

January 31, 2007

The Team Leader (Mr Javed Hasan Aly)

National Education Policy Review Team

Room No. 32, Academy of Educational Planning & Management

G8/1, Islamabad

**Subject: Critique, feedback and recommendations on “Education in Pakistan – A White Paper” by Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE), Islamabad**

Dear Javed Sahib,

Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) organized a national-level meeting on 26 January 2007, in Islamabad to discuss the ‘White Paper on Education Policy’ prepared by the Education Policy Review Team of the Ministry of Education. The meeting was attended by people from all the four provinces consisting of educationists, academics, experts and members of civil society organisations working on and concerned with state of education in Pakistan. Their names are placed at Annex-I.

The comments and recommendations thus collated are presented here in an organised manner. The Preamble furnishes summation of critique; after which, The White Paper has been appreciated and critiqued in order of its structure, with four types of commentary. The first category underlines those portions of the White Paper which the participants have strongly endorsed. The second category of comments pertains to statements and portions of the White Paper which in our view carry ambiguities and contradictions and need either conceptual clarity or language exactitude. The third type of comments comprises what the group wishes to contest and argue out; and the fourth type consists of reflections that point out gaps in the White Paper.

The group has made these comments and recommendations believing that education is a vital, viable and great social equalizer that could simultaneously ensure individual as well as collective wellbeing of Pakistanis.

We hope that this effort would be taken in the spirit of constructive and critical critique aiming to improve an understanding whose outcomes have serious and definite bearing on our present and future.

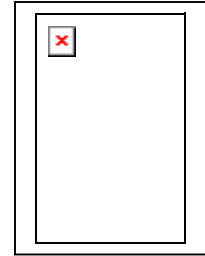
We thank the Ministry of Education for undertaking this seminal work as it has heralded a new era of inclusive approach and bold process of public policy formulation.

We look forward to due incorporation of this and other such feedback offered by a multitude of stakeholders.

Should the Ministry or NEPR require any assistance, the PCE would be honored.

Zehra Arshad

National Coordinator- PCE



## **Preamble of the recommendations by PCE**

The White Paper is indeed a bold step towards the right direction of inclusive public policy formulation. It is all encompassing in its coverage of the educational issues and contains pertinent discussion about most of the challenges that trouble the state of education in Pakistan. Its annexes are appreciated for being useful resource; particularly, annexes 2, 3, 4 and 5 inform the perspective of the reader.

2. A white paper is a comprehensive situational analysis combining a balance of description and prescription, and then culminating into prefiguring of the ensuing policy direction. Although the present document has attempted to do that but the force of narrative has overtaken the potential depth of analysis; both consistency and coherence have been a casualty as many contradictory recommendations have found their way in it.

3. Being in English, the document has limited and limiting outreach. This limit was reinforced with the short time that was given to seek the feedback: The Paper was circulated in the last week of December 2006 when Xmas and Eid holidays had started, and the feedback was asked by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007, which was incrementally increased to 31<sup>st</sup> January. A large population of key stakeholders, such as teachers and parents, was thus excluded.

4. The structure of the White Paper could be more refined and coherent, driving the analysis and the argument from abstract to the practical in a more logical fashion, and reasoning how the articulation of an abstract concept like the purpose of education relates to the practical expression of schooling; or how benign looking – and less thought out - assessment and examinations affect the minimum learning achievements in students.

5. The Paper, while dealing with various issues, tends to respond to symptoms instead of focusing at the causes that generate those symptoms. It could have picked various problems and challenges one by one, analysed them contextually and then may have suggested various corrective and or curative options along with their indicative costs: both institutional costs and financial costs or redoing. The policy recommendations under various rubrics seem to have been compiled without closer look at their inter-relation as some of them contradict others.

6. While in its effort to talk about Pakistanis, the paper ends up discussing Muslims in Pakistan. Ironically, the White Paper misses out on reporting and articulating the educational concerns and needs of those whom the ‘white’ of our flag represents.

7. It would therefore be pertinent to revise the White Paper in the light of all the feedback received from all and sundry, including this humble contribution; and then share the revised version both in English and Urdu with representatives of various interests to arrive at more inclusive, viable and practical policy approach.

## **Section wise comments**

### **1. Preamble**

8. Preambles could have premised the argument of role and importance of education in individual and collective wellbeing and progress upon six key rudiments viz. a) the collective learning of human history of progress; b) the teachings of all religions, particularly of Islam about acquiring knowledge through education; c) UN's UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights); d) Quaid i Azam's statements and assertions (quoted in the Background); e) the 1973 Constitution [Section 37(2)]; and f) the harsh learning of last 59 years trial and error in the education.

9. Preamble also needs to recognize that education is i) *learning how to learn*; ii) *how to apply that learning*, iii) *how to continuously regenerate that learning*; and iv) *the role of multiple source of learning that impact education*, both inside the organised learning environment (school, college university et al), as well as outside that (family, community and society).

### **2. Background**

10. The background is well composed. It could be elaborated by including the analysis (based on Annex IV & V) that portrays the education policy and practice efforts thus far. That is, to build the context for the present white paper from 1947 onwards.

### **3. Overview – Process and Policy**

11. This section could have restricted itself to the description of the institutional framework within which various past policy efforts were undertaken and how the present effort was different. The rationale and coherence of this section are marred by avoidable digressions and wrong generalizations like “every state has an ideology” as many do not have ideologies (with reference to education); like Japan, China, Hong Kong and many more.

### **4. Vision and Purpose**

12. Vision, technically speaking and also taking a cue from the very first line of this section (that it is an abstract philosophical driver) should be a brief statement the way the government (on behalf of the state and the people) envisages the role of education in tomorrow's Pakistan. The Section has all the right jargon and ingredients but needs to be presented in a different, technically fit manner. The proposed Vision statement is actually a mission statement.

13. This section would serve better if it is taken immediately after the Preamble and affords a deep discussion on the concept and purpose of education. It would also be wiser

to debate the role of religion in education, Islamic education and how the flawed concept led to inadequate delivery of this service.

## **5. Governance & Management**

14. It is perhaps the first time that a pre-policy document of the government of the day has talked about governance and management issues so candidly and succinctly; this is highly appreciated.

15. This is a very well articulated section, and highlights various sub-issues in detail. It has very effectively developed the argument for rethinking education governance and management.

16. This section needs to recognize that in the wake of decentralization and devolution, certain aspects of education management have been recentralized from schools to district government/s.

17. It would be useful if this section could give a glimpse of the big picture of the education management, indicating all institutions, structures, entities and organisations that are involved in one or the other way in managing (or confusing the management of) education. An analytical inter-relational organogram of all the players in the public sector would help understand which entities are useful and which are hindering the delivery of quality education, confounding the confusion and thus need to be eliminated/ merged.

18. In the Policy and Planning sub-section, more discussion is required on various possible scenarios regarding the restructuring of the Ministry of Education and the resulting benefits and costs. The White Paper should not assume any entity as a holy cow and ought to be bold to talk about several options. For instance it would be useful to debate whether HEC is serving the purpose of higher education better as an independent entity or is it distorting the state of education; and if it would be prudent to make it an equal of the 5 bureaus of the restructured M/o Education where the Ministry (as proposed in the Paper) to perform its key role of a facilitator, coordinators and setter of standards/ regulator has a bureau each on i) Policy, planning & learning ii) standards, regulation & certification; iii) financing (donor fund raising), and special interventions/ initiatives; iv) primary, secondary and support<sup>1</sup> education; and v) higher education, research and knowledge production.

19. Similarly, the role of text book boards and that of the examination boards in generating a downslide of standards in educational outcomes needs to be incisively debated and their continuation be questioned.

20. On Education financing, a fundamental gap in understanding is the lack of any actual per capita cost estimates. This exercise should include the visible costs that are

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<sup>1</sup> Support education denotes special, technical, vocational, occupational et al

being incurred by the government, the private sector / parents; and the hidden costs, e.g., the lost opportunity costs of right and timely investments (that did not take place); the loss of potential human resources; the social costs that society bears as result of not providing right, relevant and quality education to a majority of its population. A realistic estimate of per capita costs would also inform about the existing and required magnitude of collective (Public and private) expenditure on education. This might tell us whether we need to allocate 6% of GDP, or more or less.

### **6-9: Quality; Equity; Access; Relevance**

21. All these sections need to be related to one another and then re-ordered (Relevance, quality, access & equity). For instance, relevance is related to concept and purpose of education on one hand, and the socio-economic and political needs/ demands of the society on the other. Then equity and access are two sides of the same coin: as access is how many people (boys and girls; men and women) have access to schooling; and equity means the impact of such access. The concept of *quality* needs to be redefined and quality must be gauged against certain minimum standards which are not only implemented but are also strictly monitored. It is about time to move forward from the conventional understanding of quality where the erstwhile four pillars (Curriculum, text book, teacher and school environment) are seen to be determining the quality: The role/s of assessment/ examinations; of parents (PTAs/ SMCs); and of pedagogical techniques also need to be looked at in determining the of quality of schooling, learning and education.

### **10. Islamic Education**

22. This section would serve a better purpose if a) the debate is part of the concept and purpose of education; b) if a comparative stance is taken by juxtaposing the inputs and outcomes of education in pre-Islamized schooling (before and after 1979); and c) debating the benefits and costs teaching *deenyat* and ethics vs. *Islamiyat* and misplaced colouring of sciences with religion.

23. The group recognized the sensitivity and politicization of this subject but asserted a clear stance would help more than a convoluted argumentation. The phrases like dogma need to be avoided or handled more academically.

### **11. Linkages with Principle Social issues**

24. Thematic linkages should be part of relevance of education; whereas the sectoral and structural linkages that matter on the operational side of the delivery & management of education should be highlighted here.

25. The concept of inclusive education, as a responsibility of Ministry /departments of education, also needs to be recognized.

## **Some additional recommendations**

26. The group supported, endorsed and seconded several other recommendations offered separately by other stakeholders like National Commission on Justice and Peace; Idara Taleem o Agehi; Professor Aneeta Ghulam Ali and others.

27. Several additional, general and specific, recommendations are also submitted in the following:

### **General**

- ❖ The White Paper should be revised ensuring consistency of ideas, concepts, proposals and the arguments. It has most of the necessary material but needs to be presented in a simpler and coherent manner. The revised paper should have simultaneous Urdu and English versions.
- ❖ Key concepts need clarity, e.g., Education must not be confused with schooling
- ❖ Creativity, critical thinking, healthy life style and volunteerism ought to be the desired outcomes of schooling and education
- ❖ Parents' role should be recognized and measures be suggested to organise the demand side of schooling and education (particularly in early childhood education; not schooling)
- ❖ Young children should not be robbed off their childhood in the garb of early schooling; the day care centres should not be mixed with schools
- ❖ The benefits of early education/ instruction in mother tongue and the requisite paraphernalia be debated along with clear delineation of issues of capacity and responsibility
- ❖ A learning review of the successes and failures of the neighbouring countries (India and Bangladesh) and of Islamic countries (Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia) should be part of the White Paper so that the resulting education policy could be more viable, relevant and realistic
- ❖ The revised whitepaper should be edited for language, concepts & contents clarity

### **Specific**

- The recommendations of the National Education Conference held in Islamabad on May30-31, 2006 should be reflected in the relevant section of the White Paper.
- The books should be written by those who are well versed in the rules of pedagogy and we should not hesitate to get the good syllabus books written abroad. Private book developers should also be allowed to compete so that students have access to quality books and monopoly of the text book boards is eliminated. The role of the government comes in price regulation of the text books whether they are printed by the text book boards or the private sector. Low price

- editions of imported text books should gradually replace the pirated books, on the lines being done in India and other countries.
- There is a need to ‘communitize’ the schools which means that the community as well as parents should take active interest in the management of the school through the formation and activation of school management committees and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), like in FG Schools.
  - The education budget should be increased substantially but not less than 6 percent of the GDP from the next fiscal year (2007-2008), and the per child cost on education in all districts of Pakistan should be calculated separately to obtain a realistic percentage increase in education budget for future. Concurrently the absorption capacity of the schools should also be enhanced; and the intrinsic inefficiencies and leakages should be identified and eliminated.
  - The White Paper should debate and highlight the urgent corrective measures such as provision of basic facilities and needs like electricity, boundary walls, toilets and other basic infrastructure to 82,000 schools that lack these.
  - The role and scope of the private and citizens’ sector be discussed and a distinction must be made between the philanthropic and purely for profit initiatives.
  - Present system of internal monitoring or supervision of schools is not functioning and in fact, it is one of the major contributors in devastating school education. There is a need to look at other options including third party monitoring and review occasionally.
  - The pivotal role of teachers in imparting quality education; the right set of incentives to keep right teachers; the role of training and equitable access to training; linking of incentives to performance; affirmative steps to recruit more female teachers at primary level; and other measures that establish dignity and centrality of a teacher in schooling and education should be devised.
  - The pros and cons of the parallel setups and systems of schooling and education be more critically brought to the fore, thoroughly analysed and viable options be suggested.
  - Academic institutions belonging to armed forces should also incorporate the regulations made by the Ministry of education just like Public schools. Disparities and differentiation regarding admissions, fees and other incentives for children belonging to armed forces or the civil should be eliminated.
  - A pro-learning social and institutional atmosphere needs to be established and promoted with highlighted role and adequate provision of libraries
  - The guidelines for assessment standards and procedures should be proposed in the Paper
  - The recommendation of 12 year of schooling is endorsed but the classes 1-8 should be in one building while the classes 9-12 should be in other building
  - The disadvantages in access to education based on gender, geography, physical ability, religious and socio-economic status be identified, addressed and eliminated.
  - Schools till grade 8 should have preferably co-education and should continue to provide co-education when these are upgraded to high school level.

- A child's capacity to learn more than one/ two languages at early age should be recognized and a decision to teach English should have condition of corresponding provision of trained teachers.
- Early childhood education (ECE) is not the responsibility of the State; a minimum school going age be set (4/5 years).
- A predictable policy review process should also be devised and approved.
- The curriculum needs to have a fit with child's learning needs; it must invoke her/his creative, imaginative and innovative faculties and should encourage child's own learning through questioning, observation and extra reading. The curriculum must also focus on relevance to real life issues and the immediate context of the learner.

Feedback and recommendations concluded

Zehra Arshad

## **Annexure I**

### **Name of the Participants:**

1. Ms. Rabia Khan-
2. Mr. Hammad Malik
3. Ms. Aqsa Khan Ms. Rabia Nusrat
4. Mr. Imtiaz A. Nizami
5. Mr. Zahoor Ahemd
6. Mr. Arshed Bhatti
7. Ms. Asma Ghani
8. Mr. Naeem
9. Ms. Natalic Bonjol
10. Mr. Zafarullah Khan
11. Mr. Mazhar Arif
12. Mr. Amjad Nazir
13. Mr. Waseem Hashmi
14. Ms. Amera Hamid
15. Ms. Saima Anwar
16. Ms. Romana Bashir
17. Ms. Ismat Riaz
18. Dr. Fida Mohammed
19. Dr. Nazir Hussain
20. Ms. Sarwat Jehan
21. Ms. Sadaf Zulfiqar
22. Ms. Erum Burki
23. Mr. Haroon Nasir
24. Dr. Perveiz Hoodbhoy
25. Mr. Muhammad Rashid Zaka
26. Dr. A. H. Nayyar
27. Mr. Harris Khalique
28. Mr. Sada Hussain
29. Ms. Sadiqa Sallahuddin
30. Ms. Zehra Arshad