

FOREWORD

Education Sector Reforms (ESR) program is designed in the long term perspective of National Education Policy (1998-2010), and the Ten Year Perspective Development Plan (2001-2011). ESR is an Action Plan for 2001-2005, strategically positioned in the objective conditions prevailing in the country: the prime concern in the short run being, stemming the rot that has set in the education system. This catalogue of reforms reflects the consummation of extensive deliberations which the Ministry of Education carried out with a cross-section of stakeholders. In our quest to learn about the core concerns and issues and the manners in which these could be addressed, I, alongwith my team travelled to all provinces and regions to consult managers, implementers, practitioners and beneficiaries of educational programs.

ESR derives its strength from the deep commitment of the present leadership of the country to development of its human resources. At no time in the history of this country has as spirited a campaign in the cause of education been spearheaded by the President himself. The Ministers for Education, Finance and Planning of the Federal and Provincial Governments and the Provincial Governors have pledged unstinted support towards ESR. Development partners including international NGOs and expatriate Pakistanis have been mobilized for assistance.

In order to save it from further crumbling and damage, rehabilitation of the existing educational infrastructure, both physical and human, and bringing it to maximum fruition is included as one of the major planks of the program. Inadequacies and deficiencies will be made up and distortions will be rectified. Consolidation and optimum utilization of the physical facilities and improvement of skills and capacity of existing manpower is envisaged to enhance the capacity and the performance of the education system.

Another ESR hallmark is its compassion for the disadvantaged and under-served. It attempts to initiate a process of correcting imbalances and disparities. Rural areas and urban slums; girls and women; child labour and those with special needs; gypsies and riverine communities; poor and underprivileged segments of population will be focused and targeted.

Educational administration and management is being devolved from the Federal and Provincial Governments to the District Governments. Much of the action concerning education is in the communities, tehsils and districts. Educational planning and decision-making will now take place where the action is. Centralized systems and distanced planning will be replaced by governance which is people and learner-centered. Not only will this make the system more objective and rational but also more efficient.

The perception that government alone has all the resources, expertise and wherewithal is being replaced by advocacy and promotion of the public-private partnership. The private sector and civil society organizations are not only encouraged to mobilize financial resources but also to join in designing, executing and monitoring educational activities. The local communities will be actively involved in mobilizing resources and managing schools.

ESR is a comprehensive sector-wide program for increased access, enhanced equity and improved quality at all levels of education. The most avowed objective is to develop an educated citizenry in which every person has completed at least a minimum level of education. To this end, Compulsory Primary Education, linked to provision of appropriate facilities, is being introduced gradually.

For those who missed the first chance, new opportunities are being created on mass scale through non-formal basic education and adult literacy programmes. These programs would cater for three different age groups viz.; 5-9, 10-14, and 15+ using appropriate strategies and instructional materials. The younger age-groups will be enabled to enter mainstream education whereas the older groups would be assisted to acquire functional literacy, undergo skill training, benefit from micro-credit facilities and engage in economically rewarding activities.

At the secondary school level, science education is being enriched and upgraded to make it responsive to the demands of rapid advancements and emerging disciplines. A third stream of technical and vocational education is being introduced in high schools to prepare skilled workers and technicians required for industrial growth as well as for employment in an expanding labour market.

Private Sector investment in secondary and higher education is being promoted through liberal grant of charters, development of multiple textbooks and private exam board. It is expected that increasing private sector participation will set in motion a healthy competition to offer high quality programmes. Diversification and introduction of new disciplines is also likely to create new exciting options for our youth, scholars and scientists.

The quality aspects of education are addressed through moderanization of curricula, upgradation of teacher training, and reforms of examinations. A National Education Assessment System within the school system will be established to carry out assessment of students' achievement to be used as basis for improvement of policy and planning, curricula and teacher training. A National Education Testing Service will regulate admission to institutions of professional education and higher learning.

ESR packages our desires and commitment to arrest perpetuation of a failing system and to accord it a reorientation which is nurtured by collective aspirations and dynamism of the public and private sectors, civil society organizations, and the communities at large. In so doing, we implore all sections of our society including parents, students, teachers, educationists, managers, administrators and policy makers to lend support. This is a national task, the accomplishment of which is contingent upon the efforts of the entire nation. It is our prayer and hope that the ESR Action Plan becomes a precursor of a process and a tradition that cultivates realization of the maximum potential of every Pakistani citizen by virtue of which Pakistan acquires a dignified and enlightened identity in the global environment.

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