 5–10.
- Spivack, M. (2020). *Quality education for every girl for 12 years: Insights from RISE Programme research* (pp. 1–7). Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE). https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2020/015
- Teacher 1. (2023, November 13). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Teacher 2. (2023, November 10). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Teacher 3. (2023, November 10). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- Teacher 4. (2023, November 14). *Status of girls' primary education in Quetta* [Personal communication].
- UNICEF. (n.d.). *Girls' education*. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>
- UNICEF. (2020). *Profiles of underserved areas of Quetta City of Balochistan, Pakistan* (pp. 15–18). <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/2966/file/Profiles%20of%20Underserved%20Areas%20of%20Quetta%20City%20of%20Balochistan,%20Pakistan.pdf>

- UNICEF. (2023a). *Primary school age education* (pp. 1–5).
<https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/>
- UNICEF. (2023b). *Situation analysis update 2020: Children in Pakistan* (pp. 19–30).
<https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/5301/file/Situation%20Analysis%20Update%202020:%20Children%20in%20Pakistan.pdf>
- World Bank. (2018). *World Development Report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise* (pp. 71–78). <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1>
- Zafar, Z., & Ali, S. (2018). Education system of Pakistan: Social functions and challenges. *Journal of Indian Studies*, 4(1), 31–51.