

The Role of Devolution in Shaping Balochistan Education Sector Plans (2013-2018 and 2020-2025)

Sadaf Kakar

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Balochistan, Quetta sadafkakar86@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Ali

Chairman Department of Political Science, University of Balochistan, Quetta mumtaz.uob@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper examines the Balochistan Education Sector Plans (BESP) for 2013 – 2018 and BESP 2020 – 2025 to critically assess the education policies of Balochistan after the devolution of power to provinces. The study employs qualitative content analysis to investigate if, how, and/or why such policies have improved since the 2010, addressed the province’s educational challenges, and involved stakeholders in the policymaking process. It shows that the plans focus on access, equity, and quality improvement, including measures to increase the school infrastructure, both through the initiation of Alternate Learning Pathways (ALP), as well as reforming the teacher training. Now, based on a much broader plan from 2020-2025, the goal is expanding the scope to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), data-driven decision-making and a more holistic approach. However, deep-seated issues like weak implementation, political meddling, teacher absenteeism, and dependence on outside funding make headway slow. The study finds that the policies are well-designed and relevant to their contexts, but will only succeed if backed by improved governance, sustainable financing, and local engagement. These findings also have wider implications for educational policy across Pakistan in demonstrating the importance of systemic reform to promote such provincial initiatives for enabling long term educational development across Balochistan.*

Keywords: Balochistan; Education, Plan; Devolution; Policies

Introduction

The decade that commenced with the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 saw the devolution of power from the federal to the provincial governments in Pakistan as central to this transformative change in the governance of education. The provinces were given increased control over education, health and other key sectors under this constitutional amendment to address regional inequalities and to provide better delivery of services (Siddiqui et al., 2021). Balochistan, the largest but most underserved province of Pakistan (Khan, 2023) has since given birth to two education policy frameworks, namely the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-2018 and the BESP 2020-2025. These objectives also aimed to address the province’s long-standing educational issues such as low enrollment rates, gender inequities, inadequate quality of education, and systemic inefficiencies while catering to national and international obligations like Article 25A of Constitution, Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNESCO, 2015; Government of Balochistan, 2013).

The education sector in Balochistan has been mired in critical challenges for a long time now. Literacy rates remain utterly low in the province, with adjacent disparity (Bashir, et al 2023). Balochistan has

the lowest literacy rate in Pakistan, at just 43% in 2019-2020, instead of the 60% national average as per the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey 2019-2020. The female literacy rate is only 24%, indicating deep-rooted sociocultural and socio-economic barriers to education (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The province is also suffering from an acute shortage of schools, particularly in the remote rural areas, with many children travelling up to 20-30 kilometers for a single lesson. Teacher absenteeism, poor infrastructure and archaic teaching methods add onto the already substandard quality of education resulting in students being unprepared for the rigors of the modern world (Ahmed, 2018).

The Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-2018 was the province's first and comprehensive approach to all of these challenges within the post-devolution environment. Stakeholders including teachers, students, community members, and international organizations including UNICEF and UNESCO helped to create the plan through a collaborative and consultative process. It was focused on increasing access to education, better training of teachers, and governance issues (Government of Balochistan, 2013). The plan stressed in its horizontal expansion of the education system, which meant constructing new schools in many villages and upgrading existing primary schools to middle and secondary levels. It also introduced new strategies like Alternate Learning Pathways (ALP) to bring out-of-school children back into the mainstream of education (Government of Balochistan, 2013).

The BESP 2013-2018 did face many challenges despite these efforts. Due to political interference, weak governance and bureaucratic inefficiencies, success was hindered and reliance on external funding led to concerns in sustainability of the reforms (Malik, 2020). It was a major problem as teachers either absenteeism or very poor teaching were maintained. In addition, persistent cultural norms and socioeconomic constraints, especially in rural areas, still prevented access to education, especially for girls (Ahmed, 2018; Bushan, 2017).

The Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-25 took a more wholesome and futuristic approach to remedy the shortcomings of the BESP 2013-18. They extended their plan to include Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), in order to prepare students with skills relevant to the market and curb youth unemployment. In Pakistan, for example, the new Framework committed to improved database management, including a greater emphasis on data-driven decision-making, promoting data that is accurate and comprehensive for evidence-based policy and planning (Government of Balochistan, 2020). Inclusive education was also emphasized in the BESP 2020-2025 with a focus on the systematic inclusion of marginalized groups, including children with disabilities and those from disaster-affected areas, into the mainstream education system. Biotraining7: where DRR in education aligns with emergency response (Schools should have the means to respond to an emergency if it occurs and in the crisis phase (Government of Balochistan 2020).

BESP 2020–2025 was developed through a multi-step process that included detailed analysis and widespread stakeholder engagement. After extensive consultations in 12 various districts with teachers, students, districts authorities and civil society organizations, the sole responsibility to develop a smart curriculum was kept with respective state governments. The analysis and recommendations were structured around thematic groups focused on specific areas (learning, access, governance, and data), allowing for more targeted probing of the implications. The plan also took advantage of high-level advisory input from experienced civil servants, ensuring its grounding in practical governance realities. Working closely with key provincial departments (like the Secondary Education Department and the Department of Finance) on strategies aligned with the available resources. Additional technical consultants and organization support from UNICEF also contributed to its formulation, ensuring its alignment with international standards and practices (Government of Balochistan, 2020).

This makes the BESP 2020-2025 a landmark achievement, but one that requires overcoming long-standing challenges to succeed. The education reforms are also hampered by weak governance and

political interference, and the heavy dependence on external funding poses questions about long-term sustainability. Continued teacher absenteeism and insufficient training, especially in remote areas, remain key concerns. In addition, involvement of long-standing cultural practices and socioeconomic hindrances, specifically for girls and rural residents, still plays an important role in restricting education (Malik, 2020; Ahmed, 2018).

This study explores how devolution shaped the Balochistan Education Sector Plans (BESP) 2013-2018, the BESP 2020-2025, their evolution, implementation, and outputs. It seeks to do so by analyzing these policy frameworks to respond to the following crucial questions: what effect has devolution had on the formulation and implementation of the education policies in Balochistan? How far have these plans gone in addressing the province's unique challenges in education? What are the potential strengths and limitations of these policies, and how they have informed lessons for future reforms?

Such findings have wider implications for policy interventions in Pakistan, particularly for education, where challenges of devolution are high. Balochistan's project experiences reinforce the need for context-specific policy frameworks, strong monitoring and evaluation systems, and systemic reforms to bolster provincial education efforts. The officials involved in the process will ensure that policymakers learn from the positives and negatives of these plans that will help in crafting a better feasible and inclusive education policy catering to the needs of diverse demographics of Balochistan and serve the province's long haul growth.

The Balochistan Education Sector Plans (BESP) 2013-2018 and 2020-2025 mark considerable approaches towards overcoming the province educational challenge in the post-devolution context. While these plans show great strides towards expanding access, improving quality and promoting inclusion, their success will depend on addressing the longstanding challenges of weak governance, political meddling, reliance on external donor funding. As issues and relevant lessons are addressed and built upon Balochistan can overcome its educational challenges and contribute to the province and country as a whole.

Material and Method

The study defines a qualitative content analysis to interpret Balochistan Education Sector Plans (BESP) 2013-2018 & BESP 2020-2025. Purposive sampling of policies that covered the study period varied between areas such as evolution, effectiveness, and alignment with the educational needs of Balochistan after devolution, with data collected from 2010 till present. Information was extracted from the official documents of both plans, including policy frameworks, strategies and implementation reports. Key themes analyzed were access, equity, quality, governance and financing. The contents were analyzed to derive patterns and trends, and these findings were interpreted to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the policies. researchers adhered to ethical guidelines for social research, including accuracy, transparency, and preventing bias.

Results and Discussions

Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-2018

International organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO supported the Government of Balochistan in developing the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-2018 through a collaborative, consultative, and research-driven process. Specifically, the Policy Planning and Implementation Unit (PPIU) in the Department of Education initiated the development of this plan and coordinated the entire process.

There Were Two Main Steps in the Creation of the Plan

Situation Analysis: This is a comprehensive study done between July 2011 and January 2012 that looked at the state of education in Balochistan. It examined inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes,

and highlighted important gaps, strengths, and capacity weaknesses in the education sector. More specifically, for the situation analysis, researchers used participatory methods like FGDs with key stakeholders (Ex. district education officers, teachers, students, and community members) in multiple districts. Education-related SWOT workshops with ecosystem organizations and visits to educational institutions were also covered under its purview.

The formulation of the Sector Plan: Following the situation analysis, thematic groups with representatives of various education organizations were created to diagnose the problem and elaborate proposed prioritized strategies. These groups advised the development of key elements of the plan, including strategies, objectives, and activities. Specifically, variety thematic pack did detailed works on specific areas (curriculum, textbook, teacher education, assessment and higher education), which guided the BESP structure and content. Researchers then produced log frame matrices for each strategy that included planned implementation actions and associated indicators and timelines.

The comprehensive BESP finalizes stakeholders' input at both provincial and district levels to embrace ownership and ensure harmony with Balochistan's educational challenges and aspirations. This plan has been made in consideration of data collected until 2024, international and national frameworks — Article 25A, Education for All (EFA), and the National Education Policy 2009, and feedback of development partners.

Solving the Challenges of Access and Equity

The Balochistan Education Sector Plan [BESP] (2013-2018) provides an insightful perspective on inadequate access to education as one of the major challenges particularly in rural areas. Most of Balochistan's localities do not have basic education facilities due to the sparse population and difficult terrain. Other criteria for establishing schools has population density that a lot of small settlements fall short of. It has left thousands of children deprived of formal education. The BESP argues for an expanded, horizontal model for education, seeking to build new schools in places which do not yet have adequate facilities, and create and convert hundreds of primary schools to middle and secondary schools. This is also the focus of the plan which, as mentioned earlier, promotes the community-based models of education with minimal infrastructure to reduce dropout rates. Additionally, an ALP program is aimed at re-enrolling out-of-school children into formal education, which fast-tracks them through core stages for re-entry into the conventional system. The measures are significant for ensuring by education to the widely dispersed population of the province and for fulfilment of the targets of Article 25A, which provides for free and compulsory education to children of the age bracket 5 to 16.

Quality of Education

One of the BESP's key concerns has been the low quality of education prevailing in Balochistan, which is being characterized by inadequate pedagogical practices and rote learning. From this day forward the educational system is built on rote learning, and hinders the ability of students to think critically and creatively. Corporal punishment, a lack of question inquiry, and a strict vertical system make it hard for students to engage. Linking teacher education with teacher capacity, evaluating and reorienting curriculum with the goal of making classrooms more compatible with the cognitive processes, etc. to change the situation. Moreover, many schools do not have sufficient facilities, with buildings that are not suitable for the local climate. Under the BESP, the education process is to be moved away from textbook-based education to a curriculum-based one, featuring diverse teaching materials and methods to create interest and participation of students in the classroom. There is also emphasis on interactive and inquiry based learning, where students are encouraged to question, investigate and apply concepts instead of rote memorization of facts. These strategies also involve enhancing school language policies that guarantee that students learn in their mother tongues at primary level; this way comprehension and retention are improved.

Educator Training and Professional Development

The BESP acknowledges teacher training as one of the weakest links in education, as both pre-service and in-service training programs widely fail to reach international standards. It takes nine months to become a teacher, but most of them, they can't use what they came up with in the first week of school when facing the struggles they will have in the classroom. Roughly trained people are also often found to be doing instructor duties in teacher training institutes. The BESP recommends replacing pre-service teacher education with comprehensive, globally competitive, full-time programs ranging from two to four years as part of the efforts to address the issue. These reforms are designed to prepare teachers for modern pedagogy. For existing teachers who are already qualified, it is recommended a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program. This CPD will include regular assessment of teacher's competencies, followed by training sessions that apply to skill deficits. They will also introduce follow-up mechanisms to reinforce the connection between the training and enhanced classroom practices. In addition, the BESP recommends a feedback loop in which teachers continuously improve their practice based on student outcomes and learning assessments, creating an ecosystem of improvement in the quality of teaching.

Governance and Management

Politics also undermines governance, management, and administration in Balochistan's education system, presenting yet another hurdle for the education system in the province. The authority of senior education managers has been breached by local politics influencing appointments, transfers and disciplinary actions of teachers. This results in a system where frantic absenteeism and lack of accountability run rife among teachers. The BESP aims to do so by providing data-driven decision-making processes to cope with these issues. The Balochistan Education Management Information System (BEMIS), for example, which collects, integrates, and analyzes inputs on school performance and teacher attendance, will be resuscitated so that all educational planning is evidence based and well-timed. Besides, BESP identifies a serious need for better coordination between different educational bodies, including the Directorate of Schools, the Balochistan Textbook Board, and the Bureau of Curriculum etc., which are presently functioning in silos. The plan is designed to make the process management more efficient and accountability to operate better among different departments. BESP also advocates for education managers to be trained in contemporary styles of management and monitoring, enabling managers and administrators to execute reforms successfully and sustain those improvements over time.

Inclusive Education and Disaster Risk Reduction

The BESP focuses on inclusion by moving away from the traditional education mainstays and towards helping marginalized student populations (including children with disabilities and kids living in remote areas scourged by disasters) enter the education system. Historically, these groups have not been prioritized, resulting in large gaps in educational performance. The initiative aims to create an environment aimed at inclusion through awareness campaigns, followed by training teachers to help children with special needs receive the help they need. A key component of the policy is Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in education since Balochistan experiences natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, causing disruptions to schooling in the region. The BESP recommends disaster preparedness as an integral part of the education sector, requiring schools to have the know-how and facilities to respond whenever a disaster strikes. For example, school buildings will be designed or retrofitted to be resilient against natural disasters, and students and teachers will receive training on emergency protocols. A key recent focus is the combination of inclusion and disaster preparedness, to ensure that the learning of all children at risk — regardless of whether they live in conflict or disaster zones — is able to continue in crises.

Cross-Cutting Strategies

The reforms of the BESP cannot be pursued in isolation and were therefore formulated based on the principles of both coordination and standardization across the education ecosystem. The Directorate of Schools, the Bureau of Curriculum, the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education have no connection with each other. These educational organizations should come together and devise a comprehensive and sustainable solution. This leads to a fragmented system where you can have inconsistent quality of education across the province. The plan also recommends establishing a central framework for coordination, in which access and quality-related issues are overseen by the Directorate of Schools. They aim to standardize aspects like teaching quality, delivery of the curriculum and student evaluations. In doing so, consistency and coherence in terms of both the process of teaching and the content taught shall be maintained throughout the system thereby establishing a set of common standards for all the educational institutions in the province. In addition, the BESP demands that communities play a greater role in the administration of schools by establishing Parents Teachers School Management Committees (PTSMCs). Local committees can ensure that local needs are addressed, keeping the schools accountable to the constituencies they serve with a higher level of engagement and oversight.

Financial Planning

The BESP provides a detailed financial plan for the execution of the proposed reforms over a period of five years, at a total projected cost of Rs. 61.359 billion. The expenditure is broken down into multiple components such as access, teacher training, quality improvement and governance improvement etc. The financial plan also differentiates between costs tied to enrollment (building new schools and hiring additional teachers) versus independent of enrollment (standards development and capacity building). While the BESP notes that sustainable funding is required to cover these costs, it envisions a need for the provincial government, and development partners, to secure sufficient and sustained financial flows. The plan also calls for formation of district-level committees to determine the allocation of resources and prioritize spending in line with local needs. These committees will be tasked with ensuring funds are spent efficiently and help us tackle the most pressing gaps in education first. Not only does the BESP design a complete financial strategy, but it also adopts the right approach to ensure that the actions undertaken in addressing the problems in Balochistan education remain economical and feasible – what will be achievable during the set time-frame.

Strengths of the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-2018

The most mentionable aspects of the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-2018 and its approved draft of 2018 include an access and equality focus, more distantly the improvement of the BESP itself. The policy is expected to focus on building new schools in rural and underdeveloped areas, along with renovations of existing ones, so that more children — particularly those in remote areas — will have access to an education. To prevent drop-out rates the system introduced Alternate Learning Paths (ALP) which open gates for out-of-school children to rejoin the system. The proposal includes an implementation plan that would promote teacher training and devasting, albeit long-term, a CPD program (Continuous Professional Development) that would address teacher quality. In addition, it enables children to think critically and develops their cognitive ability, as rote learning has been a problematic way of learning for decades. It also promotes teaching in mother tongues at the primary level that help understand and learn better. This guarantees that schools are more prepared to respond to natural disasters and to remain operational in times of crisis. Not to mention the policy ensure to standardize processes along with Parents Teachers School Management Committees (PTSMCs) participation which creates a strong bond between schools and communities and addresses local requirements. The substance of a financial strategy — Finally, once a flexible, predictable financial strategy is in place, then BESP proceeds to secure funding for system improvements over the long term,

making the policy sustainable (as it can be sustained over time) and scalable (as it can be extended over more beneficiaries).

Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP): Key Policy Weaknesses

However, there are some critical shortcomings of the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-2018 despite its positive aspects. The success of the policy will rely heavily on the elimination of political influence over governance — something that has historically undermined attempts at reforming education in the province. Also, the encouraging of community participation may not be feasible among communities where there is low literacy or community apathy. Yet reforming the classroom may not be enough, as teacher absenteeism is a wholly chronic problem and perhaps just as likely to endure in the proposed reforms. A focus on infrastructure improvements through building new schools can take resources away from other key elements like teacher wages and learning materials that have direct impact on student outcomes. Since rural areas face a shortage of qualified teachers, community-based schooling may not work if schools do not have adequate trained teachers. Budget constraints may delay the ambitious targets of construction and up gradation of schools. Moreover, bureaucratic red tape may also delay the implementation of the financial plan, causing people to wait longer for funds to be directed to them. My question about the policy is its over-reliance on funding from development partners outside the country and this begs the question of how sustainable this will become in the long run. Moreover, potential changes to the language of Rift, could meet resistance where the official differs from the languages of the masses. Finally, teacher training programs can take years to see measurable improvement, which would further defer the benefits of the reforms.

Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-25

The Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-2025 was developed through a process involving multi-step analysis and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. Building on secondary data and complemented by sector analyses including a comprehensive PESTEL analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal) to capture key challenges across sectors with a core focus on education including access, participation, learning outcome and governance. In 12 districts, meetings were held with teachers, students, district authorities and civil society to listen to a wide range of opinions. Groups were themed around specific areas, including learning, access, governance and data, enabling targeted analysis and recommendations. Iterative strategies were refined through a series of stakeholder workshops with government departments, civil society, and private sector participants. Senior civil servants who reached high levels of the civil service from Lewis-style recruitment very much contributed their advisory input to the Plan, ensuring that it was in touch with the realities of governance. And all of this also had to be done by working with the key provincial departments, including the Secondary Education Department and the Department of Finance, to ensure that the strategies would be aligned with the resources that were available. Technical consultants and organizations like UNICEF ensured that the BESP adhered to international standards and included best practices. The detailed policy to address the special educational needs of Balochistan was formulated using a collaborative, consultative and data wise approach.

Quality Education as Enabler of Learner Empowerment

The Learning theme was crucial considering the urgent need to lift students' reading, numeracy and analytical skills. The BESP notes that Balochistan is experiencing a learning crisis, with many students leaving school without developing critical literacy and problem-solving competencies. This theme also highlights the necessity of reforming the curriculum in a way that is sensitive to the realities of local children's needs across Balochistan. It includes a call to revise textbooks so that they are in line with the curriculum and to foster critical thinking instead of memorization. Second, is about teacher performance being the most decisive factor and the Plan describing a set of comprehensive teacher development and motivation strategies including better pre-and in-service training. In addition, several

areas of testing such as assessments and examinations need to move away from rote memorization and instead be based on critical skills. We will design the learning edit to be child-centered and produce self-learners who can become analytical and independent thinkers.

Education: Inclusive Access and Participation

The Access and Participation stream works to do this by increasing educational opportunities for people from more marginalized groups, such as girls and those from rural communities. Balochistan has the nation's largest out-of-school population with a considerable gender gap in terms of participation in education. To tackle logistical issues, like having long schools or schools far away from home, the Plan focuses on increasing the number of schools, particularly in deprived regions. Programs of non-formal education will need to be important for children missing formal schooling, enabling accelerated learning in the transition to the mainstream system. Under the BESP, strategies are also proposed to increase female participation by ensuring safer school environments, female teachers and improved facilities, including transport and menstrual hygiene management. Schools also work to interact with the community to help raise awareness for the importance of education for girls; it's made to address issues such as higher enrollment and retention.

Statistics-Based Education Reform

The Education Sector Diagnostic (ESD) focuses on the Data and Research theme and emphasizes the importance of data-driven decision-making for improving the education system. To meet existing gaps and track progress, accurate and comprehensive data collection, is critical to understanding and improving education systems. The Plan calls to strengthen the ability of government institutions to gather, analyze, and use data to inform policy and planning decisions. Its focus includes the need for research to demonstrate applicability to the practicalities of education reforms. Research, for example, can help reduce the knowledge we currently lack regarding why students from certain areas enroll less or drop out more than others, and which targeted interventions will improve these metrics. Strengthening its data systems will allow Balochistan to better align its inputs with educational needs, establish accountability, and monitor the success of reforms over time.

Governance and Management for the Better Delivery of Education

Lastly, in the Governance and Management theme, it emphasizes the coordination among different administrative structures, and the existence of capable leaders to carry out successful reforms. Governance problems, including weak policy-making mechanisms, lack of accountability, and inefficient resource distribution, have hampered development in Balochistan's education sector. The BESP has called for a results-based management framework to be instituted where all levels of the education system—including the provincial government and the schools—are aligned behind clear targets and accompanied by accountability mechanisms. It also calls for decentralization, so local education authorities have the power to make decisions closer to the ground where problems are felt. The other key point of focus is human resource management which covers policies and approaches to recruit, train and retain good teachers, school leaders and education administrators. These priorities also emphasize transparency and public-private partnerships as a means to increase resources and enhance service delivery.

Technical and Vocational Education and Trainings (TVET)

It aims to equip youth in Balochistan with skills that respond to labor market demands for employment. Unemployment is a major problem, especially among the youth, in Balochistan. The BESP infer can be addressed by strengthening technical and vocational education programs in conjunction with the local and national economy. These include establishing curricula that are current and relevant in the marketplace, reforming the governance of vocational institutions, and increasing access to vocational education, particularly for vulnerable demographics, including women and rural youth. The Plan also

calls for public-private partnerships so that training programs align with workforce needs. The BESP is designed to make TVET more effective, relevant, and accessible so young people leave school equipped with the skills they need to be economically active, contribute to the development of the province.

Sustainable Financing and Monitoring of Impact

The Costing and Impact theme helps strengthen the financial planning needed for successful rollout of the BESP. Ensuring the use of limited resources in an efficient and sustainable manner is a major challenge for educational reforms. The Plan presented a comprehensive costing framework explaining the financial needs for each area of reform, teacher training, school infrastructure, curriculum development and governance improvements. Consequently, this theme underscores the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to measure the returns on investments in education. The idea is to allocate financial resources based on what shows results with respect to learning, access, and participation, it argues, through performance-based budgeting. "Prioritizing mobilizing additional resources from development partners, driving long-term funding sustainability and local revenue generation for education is also emphasized in the Plan which aims to reduce reliance on external aid".

Strengths of Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-2025

These aspects lead to several advantages for the education sector of Balochistan. Firstly, it meets a long-felt need for a data-driven, evidence based policy. The Plan is contextually relevant, deep-rooted in the realities of the province, due to its comprehensive multi-sector analysis and consultations carried out with local stakeholders. A notable positive is the emphasis on improving access to education for usually marginalized groups, such as girls and children in rural areas, a focus that aims to narrow gender and regional disparities that remain vast. The Plan also provides a detailed analysis of the education sector's focus on key issues such as teacher development, curriculum reform, and improvements in governance — focusing on quality as well as efficiency. Its non-formal education pathways aim to reduce the number of out- of-school children, and thus increase inclusivity. Their participation in education governance, along with the private sector ensures that students receive relevant training, and their focus on technical and vocational education means that students are oriented towards securing a job rather than just earning a degree. Collaborating with organizations such as UNICEF and incorporating international standardization enhances the credibility of this approach and guarantees the adherence to global best practices.

Pros and Cons of the Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-2025

The BESP 2020-2025 is, however, not without its challenges. Implementation Problem Pros and Cons Poor implementation, driven by weak governance and the lack of political will, had left ground-dwelling policies floundering in Balochistan. Maximizing the potential for success of the BESP will require considerable administrative capacity and monitoring, which are traditionally the weak spots. One limitation is the potential dependency on external funding and partnerships, which can leave the Plan open to changes in political and financial support from external donors. Even rather distinctive for them, the aggressive fair targets through the Plan, facilitating access and reducing the gender gap, and so on, also depends on concrete short term circumstances as there are deep rooted socio-cultural obstacles in Balochistan. Furthermore, they can provide an opportunity to build capacity at the local level to get quality teachers and staff to remote areas, where recruitment and retention are challenging, in the long term. Analyzing the Plan in terms of non-formal education pathways, it can connect challenges in the message and in the content, as traditionalists promoting formal education models might challenge the acceptance of these pathways limiting the extent and effectiveness of these non-formal education programs.

As here again, the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-2025 and BESP 2013-2018 are guided by the shared fundamental principle of provisioning free and compulsory education under Article 25A of Pakistan's Constitution. Both plans acknowledge that access to education is a fundamental right for children aged 5–16 and aim to increase enrolment rates and reduce the number of out-of-school children. The two documents also focus on upgrading the quality of education by institutionalizing better teacher training, curriculum reform and moving away from rote learning. In both of those plans, quality education takes a front seat for improving overall educational outcomes, such as cognitive development and critical thinking skills in students.

Both plans also highlight the importance of addressing serious gender disparities in education, noting that girls' enrolment rates in education are particularly low in the province of Balochistan. Outlining the debt outcomes for policies to close the gender gap, increase participation in education for women and provide equality of access to education for children. Another joint target area is governance and management reforms. Both strategies emphasize the importance of improved monitoring, oversight, and accountability mechanisms to facilitate effective implementation and assess progress towards education objectives.

Differences between Data BESP 2013-2018 vs. BESP 2020-2025

The BESP 2020-2025 is different from the last plan as it covers not only school education but also Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This indicates an attempt to align education with market needs through equipping students with employable skills. The previous BESP 2013-2018, though extensive, did not include such a strong emphasis in the area of vocational training. The plan also incorporates more cross-cutting enablers such as standards, gender inclusiveness, and partnerships with non-governmental actors aimed at it being more a holistic and holistic approach for tackling education challenges in Balochistan.

Another key difference is the increased focus on data and research as an important tool for decision-making and continuous improvement in BESP 2020-2025. The focus of the 2018-2022 Plan in these aspects is a decisive improvement in the role of data collection and assessment in the planning and formulation process, in contrast with the previous Plan (2013-2018) that was predominantly concerned with access and basic reforms. Additionally, the updated plan includes perspectives for new issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which were not addressed in the previous plan. Lastly, the previous framework, BESP 2013-2018, highlighted Alternate Learning Pathways (ALP) as a strategy for re-integrating out of school children back into education (which is still significant), yet is less emphasized in the 2020-2025 plan.

Conclusions

The Balochistan Education Sector Plans (BESP) 2013-2018 and BESP 2020-2025 both analyses reveal progress achieved and issues faced to address the education needs of Balochistan over a period of time and efforts made after the devolution of power to province. Both programmes share a deep intention of making education tenure more available, equitable and worthy through initiatives like schools infrastructure expansion, Alternate Learning Pathways (ALP) as well as teacher training system reforms. Its 2020-2025 iteration extends the old plan by teaching Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and making decisions based on data, which gives it a more comprehensive and forward-looking focus. Amid all this progress, however, many challenges remain. Weak political will shaped by political interference, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and low administrative capacity remains the main obstacle in India. And this control loosening the quality of education, such as teacher absenteeism and the quality of pre-service teacher training. Moreover, these reforms are heavily reliant on external funding, which calls into question their long-term sustainability. In addition, strong cultural and economic obstacles, in particular gender inequality and poverty, make it increasingly difficult to

reach the goal of universal education. The results highlight the need to boost governance and accountability in ways that will let policy be done. Innovative financing models like public-private collaboration and local revenue streams will be essential for achieving greater financial independence from external assistance. Other solutions include increasing community participation and ownership in schooling through greater roles in management, which can mitigate cultural barriers to achieving locally owned educational goals. In addition, systemic reforms to teacher recruitment, training, and retention should always be prioritized in improving the system of education. This study also marks broader implications for education policy in Pakistan through the lens of devolution. The key takeaways from Balochistan highlight the urgency for developing context-specific policies and establishing strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and systemic reforms to facilitate provincial level educational efforts. The lessons learnt from the strengths and weaknesses of these plans could help policymakers in the formulation of better education policies that are more effective in addressing the diverse needs of Balochistan's population and contribute to the province's development in the long run.

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