From Practice to Policy: Making a Difference
From Practice to Policy: Making a Difference

The Teachers’ Resource Centre,
Working with the Government of Pakistan,
in Early Childhood Education

Sughra Choudhry Khan, in collaboration with the Teachers’ Resource Centre, Karachi.
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2004
Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise.
Risking more than others think is safe.
Dreaming more than others think is practical.
And expecting more than others think is possible.

Anon.

This study is dedicated to
teachers and students from the government and private sectors
working with Teachers’ Resource Centre (TRC),
and the management and staff of TRC for their never-ending dedication
to improving the lives of children in Pakistan.
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One Little Boy

Once a little boy went to school.
He was quite a little boy
And it was quite a big school.
But when the little boy
Found that he could go to his room
By walking from the door outside
He was happy.
And the school did not seem quite so big anymore.

One morning when the little boy had been in school a while
The teacher said:
'Today we are going to make a picture.'
'Good' thought the little boy.
He liked to make pictures.
He could make all kinds:
Lions and tigers,
Chickens and cows,
Trains and boats.
And he took out his box of crayons
And began to draw.

But the teacher said 'Wait!'
It is not time to begin!
And she waited until everyone looked ready.

'Now', said the teacher.
'We are going to make flowers.'
'Good' thought the little boy.
He liked to make flowers.
And he began to make flowers
With his pink and orange and blue crayons.

But the teacher said 'Wait!'
And I will show you how'.
And it was red, with a green stem.
'There', said the teacher,
'Now you may begin.'

The little boy looked at the teacher's flower.
Then he looked at his own flower.
He liked his own flower better than the teacher's.
But he did not say this.
He just turned his paper over
And made a flower like the teacher's.
It was red, with a green stem.

On another day
When the boy had opened
The door from the outside all by himself,
The teacher said:
'Today we are going to make something with clay'.
'Good' thought the little boy. He liked clay.
He could make all kind of things with clay:
Snakes and snowmen,
Elephants and mice,
Cars and trucks.
And he began to pull and pinch his ball of clay.
But the teacher said:
'Wait! It is not time to begin!'
And she waited until everyone looked ready.

'Now' said the teacher.
'We are going to make a dish'.
'Good!' thought the little boy.
He liked to make dishes.
And he began to make some
That were all shapes and sizes.

But the teacher said ‘Wait!
And I will show you how.’
And she showed everyone how to make one deep dish.
‘There’, said the teacher.
‘Now you may begin’.
The little boy looked at the teacher’s dish.
Then he looked at his own.
He liked his dish better than the teacher’s.
But he did not say this.
He just rolled his clay into a big ball again
And made a dish like the teacher’s.
It was a deep dish.

And pretty soon
The little boy learned to wait,
And to watch,
And to make things just like the teacher.

And pretty soon he didn’t make things
Of his own anymore.
Then it happened
That the little boy and his family
Moved to another house
In another city.
And the little boy
Had to go to another school.
This school was even bigger
Than the other one,
And there was no door from the outside
Into his room.
He had to go up some big steps
And walk down a long hall
To get to his room.

And the very first day
He was there,
The teacher said:
‘Today we are going to make a picture.’
‘Good!’ thought the little boy
And he waited for his teacher
To tell him what to do.
But the teacher didn’t say anything.
She just walked around the room.

When she came to the little boy,
She said, ‘Don’t you want to make a picture?’
‘Yes,’ said the little boy,
‘What are we going to make?’
‘I don’t know until you make it,’ the teacher said.
‘How shall I make it?’ asked the little boy.
‘Any way you like,’ said the teacher.
‘And any colour?’ asked the little boy.
‘Any colour’, said the teacher.
‘If everyone made the same picture,
And used the same colours,
How would I know who made what,
And which was which?’
‘I don’t know,’ said the little boy.
And he began to make a red flower,
With a green stem.’

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### List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADO</td>
<td>Assistant District Officer</td>
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<td>AKF</td>
<td>Aga Khan Foundation</td>
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<td>AKF(P)</td>
<td>Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan)</td>
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<td>AKU-IED</td>
<td>Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development</td>
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<td>AJK</td>
<td>Azad Jammu and Kashmir</td>
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<td>BCEW</td>
<td>Bureau of Curriculum and Education Wing</td>
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<td>CB</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based Organisation</td>
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<td>CE DAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CT</td>
<td>Certificate of Teaching (Secondary)</td>
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<td>DCO</td>
<td>District Coordination Officer</td>
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<td>DEO</td>
<td>District Education Officer</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DMC</td>
<td>District Municipal Corporation</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>ECCD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Care for Development</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>ECEP</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education Programme</td>
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<td>EDO</td>
<td>Executive District Officer</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EQ</td>
<td>Emotional Quotient</td>
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<td>EQ UIP</td>
<td>Education Quality Improvement Programme</td>
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<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>ESR</td>
<td>Education Sector Reforms</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Ratio</td>
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<td>GoP</td>
<td>Government of Pakistan</td>
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<td>GoS</td>
<td>Government of Sindh</td>
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<td>ICPD</td>
<td>Initiating Change through Professional Development</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Islamabad Capital Territory</td>
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<td>INSET</td>
<td>In-service Education and Training</td>
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<td>IUCN</td>
<td>The World Conservation Union</td>
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<td>JEA</td>
<td>Joint Educational Advisor</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japanese International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>LFA</td>
<td>Logical Framework Analysis</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>NFE</td>
<td>Non-formal Education</td>
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<td>NOG</td>
<td>Non-government Organisation</td>
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<td>N O RAD</td>
<td>Norwegian Agency for Development</td>
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<td>NWFP</td>
<td>North-west Frontier Province</td>
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<td>PEP</td>
<td>Primary Education Programme</td>
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<td>PITE</td>
<td>Provincial Institute of Teacher Education</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent-Teacher Association</td>
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<td>PTB</td>
<td>Pahla Taleemi Basta (Readiness Bag)</td>
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<td>PTC</td>
<td>Primary Teacher Certificate</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Social Action Programme</td>
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<td>SAPP</td>
<td>Social Action Programme Project</td>
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<td>SC-UK</td>
<td>Save the Children, UK</td>
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<td>SIDP</td>
<td>Social Institutions Development Programme</td>
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<td>SDEO</td>
<td>Sub-divisional Education Officer</td>
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<td>SDPI</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Policy Institute</td>
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<td>SM C</td>
<td>School Management Committee</td>
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<td>SPEDP</td>
<td>Sindh Primary Education Development Programme</td>
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<td>STB</td>
<td>Sindh Textbook Board</td>
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<td>SW D</td>
<td>Social Welfare and Women's Department</td>
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<td>TPTE</td>
<td>Technical Panel for Teacher Education</td>
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<td>TLO</td>
<td>Tracking Learning Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education and Science Organisation</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>VEC</td>
<td>Village Education Committee</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>The World Bank</td>
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<td>WWF</td>
<td>World Wide Fund for Nature</td>
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Aims of the Study

This study aims to record and explore the journey that the Teachers' Resource Centre (TRC) in Karachi has been undertaking with the Government of Pakistan, particularly in the area of Early Childhood Education. Under the CIDA/AKF funded ‘Social Institutions Development Programme’ and, more recently, the USAID funded ‘Releasing Confidence and Creativity: Building Sound Foundations for Early Learning in Pakistan’ programme, TRC has been a critical institution, seeking to become a leader in establishing the importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE). It is using its knowledge and expertise in ECE to engage in policy dialogue with the government, to improve the education of young children, particularly girls, in the areas of access, quality, retention and sustainability.

This study is a shorter version of a more detailed study prepared for TRC. In it, I seek to give the context for TRC’s work through a background of education in Pakistan and a history of TRC and its work with the government over the last decade and a half or so. I explore the nature of TRC’s public-private partnership with the government, describe the process, and analyse the role it has played in policy dialogue with the government. I then go on to explore the learning and approaches that have contributed to the success of the TRC-government partnership and the challenges, questions and possibilities for the future. This promising relationship has resulted in the successful establishment of quality kachchi classes in selected schools in Sindh and, more importantly, the adoption by the Federal Government of Pakistan of the ECE framework curriculum, as the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education of Pakistan in March 2002.

I drew information for this study from selected relevant literature on the nature of policy planning, analysis and dialogue in developing countries, on educational and teacher development and the involvement of NGOs in public-private partnerships. I had detailed discussions with TRC senior management and meetings with Government of Sindh officials and teachers, head teachers and supervisors of project schools. Documents examined included numerous narrative reports on TRC progress, seminars and consultancies. I also draw on my experience of working closely with TRC from 1997 to 2002, as the Programme Officer/Manager, Education, for the Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan). Had time allowed, the study could usefully have benefited from more school visits and a wider range of focus discussions with children, parents, teachers, educational officials and Islamabad Federal Curriculum Wing senior management personnel.

I am very grateful to all those who contributed their time for this study, especially to Seema Malik, Director, TRC, and Mahenaz Mahmud, Senior Manager, who gave hours of their time to discuss TRC’s work and allowed me to write their story. Thanks are also due to Dr Parween Hassan and Stella Jaffri for their comments and suggestions. Any errors in this study are mine. I hope that the study provides useful detailed documentation and analysis of TRC’s work with the Government of Pakistan and shows how an NGO can be effective in influencing educational policy in Pakistan by putting teachers at the centre of the process. Last but not least, I hope that the study gives rise to further sets of questions to be explored about the nature of improving education in developing countries and thus contribute to our learning.

Sughra Choudhry Khan, June 2004.
EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN
‘...there is no doubt that the future of our State will and must greatly depend upon the type of education that we give to our children...’

Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah

The Education Crisis

Education in Pakistan has been in crisis for a long time. It suffers a poor history that reveals that the government has, in the past, provided neither the leadership nor the resources to develop its children in preparation for its future. Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, there have been seven policies and eight five-year plans, containing the same laments about the dire situation and repeatedly deferred targets that have led to very little progress. The large, national, two-phase multi-donor and government Social Action Programme, with a major focus on education, failed abysmally and ended prematurely. Pakistan today still has some of the worst educational indicators in the region and world. A third of the population of 140 million are in poverty. Some 50% of the population is illiterate. Official figures tell us that the gross school enrolment rate for boys is 80% and 61% for girls but the net enrolment rate is 47% and 37% respectively. Over 11 million children are out of school, and of those that are in school, only 50% remain to complete the primary years, many leaving in the first two years.

During the ‘90s, public expenditure allocated to education averaged 2.3% of GNP, significantly less than the 4% recommended by UNESCO for developing countries. However, it should be noted that actual expenditure is much lower as a result of inefficiencies in the system and money being transferred too late in the financial year. In 2001, expenditure was 1.3%. In contrast, in 2004 Pakistan will spend Rs 160.3 billion on defence as opposed to Rs 3.107 billion on education.

In the first systematic study of primary education in Pakistan, Warwick and Reimers concluded that there were five conditions that the government needed to address in order to provide learning opportunities for children: access; enrolment of all children who are eligible; capable and competent teachers; adequate teaching materials; and students learning successfully and staying on to complete their primary education. Many children cannot access school as there is not one near enough to home, or the family cannot afford the direct and/or indirect costs, or the family does not see the relevance or need for such education. The physical state of schools renders them unsafe learning environments: no building (shelterless schools) or ones in a dilapidated state, lack of boundary walls, no toilets or ones not working, lack of drinking water and lack of furniture, libraries and laboratories. Some areas have too many schools and others too few. Where there are adequate facilities they are frequently underused.

The curriculum teachers are expected to teach has been criticised for being outdated and irrelevant and not designed to develop creativity, relevant skills and competences. Curriculum change is very difficult to instigate and is tied to the development of textbooks, the quality of which is wanting. In fact, teachers may even be unaware of the requirements of the curriculum as the textbook serves as both curriculum and syllabus.

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5op. cit.
7Pakistan Integrated Household Survey results as reported in Mallick, A.A. (2000).
8Multi-donor Support Unit (2001): Elementary Education in Pakistan, Current Strategies, Issues and Future Strategies, Islamabad; MSU. Numbers did not include Balochistan, unavailable at the time of MSU’s publication. This would increase the number, Balochistan being a known area of under development in education.
10N.H. Mayar: Education: Some Thoughts on Reform. Dawn Sunday June 22 2002 Islamabad
Teachers

Research shows us that it is teachers and schools that have a greater influence on student achievement within developing countries rather than the background of the student. Thus, it is all the more alarming that there is a lack of quality teaching in Pakistan, and that the type of traditional teaching used strangles children’s desire to learn. Teachers suffer from poor morale, lack of self-esteem, poor working conditions and inadequate salaries. This is especially so with primary teachers who are at the lowest rung of the hierarchy. We hear that ‘teachers get away with educational murder’12 and that many send their own children to private schools. Kizilbash states that ‘teachers at the rural primary level have been treated with such contempt that many of them no longer care how they perform’13. However, not all government teachers are bad. Gazdar looked at over 30 government schools and although he found the situation dismal, he states that many teachers were exceptionally dedicated to their work, despite adverse conditions14. He also states that ‘It appears strange that teachers who are required to teach and take care of the most vulnerable children, whose participation in school is likely to be quite fragile, are at the bottom of the educational hierarchy’15.

Teachers are not usually the academic high achievers; indeed, academic credentials may be dubious and commitment very low. This lack of motivation leads to classrooms in which the stick rules with fear, where there is dull rote learning and a lot of recitation. The ineffective examination system reinforces this type of teaching, and leads to large numbers failing. There is no place for learning to think, or be critical, and certainly none for discovering the joy of learning. Primary teachers rarely benefit from in-service training that they can put to good use, often attending half-heartedly and being more concerned about the travel and daily allowances that are due to them. Although 75% of teachers are supposed to be ‘trained’ through the PTC (Primary Teaching Certificate) or CT (Certificate of Teaching - secondary), such training is outdated and not related to practice in schools.

Equity Issues

Concerns about equity issues abound. The rural-urban divide has widened, as has the gap between the richest and the poorest. There seem to be two systems at work, one for the rich who can access a western style education in English medium, therefore deemed to be of ‘good quality’, and the other for the poor who can only access government schools teaching in Urdu. However, a rise in private schools during the ’90s now caters for 28% of enrolment16 and includes a wide range of types and fees, as well as varying degrees of quality.

Haq states that investing in female education is the ‘most precious investment a society can ever make’, particularly in South Asia, as it delivers a huge rate of return - higher income opportunities; greater reduction in poverty, especially in rural areas; better family nutrition; hygiene and health; lower infant and child mortality rates; smaller and more educated families and increasing democratisation of society. However, the gender gap between males and females in Pakistan is one of the largest in the world. The mean period of schooling for girls is 0.7 months, (2.9 for males)17 and two thirds of women are illiterate. The general failings of the system affect girls disproportionately. It is hard for them to be allowed to travel to distant schools, for fear of safety. The curriculum and teaching style is not gender sensitive. The opportunity costs of schooling matter more when girls have to help at home, and limiting socio-cultural factors may prevent their going to school, while early marriage puts an end to it anyway. Although there is a segregated system for females, this can actually work to disadvantage18 them as it is more difficult attracting female teachers, supervisors and education officers, especially to rural areas.

Chapter 1 - The State of Education in Pakistan

The Development of Educational Policy

In 1947, Pakistan inherited a population that was 85% illiterate, and rural areas where no women were educated19. The first National Education Conference took place in 1947 and aimed to achieve free compulsory education in 10 years and universal primary education within 20 years. In 2003, we are still chasing this elusive goal, which Pakistan is bound to deliver under its Constitution (1973, Article 37-B)20:

- The State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of backward classes or areas.
- The State shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within the minimum possible period.

The current National Education Policy 1998-201021 was finalised after a process of consultation and is comprehensive, although somewhat lacking in coherence. This policy, like others before it, also laments the poor position of Pakistan’s educational development, which it states has a history of excellent plans and policies that have not been implemented. The literacy rate has only increased an average of ½% annually over the last 50 years, because basically no realistic plan of operation had been in place.

In taking stock, the 1998-2010 Policy recognised that there was a critical shortage of physical facilities and equipment. Over 25,000 primary schools had no building. Most one-room rural schools were very basic and the majority of schools had no toilets or water. There was a shortage of furniture, and teaching kits have lain unused in head teachers' rooms since the early '80s. Non-formal education was again in favour to complement formal education, which would now become an elementary system from classes 1 to 8. The Policy acknowledged international agreements and the involvement of foreign donors. It aimed at having every 6 to 12 year old in school within five years, and introduced the kachchi class to improve achievement. Use of current buildings would be optimised and new facilities provided. Quality would be improved through better pre-service and in-service education of teachers, who would now be required to have higher education levels before being trained as teachers. In addition, communities and NGOs would participate more in the process of education in their schools. Thus, as Bengali tells us, after seven national education policies and eight five-year plans, we have little to show for it - after the first ten years 'verbiage began to replace substance'22 within educational policies.

The Education Sector Reforms (2001-2004)

The Education Sector Reforms23 (ESR) initiated in 2001, are unusually and significantly not a new policy but an action plan to implement the National Education Policy 1998-2010, launched after a wide consultative process. The Reforms seek to improve access and quality and include quantitative and qualitative improvements as well as incorporate proposals for achieving Education for All (EFA). The mission for the education sector within the ESR Action Plan is ‘to develop human resources in Pakistan as a pre-requisite for global peace, progress and prosperity’24. The ESR outline seven key programmes or ‘thrust areas’, some of which have attached ‘innovative programmes’ which adopt and attempt to scale up some innovative ideas practiced in donor projects:

- The National Literacy Campaign;
- Mainstreaming the Madrassahs;

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20 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973) Article 37-B
Universal Primary/Elementary Education with the innovative programmes of Tawana Pakistan's Schools Nutrition Programme; Early Childhood Education; and Good Governance and Decentralization in Education;

Improving the Quality of Teacher Education and Training, Exam Reform and Assessment: Innovative programmes: National Education Assessment System; Reforms in Examination System; and Tehsil District Resource Centres;

Technical Education: Innovative programme of Video Textbooks;

Higher Education Sector Reforms;


Although the ESR represent a more sensible approach developed for the implementation of reforms, there is still scepticism about the ability of the government to allocate and spend sufficient funds for education. However, for TRC the current education policy and the ESR Innovative Programme component proved very timely for its work on influencing policy and practice in the area of ECE.

International Commitments

In terms of international commitments, Pakistan has signed up to the EFA commitments in the Jomtien Declaration (1990), which outlined an ‘expanded vision’ for education, with a focus on quality, early childhood development and the needs of the poorest countries. Pakistan has been the first country to develop a national fifteen-year Plan of Action for EFA which forms an integral part of its education reform package. Pakistan is also a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, affirming free and compulsory education as a human right. It has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Education in the Recent Political Change Environment

The malaise in education is generally attributed to a lack of political will, institutional capacity and good governance. It is hard to be optimistic about the future of education and therefore the future of Pakistan itself, given the lack of progress. However, we perhaps need to remind ourselves that the ‘necessary first step to progress is keeping a positive mindset, a belief that eventually we can, and will, overcome problems, no matter how great’.

The recent changes in Pakistan’s political environment, with General Musharraf’s ‘NGO-friendly government’ from October 1999, and the 2002-elected government have led to a greater recognition of the difficulties of implementing ongoing education policy, greater commitment to education as a key component to poverty reduction, and more action on gender equity.

The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper provides the policy framework for education reforms, and the devolution plan, by which power is devolved to the local level, forms the implementation framework. The Paper also recognises that ‘education is probably the most significant factor characterising the difference between poor and non-poor households’. In the recent Pakistan Development Forum in May 2003, interestingly called ‘Partners In Progress’, education was named as one of the major thrusts of the Strategy. The Prime Minister of Pakistan stated that:

‘We are conscious of the fact that education is our primary responsibility, and especially girls’ education. We shall employ all available resources to give effect to our plan...’

Accordingly, almost 50% of the expenditure in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper was allocated for education. Addressing the forum, the Minister of Education reported signs of better fund utilisation and accountability in districts, through community participation and greater public awareness of education. However, there were many
constraints, such as imprecise mechanisms for fiscal transfers, unclear delegation of roles and responsibilities, politicisation, lack of capacity, and a lack of coordination between the District Coordination Officers and the Executive District Officers with the provincial Departments of Education.

We can thus see that there has been much movement with regard to education reforms in recent years. However, the government is well aware of the challenges ahead. It is too early to assess the implementation of the ESR, the period of which has now been extended to 2005, but there seems to be cautious hope. However, Zobaida Jalal, the then current Minister of Education, had ‘her work cut out for her’ having to ‘to make up for the negligence of decades’. Any future Ministers will also face enormous challenges in attempting to reform education in Pakistan.

Summary

Education in Pakistan has been in crisis for a long time. Today it has some of the worst indicators in the world. Over 11 million children are out of school and of those that are in school, only 50% remain to complete primary education, while the other 50% mostly leave in the first two years. Many children do not have access to school. School facilities are lacking and the curriculum is criticised for being outdated and irrelevant for the skill demands of the 21st Century. Funding for education has been inadequate and poorly utilised. Public expenditure during the ‘90s averaged 2.3% of GNP. This is significantly less than the 4% recommended by UNESCO for developing countries. Actual expenditure is lower still. In terms of equity concerns, the rural-urban, rich-poor divide has widened. Despite the huge rate of return for society that is possible from the education of females, Pakistan has one of the largest gender gaps, with two thirds of women remaining illiterate. Furthermore, despite the constitutional responsibilities of the Government, seven national policies and eight five-year plans, Pakistan has only achieved an average increase of 1/2% in literacy over 50 years.

The Education Sector Reforms (2001-2004/5) form the Action Plan to implement the current National Education Policy (1998-2010). These reforms address the areas of literacy, elementary and madrassah education, the quality of teacher education and training, examinations and assessment, technical education, Higher Education reforms and public-private partnerships. In terms of international commitments, Pakistan has signed up to EFA, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Recent political changes have resulted in greater recognition of the importance of education and the will to act. The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper prioritises education, and efforts are being made to address numerous problems, such as the lack of institutional capacity, good governance, community participation and co-ordination. Such changes are welcome, but the journey to universal primary education is still a very long one that the government acknowledges it cannot take alone.

Having reviewed the general state of education in Pakistan, the study will now look at Early Childhood Education in Pakistan, providing the setting for TRC’s work with the government in this area.
Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a part of the relatively new, wider term of Early Childhood Care for Development (ECCD). The field of ECCD has received increasing international attention as a result of a body of research that lends convincing and compelling evidence to the importance that experiences and learning in early childhood hold for optimal development and later success in the lives of individuals and their societies. ECCD is multi-disciplinary and recognises that health; intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical development; socialisation and attainment of culture, all interact and are inter-related in a young child’s life. Research tells us that the most active part of a child’s brain development takes place from birth to the age of two and is crucial for the potential of learning. What the child then experiences from the ages of 2-5 lays the foundation for social skills, school and later learning. It further informs us that the experiences from the ages 6-8 are critical to sustain learning and later success in life. In short, research has shown that ECCD can improve performance in primary and secondary school, increase children’s prospects for higher productivity and future income, and reduce the possibility of them becoming burdens on public health and social service budgets. Evidence also suggests greater benefits for children from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds, and those with lesser educated parents.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) of good quality concentrates more on the education side of ECCD and recognises that learning cannot be divided into discrete subjects, but must be holistic and consistent with the positive values of the community. ECE starts from where the child is, from what he/she already knows, and aims to expand and examine this in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. There is stress on building the self-esteem and confidence of the child as the basis of all future positive development. Learning is developed through opportunities to play, experiment and ask questions. Children are taught to be aware of themselves and to relate to others positively. ECE seeks to develop the child’s natural curiosity to learn, the ability to relate to people and their environment well, and the intrinsic motivation that he/she can carry through into later life. It seeks above all to kindle and keep the desire for learning alive. The teacher should be actively observing and engaging with children; moving them on; getting them to value, collaborate and learn from each other; asking questions; encouraging children to think and experiment, and providing the opportunities and a safe environment in which to do so.

ECE in Pakistan

ECE in Pakistan is generally taken to refer to the pre-primary/reception or kachchi class, although there are some projects that work with the age range of 0-3, thereby beginning to widen the understanding of ECE. It is traditionally a neglected area, although some classes have been present from pre-1947. Government records state that approximately one-third of primary school children are presently enrolled in a kachchi class (the official school age being 6 years) and that numbers have only just begun to be monitored. Many children under the age of 4 also accompany their siblings to school, but remain outside official statistics. The private sector has been much more effective in setting up pre-schools: nursery, kindergarten, and Montessori schools. 1998 EFA data shows that only 734,455 out of the 8.6 million children between the 3-5 age group are enrolled in schools, giving an enrolment rate of only 8%. Figures also show that most children drop out before or during class 2.

There are some ECCD programmes being implemented for the 0-3 age range, such as those supported by UNICEF, SCF and ADB. AKF has funded a successful pre-primary and primary education programme working with communities in rural Sindh, and now has a Releasing Confidence and Creativity programme working in selected government schools in Balochistan and Sindh, which works with all sections of the school community and district. Plan International is working in community-based ECD centres in the Punjab and the Children’s Resources International is working in schools in the ICT, Rawalpindi and Karachi areas. SC UK is planning ECD programmes building upon its work on the child-to-child health action schools approach in Sindh. The Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development is developing a module on ECE for its Master’s programme and the Aga Khan University in Pakistan is planning ECD programmes working in selected government schools in Balochistan and Sindh, which works with all sections of the school community and district.


Khan University is developing a Human Development Programme that will conduct activities and research in ECCD. There is also, of course, the work of the TRC that is described later. A review of donor funded projects would suggest that most projects are working in isolation and in limited areas and with small numbers. Shakil states that there is not much attention paid in most projects to building the capacity of the government and that there is little co-ordination of work and sharing of materials.

ECE in the Education Sector Reforms 2001-2004/5

As seen above, the Government of Pakistan includes in its current policy and ESRs, provision for kachchi classes within its Innovative Programmes component. This contains a call to support ‘Early Childhood Education as the first pillar for Education for All’ and tells us that:

‘It is common knowledge that a good ECE programme is an incentive for parents to bring their children to school, build their readiness skills and ensure that they remain in schools with optimum results’.

The goal of the ECE programme is:

‘To initiate Early Childhood Education (ECE) as an incentive programme for improving primary access and retention, addressing the well-being of the very young at the household and school levels’.

Activities within the ECE programme include the setting up of ECE in 200 schools in each province and 100 each in AJK and the Northern Areas. The Teachers’ Resource Centre (TRC) is named as a resource institution for providing policy and professional back-up. ECE curriculum and competency levels are to be developed. 1000 teachers are to be appointed as well as teachers’ aides. Master Trainers are to be trained by TRC in collaboration with local/district training institutions for training of teachers. TRC’s ‘First School Bag/Readiness Bag’ (Pehla Taleemi Basta) and the Quaida Kit developed by Alif Laila Book Bus Society (ALBBS) are named as learning materials. Activities include classroom and parental support, action research on links between pre-primary and primary classes, the development of monitoring tools, and generally raising awareness of the importance of quality ECEP. Funding for schools covers teacher and teacher assistant salaries, furniture, play equipment, books and learning materials.

The activities listed in the ESR bear a striking resemblance to the language and activities used by TRC. However, despite being named as a national resource, TRC did not know that it was named within the ESR until the text was brought to their notice. The ESR document also includes a quotation from a satisfied mother of a child in a TRC project school:

‘Children don’t even think of staying at home anymore. We used to force them to attend schools each day but now they are so eager, they insist on going’.

The EFA provisions under the National Plan of Action, incorporated within the ESR, require the institutionalisation of the kachchi class through providing a separate room and teacher for kachchi classes, activity-based textbooks and materials, teaching kits and audio-visual aids.

The facts, descriptions and figures above support a compelling argument for good quality ECE and clearly show the need to rectify the weaknesses in government provision for it, if Pakistan is to have effective ECE and wishes to increase the retention rate and success of children in schools and society.

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39 Ibid., p. 30.
Summary

International research provides compelling evidence about how important a child’s early childhood experiences are for optimal development and success in later life. Quality ECCD can improve a child’s performance in primary and secondary school, his/ her productivity and income in adulthood, and reduces the chance of his/ her becoming a burden on health and social service systems. ECE provides a holistic education, starting from what the child knows and building his/ her self-esteem and confidence. Learning is through experience and relating with peers and adults within a safe learning environment designed to nurture the desire to learn.

ECE in Pakistan generally refers to the pre-primary/ reception or kachchi class and has traditionally been neglected. The numbers of children have only recently been monitored and children younger than the official school age may remain outside official statistics. The enrolment rate of 8% and the very high drop-out rate by class 2 are critical factors that need to be addressed.

Various donor programmes for ECE exist but most seem to act in isolation and with small numbers. There is also a lack of sharing and co-ordination. The Government of Pakistan’s ESR provide for kachchi classes, recognising ECE as the basis for achieving Education for All. Activities are planned on a national level and the TRC is named as a technical resource for policy and professional assistance.

This section of the TRC study has reviewed the general state of education and ECE in Pakistan, thus providing a background to TRC’s work with the government. The next section will examine how TRC came about, describing its early development and the first major project it undertook with the government sector. These early experiences provided the basis for TRC’s increasing capacity to work effectively with the Government of Pakistan.
THE TEACHERS’ RESOURCE CENTRE
‘It appears strange that teachers who are required to teach and take care of the most vulnerable children, whose participation in school is likely to be quite fragile, are at the bottom of the educational hierarchy’.\(^{41}\)

**Beginnings**

The Teachers’ Resource Centre was set up in 1986 as an independent, non-profit and non-governmental organisation by a small group of private sector head teachers who were concerned about the state of education in Pakistan, and wanted to improve the quality of school education\(^{42}\). The process began in 1982, against the background of a lack of real progress in education indicators, when the founding head teachers of TRC were angry about the low status accorded to teachers, and the accusations of apathy, and wanted to provide avenues for self-help.

The founding group met regularly and conducted a survey on needs among Karachi schools. The group found that in-service education was the highest felt need by teachers, followed by having a professional library and inexpensive, culturally relevant learning materials. The idea of a resource centre for teachers was thus born, based on similar models that were functioning in the UK. AKF agreed to provide the initial funding. The chosen focus of primary education recognised the foundation it provides for further learning. Although the founders of TRC were from the private sector, there was always a conscious desire to build bridges with the government sector by, for example, providing advisory services and narrowing the gap between public and private sector education.

**Mission and Aims**

The current mission of TRC puts the child and the teacher at the heart of the teaching-learning process:

‘To contribute to improving the quality of children’s learning experiences through changing teachers’ perceptions of the learning process. Through its mission, TRC aims to create an environment where teachers see themselves as life-long learners; where individuals are in control of their learning; where they collaborate in each other’s learning, and by doing so are individually and collectively equipped to do the same for children’.\(^{43}\)

The current aims of TRC clearly reveal the philosophy of TRC, analysed later in this study. These aims are:

- To bridge the gap between less privileged schools in the public and private sectors and well-resourced private schools, by sharing resources, information and expertise.
- To replace the prevalent culture of competition among schools to one of co-operative development.
- To respond to learning needs identified by teachers as well as schools.
- To provide a forum for the professional development of teachers, and to enhance their professional and social status.
- To assist teachers in recognising themselves as not only teachers, but also as life-long learners\(^{44}\).

**General Activities**

TRC’s early activities focussed on a regular programme of primary education courses and training for workshop leaders, so that teachers could gain confidence to lead workshops. At this early stage, it was recognised that teachers needed to grow in confidence and that a deeper understanding of the learning process was concomitant with a necessary personal growth. A library and media resource provided over 10,000 books to encourage reading in a country which lacks a reading culture, and to provide a space for research, workshop and material preparation, and the use of equipment for teaching and learning.

\(^{42}\) TRC (1990): *TRC: A Case Study for World Conference on Education for All*.
\(^{43}\) Present to the AKF(P) Budget Sub-Committee in November 2001. Bold print by author

TRC now has a dedicated core of full- and part-time staff, institutional and associate members, and friends who assist and support activities. Its activities, based on membership or donor-funded educational development projects, are:

- Training workshops for all levels
- Producing regular and one-off publications to improve pedagogy
- Holding special events for children, parents and teachers to share activities
- Maintaining a professional resource library
- Sharing knowledge and skills with organisations at various fora
- Offering intensive classroom support
- Developing teaching and learning materials

In 2003, the TRC reported a membership of 117 Associate Members and 137 Institutional Members, ‘Friends of TRC’ had 13 members, and free membership of TRC was provided to three government schools. In the same year, TRC conducted 58 workshops for 1,220 participants, and had 346 requests for information, along with various visitors.

Early Approaches

The very beginnings and raison d’etre of TRC clearly reveal a sympathy for the plight of the teacher in Pakistan, and the desire to improve the professionalism of teachers without apportioning blame, and through that to improve the learning of children. TRC’s holistic approach includes a global view of people as citizens of the world and the integration of environmental issues in all activities. TRC approaches planning and implementation rigorously. Some courses are on generic teaching and learning subjects such as organising the classroom, how children learn, or how to assess children. Others focus on specific curriculum areas, such as how to teach science, bearing in mind content and methodology, to increase the teacher’s and child’s conceptual understanding. All courses promote activity-based learning, a non-threatening environment to enhance learning, ideas that can be tried in a variety of schools, and the recycling of materials to make effective learning and teaching aids. The workshop leader, acting as a role model, exemplifies appropriate attitudes, methods, qualities and skills through his/her approach, that participants learn to emulate in their classrooms, with support. TRC makes an effort to be sure to start from where the learner is, and to grade the learning into achievable steps, within a safe environment that recognises that, for change to take root, a minimum of five years is really needed.

Summary

The Teachers’ Resource Centre was established in 1986 as an independent, non-profit and non-governmental organisation, by a small group of private sector head teachers concerned about the low status of education and teachers. A survey of needs in Karachi schools found that in-service training was the highest felt need, followed by having a professional library and culturally relevant learning materials. This gave rise to the idea of a Teacher’s Resource Centre, with a focus on primary education and a desire to bridge the gap between public and private sectors of education.

TRC’s current mission is to ‘contribute to improving the quality of children’s learning experience, through changing teachers’ perception of the learning process’. It wishes to enable teachers to become collaborative, life-long learners, and be collectively equipped to do the same for children.

TRC’s early activities provided a programme of primary education courses and training for workshop leaders. Regular publications, a library and special events provided additional support. The approach developed did not apportion blame, but sought to increase the self-confidence and professionalism of teachers through practical assistance and the provision of workshop leaders as role models.

This chapter described the beginnings of TRC. The next chapter goes on to outline a number of small projects that TRC undertook during its initial stages of working with the Government of Pakistan.

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49 TRC: 9th Annual Report, Karachi, TRC.
TRC’s Early Projects

TRC’s experience of working in disadvantaged communities and government schools started within two years of its existence, and grew gradually through its work on several projects funded by various donors with different agendas. During the School Development Project of 1988-1990, funded by Camrose Institute Canada, through South Asia Partnership, for one year, and Bank of Commerce & Credit International for the second year, TRC worked in four schools in slum areas of Karachi, one of which was a government school. The support comprised of weekly workshops on site, professional support in the classroom, and stationery material and book donations from TRC member schools. TRC learned that being patient and flexible were vital qualities to achieve progress, albeit slow.

In the Environmental Education Project (1990-1993), funded by WWF, UK, through IUCN, awareness was raised within the educational community through workshops, activity packs, publications and special events. The project had a considerable impact on participants, putting environmental education onto the agenda of schools, and had an impact on TRC itself as an organisation. The best approach found was the integration of environmental education across the curriculum, in subjects such as Maths, Science, Islamiaat and Language, an approach that was later taken up in the National Conservation Strategy.

The Early Childhood Education Project (1991-1994), funded by Royal Norwegian Agency Development Corporation (NORAD), provided workshops for teachers and decision-makers, classroom support and review meetings with the Social Welfare Department. However, the project was not very successful and was changed in the light of experience gained from the later ICPD project.

The UNICEF designed Teacher Empowerment Project (1997-1998) aimed to increase pupil attendance by improving the quality of teaching and pupils’ learning outcomes in the Larkana and Hyderabad districts. It provided the opportunity for TRC to work with the Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Wing (BCEW), conduct a background survey and needs assessment and to train 96 lower primary female teachers and 59 master trainers. Monitoring of progress was identified as a crucial issue. A training manual for master trainers was also developed; this included a session on multi-grade teaching.

The Development of Learning Materials Project (1988), funded by CIDA, was in response to the Ministry of Education’s new Integrated Curriculum for classes 1 to 3. This involved the development of six project packs, and a book containing 100 classroom activities. The TRC worked with teachers to develop materials that valued the first languages of children, and activities that promoted respect for ethnic and cultural differences.

The 1989 Micro-study of Street Schools in Lyari (funded by UNICEF), an underprivileged area of Karachi, highlighted the training needs of teachers and led to TRC conducting a 10-day workshop for 22 teachers, with three sessions of follow-up. TRC found that there was a low level of motivation despite its efforts, and that more intensive shorter training and classroom support was needed. There was also the need to train people to provide peer support and to provide funds for equipment. Results, however, showed that children were less restless and looking forward to lessons, and that untrained teachers were also learning from their trained colleagues.

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50 Information from TRC (1990): TRC: A Case Study, for World Conference on Education for All.
51 Information from TRC (1994): TRC’s Ninth Annual Report, Karachi, TRC.
53 TRC (undated): Classroom Support for Lyari Street School Teachers, a TRC Initiative, funded by OXFAM.
The mobilisation of Parent-teacher Associations (PTAs) was the focus of TRC’s involvement in the UNICEF project called ‘Community Empowerment and Partnership Building between Government and Civil Society’. The goal of the project was to enhance community involvement in basic education and to form effective partnerships among service providers, schools and communities, by establishing and making functional PTAs in Sindh. TRC served as the umbrella organisation responsible for the co-ordination, monitoring and documentation of the process of mobilisation. Local NGOs mobilised 54 PTAs in female primary schools in the Mirpurkhas and Sukkur divisions of Sindh, in the hope that they would become more active and take on a more definitive role in the management of schools. TRC made a number of recommendations on the process of forming PTAs, which included the need to have orientation workshops for the mobilisers, sensitisation of field staff collecting data, training in skills for PTA members, and the need to monitor the process of mobilisation. A similar exercise was conducted in the districts of Larkana and Badin in 1998, where two other Sindh NGOs mobilised and set up 36 PTAs in government girls’ primary schools.

By 1999, all these early projects, working in disadvantaged areas and with the government, had led to TRC reaching out to all five divisions of Sindh, to 17 out of 21 districts, 3 of the remaining 4 being in Karachi and 1 in Umarkot. TRC also learned how to deal with government officials and school staff members who were non-responsive or actively opposing efforts towards change.

**Research Projects**

TRC developed its research skills ‘on the job’, through the execution of several research studies, which also contributed to its experience of working in disadvantaged and rural areas. Areas explored included female children in mosque schools in Sindh; female teacher incentives in Balochistan; a survey and a needs assessment on resources in primary schools, and the needs of female government primary school teachers, in the district of Larkana. Conclusions of the latter study included the need to improve teachers’ academic and professional competence through in-service education and classroom support, especially in the early years. It also included the need for reliable selection procedures, recruitment on merit, and the need to improve the status of primary education.

**More Recent Activities**

TRC’s more recent activities include setting up Early Learning Centres; a session on setting up NGOs in Balochistan; developing a Health Curriculum in 6 schools in the deprived Mohammadi Colony and Machhar Colony area; and providing recommendations to SCF UK to improve education efforts within the Tharparkar Rural Development Project. In 2002, TRC trained three SCF UK NGO partners in Punjab and Sindh in ECE, and started a UNICEF Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) research study on 500 primary care-givers, and child-rearing practices in low income areas of Lyari and Jamshed Town, Karachi. In attempts to meet the increasing demand for its services, TRC has had to adopt a more strategic approach to deciding which activities to undertake.

**Summary**

TRC began its work in disadvantaged communities and government schools within two years of its creation. Through its early projects, it gained experience of working in slum and government schools in disadvantaged areas; in developing environmental education; early years education; developing integrated materials; improving the quality of teachers’ and students’ performance, and improving the functioning of PTAs.

TRC’s research capabilities were developed through a number of projects which focused, for instance, on the needs of primary schools and female teachers. Most recent TRC activities range from setting up Early Learning Centres to developing a Health Curriculum. TRC has had to develop a more strategic approach in deciding which activities to undertake, in the face of the increasing demand for its services.

Based on the early experiences and skills gained by TRC in disadvantaged and government schools, described in this chapter, TRC went on to carry out its first major project within the government sector, which is reviewed in the next chapter.

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55 TRC (undated): PTA Formation through Community Mobilisation by Local NGOs, Report and Analysis
56 TRC (undated): Rapid Background Survey and Needs Assessment of Female Government Primary School Teachers in Larkana District.
TRC's Major Donor Funded Projects

Two major projects have contributed to TRC’s learning with regard to raising the level of quality in government schools, and increasing its credibility within the government sector as partners who are serious about wanting to - and being able to - implement change within public education in Pakistan. These projects are the 'Initiating Change through Professional Development' (ICPD) and the ‘Social Institutions Development Programme’ (SIDP).

Initiating Change through Professional Development (ICPD)

TRC developed the first of these projects, the ICPD, in August 1992\(^\text{57}\), which was to prove to be a major turning point for TRC’s work with the government. It agreed to undertake the ICPD project on an experimental basis, but had limited expectations of success. The aims of the ICPD project were to:

- Provide teachers with an understanding of how children learn;
- Improve teacher pedagogy skills, content, knowledge, and classroom-management skills;
- Establish replicable models for interventions in government schools.

TRC chose to work in 10 government schools, with 30 teachers, in Karachi District South and East. In order to gain entry into government schools, TRC started negotiations with the Director of School Education to introduce the project and start to ‘build relationships with the government at every hierarchical level’\(^\text{58}\). Seven workshops were to be provided (15 hours) with classrooms supported by the TRC Project Co-ordinator, who would provide feedback following observations. A core group of teachers, heads and supervisors with leadership potential were trained to co-lead workshops for colleagues. This was TRC’s first venture into training staff of different hierarchical levels together. This was understandably difficult at first, given the status-conscious nature of educational bureaucracy in Pakistan. However, TRC used various exercises and models to break down barriers and to get the teachers, heads and SDEOs to work together fruitfully around the table for the first time.

The ICPD project included a very successful Phonics course, which demonstrated how to teach Urdu to children using a phonic approach, which TRC had successfully used with children from the Orangi (a very deprived kachchi abadi/slum area. The ICPD schools were so impressed with the results, that they all wished to be nominated as the case study school for the project. The case study school was selected on the basis of having a motivated and committed head teacher, proven potential of teachers, and proximity to TRC. Teachers of class 1A and 1B were required to keep a diary of progress, which included ‘personal feelings of exhilaration, depression, excitement, frustration, etc.’\(^\text{59}\), as well as constraints felt. The results following the course showed that the phonic approach promoted the ability to think and understand; that reading became more interesting, spelling became easier and was achieved more quickly, and that children were more interested and participated more in lessons, although they needed to feel assured that they could achieve.

The success of the Case Study and teachers informing SPEDP\(^\text{60}\) of the approach led to the DFID funded programme requesting TRC to revise its module on reading and to train teachers in the programme’s government schools\(^\text{61}\). The project demonstrated that if teachers were treated professionally and provided quality training and resources, they would respond enthusiastically and with professional commitment, even when there is no external incentive. It also demonstrated that there is much to gain from a joint NGO and government programme\(^\text{62}\).

The first phase of the ICPD project (ICPD I) exceeded all the expectations of both TRC and the funders, and showed them what was possible in a government school. This led to a second phase which included support visits for ICPDI schools; working with 20 new teachers in 10 schools in the rural Murad Memon area; training a second round of potential workshop leaders and supervisors; supporting the Laboratory School; phonics training; and conducting meetings with parents.

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\(^{58}\) Ibid

\(^{59}\) Ibid

\(^{60}\) SPEDP was the DFID funded ‘Sindh Primary Education Development Programme’.


\(^{62}\) Ibid.
Despite the struggle to give enough support and time to teachers within the ICPD, the programme found that schools were cleaner; materials were being made with scrap; a more appropriate teacher tone of voice was being used, and there was more teacher interaction with classes. Stories were being translated into Sindhi; colourful displays and objects were set up in activity corners, and children were expressing themselves through drawings. Children in the laboratory schools were less inhibited and showed increased confidence and attentiveness, interest and enjoyment. They were also more analytical, could read with understanding, and showed a marked improvement in Drawing, Maths and Language. These schools also had plans to develop a resource room, share learning with colleagues, and develop artwork and a school library.

As stated, the outcomes of the ICPD project exceeded all expectations and validated to TRC the appropriateness of its approach in encouraging activity-based teaching in government primary schools. ICPD showed the importance of involving and including all the players in order to sustain change. Chowkidars and cleaners also had a role to play and an important stake in the life of the schools. The project also, more importantly, exploded the myth that government schools did not want to or could not change. It additionally emphasised the critical role of education officials at the administration levels. In the words of the Senior Manager, TRC:

‘Contrary to popular belief, despite an overriding cynicism and disillusionment in the government school system, I have observed that where there are motivated decision-makers at the SDEO and Supervisor levels, there are motivated heads and teachers at the school level’.

For TRC, the ICPD project was a firm step towards reducing the gap between government and private schools, and was a major influence in the development of subsequent projects. It also showed that consistency in personnel and policy was important and that the potential for improvement was even greater than that actually achieved:

‘It is, therefore, apparent the heights ICPD schools could reach if TRC’s commitment was matched by sustained support from the government sector’.

The success of ICPD was noted in the Smillie and Thompson review of TRC, which recommended it expand its INSET in government schools and move into rural areas. It could thus develop into the ‘premier in-service educational institution in Pakistan, working at a policy level, as well as on the delivery and replication of field-based programmes’. The review also called for greater attention to be paid to educational evaluation and research to measure the impact of interventions on children’s learning and to documentation and distributing learning widely. This would form the basis for TRC to project itself as a leader and learning organisation in this area and ‘inject itself and its findings into policy debates as these develop in the years to come’.

Summary

Two major projects have contributed deeply to TRC’s learning in relation to raising the quality of education in the public sector, and its credibility as a partner serious about working with the government to improve children’s education. The first of these projects, the ICPD, aimed to get teachers to understand how children learn, and to improve their teaching and classroom management skills, and content knowledge. Work in 20 schools and with 50 teachers from 1992 to 1996 led to more encouraging learning environments; better teacher interaction with pupils; and increased confidence, interest and enjoyment on the part of the pupils.

The success of ICPD validated TRC’s approach in encouraging activity-based teaching and learning in government primary schools, and involving the whole school community. It exploded the myth that government schools did not want to, or could not, change, and made apparent the potential for greater success, given sustained support from key officials in the government sector.

The learning from ICPD formed the basis for TRC’s foray into its second major project with the government sector, The Social Institutions Development Programme. This is examined next, in Section III of the study.

[64] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., p. ix.
[67] Ibid., p. 39.
THE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
The Social Institutions Development Programme (SIDP)

The Social Institutions Development Programme (SIDP) of the Aga Khan Foundation Pakistan (AKF(P)) was set up “to build the capacity of selected independent sector organisations (ISOs) and institutions in Pakistan to undertake more effective and sustainable approaches to human development” and had a particular stated interest in systematic research and learning, gender concerns, and linkages in order to influence the policy and practice of NGOs, donors and the government. As one of TRC’s original funders, AKF recognised TRC as a pioneer in the independent sector with increasing demand for its low-cost but innovative services for a range of practical school issues. After much discussion, it accepted the project for funding for 1997-2002. The programmes and institutional development components were ultimately to enable TRC to be in a better position (without being hindered by financial insecurity) to share its expertise and to engage in policy dialogue with the government in order to influence educational policy and practice for the better.

The SIDP of TRC has two main goals, as follows:

1. To contribute to the improvement of pre-primary and primary education in selected areas of Pakistan, through in-service training of key educators and leaders (teachers, heads, school committees, supervisors), provision of support for curriculum and materials development, and the development of a core of qualified teacher trainers;
2. To systematically learn about educational reform, and through this to contribute to policy dialogue on educational reform in Pakistan.

The SIDP consists of four programmes: the Early Childhood Education Programme, the Primary Education Programme, the Resource Pool Expansion Programme, and Capacity Building/Institutional Development. The major focus, however, was on the Early Childhood Education Programme and working in disadvantaged schools for females. The goals for each of the components follow.

Early Childhood Education Programme (ECEP)

TRC’s aim to become a leader in the area of ECE was the primary objective of the SIDP programme. The Senior Manager of TRC had experience of teaching the younger age range and felt that some of the USA High Scope approaches could be shown to work in government schools and thereby demonstrate the value of ECE to the educational community, government and parents. The goal of ECEP was to work in 40 urban and 5 rural schools:

To introduce ECE activities in new areas, and to contribute to an improvement in the quality and delivery of ECE in selected urban and rural settings, where it already exists.

The Primary Education Programme (PEP)

The Primary Education Programme (PEP) was to build upon the success of the ICPD programme (described in Chapter 5), and to develop the whole school approach to school improvement, which viewed the development of the school more holistically. The approach recognised that all the stakeholders in a school and its community are important in the process of the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning for children. The goal of PEP was:

To contribute to the improvement in quality and delivery of primary education in selected urban and rural settings.

PEP worked in four low-income urban schools in Karachi (two government and two District Municipal Schools) in two cycles, to cover a target of 44 teachers and 16 heads/supervisors.

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68 The SIDP is funded by CIDA and AKF Canada, and is due to end in 2004. Additional funds were provided for TRC’s linkage with Ryerson University (University of Toronto) and Sheridan College in Canada.
70 Ibid.
Resource Pool Expansion Programme (RPEP)

The Resource Pool Expansion Programme was developed to meet the need for a pool of teacher educators who could broaden the impact of TRC’s work and sustain change within schools. The goal of RPEP was:

To develop a resource pool of teacher educators to sustain change at ECE and primary school levels and to enrich TRC’s school improvement efforts.

Capacity Building

The Capacity Building component of the SIDP project was meant to enhance TRC’s overall performance and ability to deliver programmes effectively, through a strengthening of its ability in planning and management, monitoring, evaluation and research, outreach and delivering educational services. The goal was:

To strengthen TRC as an institution so that it can enhance the quality and impact of its programming.

The Achievements of the Social Institutions Development Programme to date:

Early Childhood Education Programme

TRC’s locally developed model demonstrates that children are becoming independent and active learners. Their parents tell us they go to school eagerly and that, besides academic learning, they are tahzeeb-yafta. These are important achievements in our society, where the drop-out rate by class 5 is 50%.

TRC’s aim in the ECE programme is to become a leader in the area of ECE and to contribute to an improvement in the quality and delivery of ECE in selected urban and rural settings where it already exists. Activities within the ECEP involved introducing appropriate ECE practice in selected schools, through training workshops and classroom support; developing and piloting culturally appropriate curriculum guidelines for teachers; developing teaching and learning materials; carrying out action research on links between pre-primary and primary classes; developing monitoring tools to evaluate progress in teaching and learning; training future workshop leaders for greater outreach and raising awareness, through seminars for instance, about the importance of quality ECE.

Under the ECEP, 10 government schools in District South, Ranchore Lines, and 10 District Municipal Corporation schools (DMC) in District Central, Liaquatabad, were initially identified with the government education department through a process of negotiation. The second cycle of 20 schools were located in the sub-divisions of PECHS and Nazimabad. All of these areas are low-income areas with a number of challenges with regard to parental background, occupations and mixed ethnic, linguistic and political backgrounds. During 1999, the ECEP team visited the areas of Shikarpur and Thatta in order to familiarise themselves with schools in rural Sindh. Subsequently, 7 schools in rural areas, instead of the targeted 5, were selected in response to the demand for TRC’s assistance in 2001.

Workshops and Progress

The introductory ECEP workshop was important to ensure that all head teachers, supervisors and Sub-divisional Education Officers (SDEOs) - a group called ‘decision-makers’- developed an understanding of appropriate practice for very young children, understood the process of change, and were familiar with the framework of the support to be provided and the logistics involved. The content of early workshops included an overview of ECE, educational and language development, making and using games in Maths and organising and managing the classroom. The ECEP follow-up at an early stage showed that teachers were highly motivated and fully supported by head

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71 tahzeeb-yafta means ‘cultured’ - here it would mean in the sense of being polite and having good manners.

teachers; that learning corners were set up and charts colourfully displayed; and that parents were appreciative of the new classroom environment and teaching style:

‘They compared the DM C schools with well-resourced schools of the city, which was a source of great joy and pride for the DM C staff.’

During 1999, TRC found a pleasing level of professionalism developing. The teacher workshops focussed on the importance of poems and interesting ways to teach them; developing an annual plan by dividing the year into manageable parts, and using the topics in the ECE curriculum framework as a guide to planning activities. In follow-up visits, schools revealed that teachers were, in line with the project objectives, increasingly aware of the importance of appropriate educational experiences for young children. In 14 out of 19 schools, children were working in the learning corners and in groups, being taken out of doors for activities, and teachers were using rhymes for language teaching. Parents commented that children looked forward to school:

‘Now the children won’t even hear of missing school. They are insistent that they have to go to school. We used to force them to go to school, and now they’re so keen!’

TRC was also building the capacity of teachers outside the classroom, through important events such as the ECE curriculum meetings, and preparing for and actually participating in the Seminar ‘From Awareness to Action’.

During 2000, head teachers reported a sustained increase in children’s interest and teacher professionalism:

‘As a result of ECEP, the daily attendance of children is 90% and above; the dropout rate has decreased; teachers do not take unnecessary holidays; lessons are planned in advance; and teachers are aware of children’s needs and self esteem.’

The presence of the finished Pehla Taleemi Basta (PTB) (First School Bag) and poetry video and booklet proved to be a bonus for the development of Cycle 2 teachers, who benefited from the experience of the first cycle of schools. Follow-up for Cycle I schools was completed in 2000. A Cycle 2 refresher workshop turned into a two-day workshop, including a visit to Cycle I schools, which went very well, with the head of the host (ICPD) school playing a very positive role. The workshop looked at parents-school relationships, children’s learning outcomes, teachers as friends, and the transition from kachchi to class 1. Cycle 2 schools revealed that the majority of teachers had set up their classrooms and were generally motivated and used the PTB. It was stated that the:

‘children seem to have a glow in their eyes.’

Some ‘firsts’ include a head teacher using the Schools Development Fund, a fund rarely touched in the past, to buy materials for the kachchi class. Head teachers of a double shift school pooled resources to acquire furniture and also received contributions from parents to which they personally added. Head teachers were seen helping to prepare materials, such as cutting stencils and preparing classwork books. More teachers were seen sitting with children on the floor thus becoming more approachable. In addition, teachers were becoming more reflective about the content they teach and their role as facilitators. One teacher, commenting on her own attitude to teaching, stated:

‘On numerous occasions, because of illness or tension, I would adopt a negative attitude. I now understand as a teacher I have a big responsibility, but as a kachchi teacher this responsibility has doubled, and I will try to implement this positively.’

Follow-up sessions in 2001 showed that there was an increased understanding of the importance of providing quality ECE. All ECEP Cycle 2 schools showed the following:

\[74\text{TRC (1999): SIDP Annual Report 1999, p. 2, translation from the original Urdu.}
\[76\text{TRC (2000): SIDP Bi-annual Report January-June 2000, p. 6.}
\[77\text{ibid., p. 4.}
There was regular daily use of the draft ECE curriculum guidelines, PTB and poems.
That kachchi teachers were attending school more regularly and taking less leave.
Heads were utilising previously unspent funds on the kachchi class.
An unprecedented increased rate in admissions.

The rural and third cycle of schools revealed:

- Supervisors appreciating the value of quality ECE.
- That children were happy to touch the materials, recite poems with actions, and were becoming increasingly confident and interested in learning.
- That teachers were more interested, enthusiastic, developing a friendlier attitude towards the children, and were also planning better.

In a decision-maker meeting in rural Shikarpur, a head teacher commented:

‘We never used to pay much attention to the under-fives before; now we know how important it is to address their needs. Before we used to have blackboards, now we have a separate room for them (under-5s) and learning corners; they touch and feel materials and are happy and interested in learning’

Another head teacher attributed the success in her school to the classroom support and follow-up which TRC provided, rather than the PTC/CT qualification that the teachers held but which did not make a difference to their classroom practice. In 2002, TRC found that the expected outcome of increasing the numbers and expertise of female ECE teacher had been achieved and was also making an impact over and above the selected project schools. Follow-up for teachers ended in February 2002 and the responsibility passed on to supervisors.

In 2003, TRC took a major step towards the implementation of the National Curriculum ECE at a national level, by building on the expertise developed by teachers in the project schools. TRC requested the government to release selected ECE teachers for an extended period to act as TRC resource persons. These teachers were trained as workshop leaders so that they could educate other government teachers to deliver the National Curriculum. The training familiarised them with the National Curriculum and Teachers’ Guide, increased their understanding of child development theory and methodology, and developed their ECE workshop leading and training skills. They then co-facilitated workshops for teachers in schools in Balochistan and Hala, Sindh, working with the AKF Releasing Confidence and Creativity programme. This provided a tremendous boost. TRC could see that teachers’ skills were enhanced and their confidence increased as they answered teachers’ concerns and discussed issues with ‘a great deal of credibility and assurance’.

Soon after, they also conducted training on their own for government teachers in Karachi.

Parental Meetings and Community Perceptions

In accordance with a whole school approach to school improvement, TRC conducted meetings with parents. Parents had observed that their children were now happy to come to school, even waking up and getting ready without delay. Further they felt that their children had learnt social skills and were more confident and expressing themselves more clearly. One parent commented:

‘Our children are enjoying school. Our younger children are eager to come to school too, seeing their siblings’ enthusiasm.

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80 ibid., p. 3.
And another from the rural area of Shikarpur shared that:

‘My children are teaching me to wash my hands and say Bismillah before meals’\(^{81}\).

Parents noted that their children were sharing concepts that they had learnt at schools in the home, such as recognising different shapes at the lunch table. Many others felt that their child’s school was better than a private school. Positive classroom management techniques meant that now there was no more hitting of children:

‘Ab maar peet khatam ho gai hai’\(^{82}\).

Town Nazims were surprised to see such good progress when conducting routine school visits. They were impressed to see children so actively involved in learning and enjoying themselves at the same time. A Nazim from Jamshed Town commented:

‘I cannot believe that this is a government school. Such results can be seen only when people work hard’\(^{83}\).

### Base-line Data, Research and Experimental Classes

TRC developed research instruments in order to monitor and assess the impact of ECE activities on children’s psycho-social and cognitive development, and the status of ECE in government schools. The research looks at progress in learning outcomes in academic areas and social skills, enrolment and retention rates, teachers’ profiles, and the transition and adaptation of children to the primary grades. A Canadian linkage partner commented that the data was very rich and a ‘gift to a research student’\(^{84}\).

During 2000, the analysis of children’s learning and teachers’ teaching, using the Children’s Learning Environment Format instrument in Cycle I schools, included the following results:

- All classes except three had set up three or more learning corners for Maths, Science, Language, Home and Art.
- Sufficient materials were usually available for writing and drawing, contrary to the situation before the project.
- Children’s work was displayed in the majority of classrooms on washing lines and softboards.
- Seventeen classrooms revealed a supportive, non-threatening learning environment compared with only two in the base-line.
- All teachers (compared to those in the base-line) were well informed of children’s difficulties and the progress of individual children.
- Children were able to express themselves clearly in 15 schools.
- The majority of children were confident, played co-operatively, took turns and tidied up, revealing the development of positive self-esteem.

### Teaching and Learning Materials:

**Pehla Taleemi Basta (PTB) or First School Bag/ Readiness Bag**

TRC’s prototype of the portable Readiness Bag as the kachchi teachers’ main resource, was adapted and redesigned with great care. This proved to be a constant challenge of endless revisions to this portable cloth bag that is filled with objects, materials and cards to use for different activities, and designed to develop basic skills through activity-based learning. In-house production of the bag consumed much staff time. The Teachers’ Guide was also re-written.

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\(^{82}\) ibid. Literally ‘Now the hitting and beating has come to an end’.


paying great attention to accessibility and simplicity of the Urdu language used. The Bag and guide were to be as ‘user-friendly as possible’. After much time and effort, 1999 was the year which saw the Pehla Taleemi Basta take off with 1,000 bags being produced. In 2001, UNICEF bought 2,500 of the bags for different rural areas, and the Canada Fund bought 615 to be distributed to the different provinces in 2002. TRC sold 1,470 PTB bags in 2003.

Poetry Booklet: Nazmon Ki Dilchasp Dunya

TRC made a start on the poetry booklet in 1997, collecting songs and rhymes. During 1998, a range of rhymes and songs were selected bearing in mind children’s cognitive, social and emotional development. There was a concern about whether teachers would be able to put the poems to tune, encourage the accompanying actions and truly involve the children. This gave rise to the idea of developing an accompanying video and booklet to assist teachers. One thousand copies of the poetry booklet, Nazmon Ki Dilchasp Dunya (The Interesting World of Poems) were produced, and introduced during the November 1999 ECE Seminar, where the video:

‘charmed the audience who had no experience of a public sector teacher singing with actions or children responding with such enthusiasm’.

Documentation

Documentation for the ECEP had commenced by the first half of 1998 and included the documentation of all workshops. Since then, thorough documentation has been underway. As ECE is a priority in the EFA agenda, TRC wrote a brief at the request of the government, TRC ‘being the only ECE initiative in Pakistan which had done any demonstrable work’, that was shared at the EFA World Education Forum in Dakar, April 2000. In 2003, the Teachers’ Guide on ECE ‘Mazboot Bunyadein’ (that is ‘Strong Foundations’) was completed (at the request of the MoE), providing the text of the National ECE Curriculum, and a very practical and encouraging guide to approach and methodology, for teachers. The UNICEF funded ECE Workshop Leaders’ Training Manual, based on the Teachers’ Guide, was also completed to assist the dissemination of TRC’s workshop methodology. Work also commenced on the first two of four ECE training videos on the learning environment, and language and literacy, that are to be edited in 2004. The other two videos will focus on social and emotional development, and creative arts and life skills.

The ECE National Seminar 1999

The National Seminar entitled From Awareness to Action: A Public Sector Initiative, and a joint venture with the Department of Education, Government of Sindh, was planned to coincide with Universal Children’s Day and took place on the 23rd and 24th November, 1999. The aim was to raise awareness of the value of ECE through showing what could be done within government schools to improve education for young children, and through a partnership between an NGO and the government. The Seminar provided a forum for sharing good practice and networking, so that these could be promoted elsewhere. TRC planned the Seminar to be as practical and interactive as possible, bringing together a range of people (over 149) involved in education, from the public and private sectors, to learn about the ECE programme and discuss how the benefits of the model could be extended further.

The particular objectives of the Seminar were to:

- Enhance awareness about the importance of providing appropriate social and educational experiences for

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88 This account of the Seminar could usefully be read along with the section on Policy Dialogue, as it constitutes TRC’s first major venture into policy dialogue on a national scale.
young children;
- Create awareness about the results obtained in the public sector through the ECEP and NGO-government partnership;
- Obtain a clear understanding of the provision for kachchi classes within the formal public sector system in all four provinces;
- Provide a framework to share teaching-learning material developed by TRC to support teachers responsible for early childhood education;
- Initiate dialogue on improving provision for early childhood education, especially in the public sector.\(^{90}\)

The opening speech by Ms Mahtab Rashdi emphasised the need for partnerships with the private sector, and including those who are responsible for implementation:

‘For a change, a government agency is following the guidance of an NGO - TRC - for we should accept and follow wherever support and guidance comes from. It is arrogant to think that we can be effective alone. If government works alone, it becomes alienated from the people who have knowledge and experience to share, as well as from the people it seeks to benefit. We want to close the gap between the public and private. Government should learn from the improvements made in the private sector by working in partnership with the private sector.'\(^{91}\)

The Seminar resulted in a set of recommendations that were presented to the Provincial Minister of Education and the Secretary of Education, as follows:

- A phased programme for induction of kachchi classes should be prepared, addressing issues of facilities, human resource development, financial resources, and community mobilisation. Model kachchi classes at district level should be set up as a start.
- A cadre of ECE teachers should be developed, so that the inputs in training are not dissipated by frequent transfers and a critical mass of human resources developed in this field.
- Head teachers and supervisory staff should be trained to provide pedagogic leadership in monitoring ECE programmes.
- Active involvement of PTAs, SMCs/ VECs should be encouraged to support and strengthen kachchi components.
- The physical environment should support children’s learning (the issues brought up were safety i.e. chowkidar, water and sanitation/ sweepers).
- Age group for kachchi children should be 4 to 6 years.
- Special skills for continuous assessment should be developed in kachchi teachers.
- Co-ordination between the school health services and schools should be encouraged.
- The teacher-pupil ratio should be limited to 1:25, maximum 30.
- Textbooks should be kept to a minimum in the kachchi class. These textbooks should be activity-based.
- School heads should be authorised to spend a specified amount from school funds for the purchase of stationery and teaching-learning materials.
- The change from activity-based learning in the kachchi to an academic focus in grade 1 should not be too rapid. The child-centred, activity-based learning should continue in grades 1, 2, and onwards.
- Child-centred and activity-based teaching and learning methodology should be emphasised in pre-service training programmes also.

The Seminar ended with closing speeches. The Director TRC, highlighting the need to educate children to think, also expressed the need to value teachers:


\(^{91}\) ibid., p. 39.
‘Teachers do not set out to give a poor education to children; they simply may not know better; they may be demoralised because no one appreciates them. What teachers need is not criticism but genuine appreciation’\(^{92}\).

Mahtab Rashdi, noting the failure of recent large scale donor projects, appreciated the impact of TRC’s project:

‘TRC’s locally developed model demonstrates that children are becoming independent and active learners. Their parents tell us they go to school eagerly and that besides academic learning, they are tahzeeb-yaf\(\text{a}^{93}\). These are important achievements in our society, where the drop-out rate by class 5 is 50%\(^{94}\).’

A report of the Seminar was produced and disseminated in 2000. The novel approach was appreciated by many participants, one of whom commented:

‘What I observed during the two days was quite impressive. This includes the poem video, school visits and the general morale, and attitude of the teachers and supervisors who were present at the seminar. The active kachchi class speaks for itself about the effectiveness of the training modules and follow-up workshops that TRC organised’\(^{95}\).

The Seminar showed TRC and the Government of Sindh that there was substantial interest in the other provinces to improve ECE and that there was therefore the need to network, share and support each other, and to have a common platform to promote initiatives in the public sector.

The Linkage with Canadian Partners

The two senior managers of TRC and representatives from the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan and Geneva, visited four Canadian educational institutions in May 1998, to seek potential linkage partners for the ECEP programme. TRC selected two institutions, chosen for their relative strengths in developing courses with approaches similar to TRC, and policy dialogue and international research in ECE. The institutions selected were Sheridan College and the School of ECE, Ryerson Polytechnic University, which later became part of the University of Toronto. The aim of the linkage was to improve the capacity of TRC in the areas of ECE course design and delivery, research and policy dialogue. The desire was to share expertise between all partners and to set up a Certificate in ECE for teachers in Pakistan.

A number of subsequent visits and meetings took place in Pakistan and Canada to develop proposals, although workload and college and donor bureaucracy sometimes halted progress and caused frustration. The partners developed into a good collaborative team that worked productively on developing the LFA, revising the budget and work plan and writing the Memorandum of Understanding. The programme map was discussed as well as the ECE course development, core values, programme learning outcomes and policy guidelines. TRC senior management spent a lot of time in 2003 developing the ECE Certificate Programme, which it considers the next major step in the implementation of ECE, as well as its growth as an institution and lead provider of ECE in Pakistan. The team also reviewed action plans and discussed various matters such as academic policies and procedures, course development and delivery, resources, faculty training and research. Progress in research has been frustratingly slow on the part of the Canadian partner who was meant to start on the analysis of data from the ECEP. After reviewing materials from other institutions, faculty and student handbooks were also drafted in 2003, and two newly appointed ECE Certificate faculty members are currently undergoing training through an intensive course in Canada. Attempts were made to acquire land for new premises and infrastructure support from JICA but the land promised by the Provincial Education Minister fell through as it had been designated for other purposes.


\(^{93}\) tahzeeb-yaf\(\text{a}\) means ‘cultured’—here it would mean in the sense of being polite and having manners.


\(^{95}\) op. cit., p.3.
Summary

TRC’s programme under the AKF funded Social Institutions Development Programme was accepted for funding from 1997-2002, and designed to enable TRC to develop and share its expertise in educational development, and to engage in policy dialogue with the government to influence education practice and policy for the better. This is reflected in the two main goals of contributing to the improvement of pre-primary and primary education in selected areas of Pakistan, and to systematically learn about educational reform in order to contribute to policy dialogue on educational reform in Pakistan. The programme had four components: seeking to improve ECE; improving primary education; to create a pool of teacher-educators; and to strengthen TRC as an institution, to enhance the quality and impact of its programming.

The ECEP worked in 38 government and DMC schools in demanding urban areas of Karachi, and 7 schools in challenging rural areas of Shikarpur. The introductory workshop ensured that key decision-makers understood the importance of ECE. Workshops for teachers gave them an understanding of good ECE practice, and developed practical skills to improve classroom teaching and management, to actively involve children in learning. As a result of the ECEP, the majority of project classes had three or more learning corners and a supportive learning environment. All teachers were well-informed about children’s progress, and the children themselves were more confident and expressive and had more self-esteem.

The ECEP produced the Pehla Taleemi Basta, (The Readiness Bag), full of materials for activity-based learning, as well as the Nazmon ki Dilchasp Dunya (The Interesting World of Poems) booklet and video, both with accompanying teacher guides. The materials proved very beneficial for both training and classroom use.

The activities of the ECEP were well documented. Materials produced included a brief for the national EFA presentation in Dakar 2000; a Teachers’ Guide to the National Curriculum Early Childhood Education, and a workshop leaders’ manual. In order to disseminate learning, the TRC held a joint seminar with the Government of Sindh, ‘From Awareness to Action’, in November 1999. The aim of the seminar was to raise awareness of the value of ECE, by showing what could be achieved in government schools and through a partnership between an NGO and the government. The Seminar, attended by 149 people from both the private and public sectors, was participatory, and concluded with a number of recommendations presented to the Provincial Minister of Education and the Provincial Secretary of Education. The Seminar revealed the high level of interest in ECE initiatives throughout the country, and the need to provide a forum for networking and support.

TRC developed an international linkage as part of the SIDP with Sheridan College and Ryerson School of ECE (University of Toronto). The aim of the linkage is to improve the capacity of TRC in ECE course design and delivery, as well as research and policy dialogue. The linkage team has developed a programme map and substantial work has taken place on the ECE Certificate course, and capacity building of the new faculty members who are to teach it.
The Primary Education Programme (PEP)

The aim of the PEP was to contribute to the improvement in quality and delivery of primary education in selected urban and rural settings. The programme worked in four low-income urban schools in Karachi (2 Government and 2 District Municipal Schools) in two cycles.

Activities under PEP built upon the learning from the ICPD programme to improve the learning environment for children. Major activities included the implementation of a whole school development programme (aims, values, development plans, implementation, curriculum review, and learning needs assessment), through workshops and follow-up; developing teaching and learning materials, such as a management manual for head teachers, and low-cost games for Maths and Science.

The two areas selected for the first pair of schools were Ranchore Lines and Lyari, the latter at the request of the Director of Schools. In 2000, two new partner schools were selected from sub-division PECHS in District East, and Federal ‘B’ Area in District Central, for Cycle 2. All these areas are low-income areas with a number of challenges in terms of parental background and occupations, mixed ethnic, linguistic and political backgrounds.

Workshops and Progress

The aim of the first stakeholder workshop was to gain a better understanding of the project and its role in school improvement and included the participation of the whole school community, that is, SDEO’s, supervisors, head teachers, assistant head teachers, teachers, PTA members, peons and maids. A situation analysis was developed, along with mission statements for the schools. Action plans were developed for the school site and environment, organisation and management, the PTA and community, teachers and students, and teaching and learning. The workshop revealed the importance of sharing in order to reach a ‘common understanding of quality, success and their vision for the school’96. The follow-up sessions at the end of 199897 showed improvements in schools such as repaired floors and having a chalkboard present; repaired roads; the induction of voluntary teachers, and voluntary carpenters repairing furniture. Workshops in 1998 introduced activity-based teaching and learning to teachers, who were supported in lesson planning in Language, Maths and Science. Weekly lesson planning was evident in teachers’ diaries; duty rosters were prepared for different responsibilities, such as supervising breaks, and PTA records were kept.

During 1999, stakeholder meetings for PEP were conducted to review the School Development Plans. A workshop on improving schools looked at how to systematically plan for the year, conduct meetings, prepare displays, and improve teacher-parent relations. Another workshop, in response to teachers’ insistence, focussed on improving the teaching of English. A workshop on assessment and evaluation aimed to create an understanding of the importance of assessing the whole child, and examined observation and record-keeping as tools. The workshop on using games in Maths took place in one school for participants from both PEP schools. The aim was for the teachers to be exposed to various non-traditional games, and ideas to promote creativity, and to replicate the games for themselves.

In the 1999 follow-up sessions, a review of School Development Plans showed that some new measures had been taken in schools, such as having regular assemblies, queuing after break and preparing an inventory of furniture and materials at the end of term. Agendas and records of staff meetings were kept, and there had been formal co-ordination meetings for teachers. TRC also shared reports on the progress of individual teachers with the head teachers, who discussed these privately with the teachers, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, the progress made and recommendations for improvement. Results showed that the teachers were working on the issues raised in the workshops:

- Teachers were taking steps to improve discipline and the overall atmosphere in the classroom;
- 80% of the teachers had a detailed lesson plan and materials close at hand;
- Teacher collaboration had increased and they were sharing lesson plans and ideas;

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97 ibid., p. 10.
There was an increased conscientiousness about responsibilities and time spent on teaching; and Pupil passiveness had transformed into an eagerness to respond in the classroom.

Both PEP schools showed a significant improvement, along with a marked shift in teacher attitude, and demonstration of child-centred activities. Results showed that 67% and 71.4% of classrooms in the two schools respectively had education displays, children's work on display, library corners, performance charts, timetables, schemes of studies, and children's duty rosters. 72% of overall classrooms showed evidence of activity-based learning and teachers feeling more equipped to plan and carry out more effective lessons.

In 2000, schools were found to have teachers using regular lessons plans; regular use of teacher and student rosters; regular teacher meetings discussing curriculum and management issues; PTAs involved in resolving issues and happier children. A peon noted that:

'Teachers now take more interest in their work.'

Cycle 1 schools had continued to review their development plans and define school aims and values. Furthermore, they had managed to develop and sustain mission statements, school planning documents and action plans, records of parent teacher meetings, minutes of teacher staff meetings, teachers' and student duty rosters from 1998 to 2000. Teachers were now meeting on a weekly basis to discuss curriculum and management issues. They were preparing lesson plans regularly, including at least two activity-based lessons per week, and reviewing weekly plans. Heads were maintaining records and planning ahead. Each class had a revised syllabus plan with a monthly scheme, and there was an annual calendar of co-curricular activities. In addition, the PTA was also positively involved and helping to solve school problems.

The support visits to Cycle 2 classrooms in 2000 revealed the following:

- Teachers were planning lessons daily, and that one of these was written up in detail, using the format developed.
- There was some interactive group work and activity-based learning each day.
- Children's work was on display.
- Teachers had a more positive attitude and understood children's needs better.
- Children had the opportunity to share their views.
- Teachers were making and using low-cost aids.
- Schools and classrooms were cleaner.
- Teachers were more confident and vocal and shared their concerns in workshops, support visits, and SDP review meetings.
- Head teachers and supervisors initially joined the support visits, but fell under pressure due to examination demands and district-level programmes.
- The initiation of a Study Circle for teachers (in line with that practised at TRC).

In 2001, TRC could see that Cycle 1 schools had managed to sustain the enriched learning environments after the withdrawal of TRC support during 2000. In Cycle 2 schools, teachers had significantly improved in attitude and ability to improve their learning environments. Heads were now more confident and organised, formal meetings were recorded, and a teacher appraisal system set up. There was also increased parental involvement. Teachers now engaged in weekly lesson planning, implemented activity-based teaching and learning, had improved the learning environment, and increased in confidence. A supervisor described what the project had done for both herself and her colleagues:

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‘The project brought forth our hidden capabilities, evoked a sense of leadership, and enriched our knowledge of teaching different subjects through games’\textsuperscript{101}.

Pupils had an increased sense of responsibility, although more work was needed on developing their performance in terms of learning outcomes and communication skills. Study Circles in partner schools covered topics such as why children lie, discipline, and competition. With regard to the latter, the teachers were shocked to find that competition could prove negative for children. 67% of Cycle 1 and 86% of Cycle 2 school classrooms showed a more enriched learning environment with teachers implementing activities for child-centred learning.

Follow-up meetings in school in 2002, discussed school plans, field visits, revised action plans, and pupil files for presentation to parents. Three teachers also volunteered to help with the revision of the textbooks that TRC was conducting for the Sindh Textbook Board. There were some positive responses from teachers:

‘I regularly plan lessons and try to do some research before planning. My writing skills have improved. I now contribute to the TRC newsletter and my confidence has increased. I now also know how to develop educational games for children’\textsuperscript{102}.

Pupil and Parental Perceptions within PEP

In 2000, TRC started to collect perceptions of change held by the school children in project schools. Interviews revealed that:

‘Studies were better’;
‘Now the teacher explains more’;
‘She teaches us with care’;
‘Now we study in groups and play more games’\textsuperscript{103}.

Parents, mostly mothers, revealed a level of satisfaction with the progress made in schools and with their children. They felt that there was better discipline and said that their children insisted on wearing clean uniforms. Children were generally much more enthusiastic about school:

‘My daughter is more enthusiastic about going to school. Previously she would keep her bag aside on reaching home; now she is busy doing her work’\textsuperscript{104}.

In 2001, one mother commented on how her totally ‘spoilt’ daughter was now more aware and confident. One parent had observed how much the school had improved academically over the last two years, and another had removed children from a private school into the government school as the

‘school systems were better and the teachers more qualified and hardworking’\textsuperscript{105}.

Base-line Data, Materials and Documentation

PEP monitoring tools were developed to cover the key areas of leadership skills, teacher and student performance, parental interest, and retention rates. In 2000, TRC also started to work on the PEP case studies. In 2002, TRC visited the Cycle 1 schools after a two-year gap to see whether progress had been sustained. They found that there was ongoing work and that 85% of the classrooms still exhibited activity-based teaching and learning. Cycle 2 schools showed that 87% of the classrooms did. Some teachers planned activities and photocopied these for group work at their own expense. This is something extremely rare in Pakistan. In May, around 75% of the classrooms showed teachers reflecting on learning and planning for short, medium and long term curriculum coverage and school development. In 2002, the case studies for the PEP schools, intended to become advocacy tools, were totally restructured and rewritten and now included an analysis of activities and results, references

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\textsuperscript{104} ibid., p. 15.
to international literature, the institutionalisation of learning, and recommendations for policy-makers.

Work on the Maths and Science games started with a thorough study of the National Curriculum and the government prescribed textbook for classes 1 to 3. Prototype games for class 1 and 2 were tested in the field by experienced private and government teachers. TRC completed 28 game packs in Maths and Science for classes 1 to 3 in 1999. Teachers also developed additional games in English, for instance, and thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on replication of games. TRC assessed the games against the criteria of innovation, appearance, clarity of instruction, appropriateness for class level, and relevance to the curriculum. Commercial publication of the games was timetabled into the extension phase requested, and approved for the SIDP project for July 2002 - June 2004.

TRC started to work on the manual for head teachers in 1999, with a conceptual framework. Intensive work on the manual took place in the first half of 2002, with the assistance of an ADO and 2 supervisors from the public sector. The Handbook was completed and printed in 2002. The Whole School Development Manual was not part of the original plan, but TRC felt it was needed in 2001. However, given the workload, the writing of this manual was postponed to the SIDP project extension phase.

Resource Pool Expansion Programme

The Resource Pool Expansion Programme (RPEP) was planned to start in 1999, to allow for the identification of suitable persons from the initial workshops to be trained for leadership trainer positions. The aim of the programme was to develop a resource pool of teacher-educators to sustain change at ECE and primary school levels, and to enrich TRC’s school improvement efforts. Courses, for example, looked at conducting needs assessment, setting objectives, micro-teaching and giving feedback, the use of quizzes and self-assessment, evaluation, communication skills, the role of a trainer, warm-up exercises, ice-breaking and trust-building exercises, and designing a plan.

During 2000, supervisors assisted TRC in conducting four ECEP and PEP workshops. Four supervisors from Shikarpur rural area were invited to join the RPEP to develop their leadership skills in 2001. This also assisted the project team in building good relationships with them. In 2002, an advanced level ECE Workshop Leaders’ Course was designed to be held in early 2003. In 2003, at the request of TRC, the government released selected ECE teachers to act as resource persons after being trained as trainers to help other teachers deliver the National ECE Curriculum. These teachers then co-facilitated TRC workshops in AKF’s RCC project schools in Balochistan and Sindh. Their assured performance in answering teachers’ questions and concerns showed that they had internalised appropriate ECE practice and values, which stood them in good stead for subsequently conducting a course on their own for government teachers in Karachi. TRC also conducted training for UNICEF, in collaboration with the Curriculum Wing, and for 100 Punjab Rural Support Programme supported community schools.

Capacity Building

The SIDP involved increasing TRC personnel and developing enabling systems and structures. A folder of information and a tour of TRC formed the starting point for induction into the TRC philosophy. The orientation for new staff of the SIDP involved re-organising the physical space in TRC and a whole staff meeting to share aspects of personal and professional lives. Visits and time spent in the ICPD Laboratory School and other government schools familiarised staff hitherto unaccustomed to working within the government sector, and proved to be an enlightening learning experience.

Staff development sessions were initiated in 1997 with a workshop on learning theory and practice, introducing TRC’s workshop philosophy and the way it develops an ‘open’ culture. A Study Circle was subsequently set up for staff, to initiate their own sessions of learning for each other, and to design materials for teacher support. Efforts were made to ensure all staff had an opportunity to attend training, conferences, seminars, etc. and those who did were expected to share their new learning with the whole team, so that everyone gained a deeper picture of what was happening at TRC, and how it could be improved. In 2002, TRC senior management felt that staff members were competent in briefing visitors about TRC, managing the practical aspects of TRC events, and representing TRC at local, national and international fora, as well as managing TRC in the absence of senior management. In 2003, TRC was more confident of its team, some of whom could now independently co-ordinate and maintain liaison with current and potential partners.
Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Documentation

TRC’s culture of continual review and evaluation was, before SIDP, tacit and anecdotal, and there was a struggle to institutionalise learning. In SIDP, this process saw much development. Documentation became an ongoing process, with weekly and monthly reports being written by the TRC teams. Reports were expected to be reflective, with a section for learning, including space for raising personal as well as professional issues. During 2000, the administration and management system of TRC was revised and written up into a systems manual. A new mission statement for TRC was also drawn up. A self-assessment/reflection sheet was designed to take a more holistic view of professional development. In 2001, TRC felt that it had, over the last few years, enhanced its role as a vital change agent, as a result of which it was receiving an increased number of requests for consultancies and training. Finally, in 2002, in its journey to becoming more and more a learning organisation, TRC documented activities more systematically and, as a result, was able to share more within and outside the organisation. In 2003, a change in the organisational framework saw the revision of job descriptions and progress review formats. TRC felt that it now had a more professional team as well as a larger resource pool to draw from, leading to more effective planning, management, service delivery and monitoring systems.

Annual Events

During 1998, TRC’s annual event called ‘Tomorrow’s World’ was inaugurated by the Government of Sindh and was very successful. TRC considered it a landmark in bridging the gap between public and private sector schools, organisations and individuals. Nearly 30,000 people attended, with the active participation of over 80 schools and 30 organisations. 40% were from the Government and DMC sectors. In 2000, Earth Day was celebrated by all TRC’s partners. The multi-faceted event included a pledge-taking, a panel discussion, and a three-day festival. The panel included government and non-governmental members, the Minister for the Development of the Environment, and the children themselves. The festival included mosaic displays, a puppet show and a dance. Nearly 21,000 people attended and over 100 schools and 8 organisations participated. The private sector accounted for 58% and the public sector 42% of the participation. All staff members of TRC have now become more adept at organising such large scale ‘edu-tainment’ events.

Challenges

During the SIDP, TRC confronted many challenges, some of which are ongoing. A major challenge was in the recruitment of staff. This has been a perennial problem and one that is shared with many NGOs in Pakistan. Many positions remained vacant while TRC management spent a lot of time trying to analyse the reasons (one being the difficulty of finding the right kind of people, committed to the cause and willing to work the long hours common to NGOs), and seeking creative solutions. In 2003, it felt that it had at last a more professional and viable team. In wanting to increase learning, TRC found another area notably lacking in Pakistan and the NGO environment - that is the ability to write well in English, required for successful reporting and documentation for both the donor and TRC’s own documentation and learning needs. Meeting the high standards set by TRC has been hard, despite the setting up of a ‘buddy’ system to build capacity.

The growth of programming has naturally increased the time that senior management has to spend with the management of staff and programmes, an aspect that is further exacerbated by not having a full and relatively stable complement of staff from the beginning of the programme. Meeting increasing donor demands and annual events led to pressure on time that meant it was difficult to conduct the planned number of follow-up visits for schools. Numerous delays also frustrated efforts. During 1998 for stet, delays in the collection of data occurred for various reasons that could not be planned for, such as school examinations being held early, the government rescheduling dates, or simply due to ‘miscommunication’. Sometimes bottlenecks at the district level would lead to teachers being at the wrong course or simply not being informed. High staff turnover at all levels of the government would mean that TRC would have to start from scratch to build productive relationships with new appointees.

The lack of enthusiasm in teachers who, despite having positive heads and supervisors, often gave the excuse of lack of resources or too many children, was another depressing aspect. So were some of the circumstances in schools where, for example, one school had to accommodate class 1 and 2 in temporary rooms, leaving children in corridors with no blackboards, and another school which had a severe shortage of teachers, leading to large classes. Building enthusiasm and increasing awareness among supervisors, who seemed more concerned with dealing with the increasing load of paperwork, also proved demanding.

**Summary**

The aim of the Primary Education Programme was to contribute to the improvement in quality and delivery of primary education in selected urban and rural settings. The programme worked in four low-income urban schools in Karachi (2 Government and 2 District Municipal Schools) in two cycles. The development and implementation of Whole School Development Plans took place through workshops and follow-up, and supplementary materials were developed for the teaching of Maths and Science through games, and for school management. All members of the school community in the 4 disadvantaged schools participated in the programme, in order to improve learning for children. Outcomes at the end of the project showed an increased level of professionalism exercised by head teachers and teachers, more positive learning environments, and children made more enthusiastic, learning more meaningfully. Case studies have been developed to use as advocacy materials to assist others to improve teaching and learning in primary schools.

The Resource Pool Expansion Programme trained a number of teachers selected for their leadership potential as workshop trainers. They became part of a resource pool of trainers that could be drawn upon to sustain change and enrich TRC’s school improvement efforts. In 2003, some of these trainers competently conducted courses, in delivering the National Curriculum ECE for other government teachers, unassisted.

The SIDP also involved TRC increasing its staff and developing enabling systems and structures. These encouraged the development of professional learning and management skills. The monitoring, evaluation, research and documentation of progress and learning in the programmes became a regular feature of TRC systems, in its attempts to become more of a learning organisation. Staff members had also become quite adept in executing very successful large scale ‘edu-tainment’ events, that brought together people from both the public and private sectors of education. In 2003, TRC senior management felt it had a more professional team and more effective planning, management, service delivery and monitoring systems.

Recruiting suitably qualified and committed staff proved a major challenge for TRC, despite attempts to be as flexible and creative as possible. Another challenge was the increased time that senior management had to spend to manage and support staff and programmes, as well as the time needed for documentation that required a good standard of English language, which few staff members possessed. Numerous delays, that could not be planned for, were also frustrating, along with the lack of enthusiasm in some teachers and education officials.
POLICY DIALOGUE
Chapter 8 - Policy Dialogue

‘Civil society...needs to develop critical engagement with the state, so that the voices of the deprived and marginalized are heard and included in developing a new social contract’.

Omar Asghar Khan

What is Policy Dialogue?

Defining ‘policy dialogue’ seems to be difficult despite its prevalent use within donor and developmental agency circles, where the meaning of the word, and mutual understanding of it, appears assumed. ‘Policy’ is defined by Najam at a minimum as a ‘social device to accelerate, decelerate, circumvent or create particular changes’. ‘Dialogue’ we can take in its everyday meaning of ‘talking to each other’, but with the understanding that in talking to each other we are moving forward in some way, breaking down barriers, and increasing our understanding and leading perhaps, to, for example, reaching a solution to a problem.

Within development circles, the term ‘policy dialogue’ seems to refer to talking and negotiating with, mainly, the government, in order to influence policy (and thereby it is assumed that one influences implementation). Policy dialogue may inherently carry within its process an element of capacity building in learning how to influence and develop policy in a different and more participatory way. It has been described as a ‘catalytic process of changing mindsets’ that may take a long time. Many donors now want to be able to ‘measure’ the success of their programmes according to the level of policy dialogue, although to measure this would be quite difficult as it may take years for a tangible result to occur. Successful dialogue may indeed be just that which has allowed a new way of thinking to permeate into the policy dialogue process - preparing the ground for change. However, we are told that dialogue ‘can only occur when a group of people see each other as colleagues in a mutual quest for deeper insight and clarity’, or at least are willing to see each other as colleagues at the start, and lose the sense of hierarchy.

Developing and Establishing the ECE Curriculum

Curriculum change in Pakistan is a federal affair (although education generally has been the responsibility of the provincial governments), about which people at the grassroots of education can seem to gain little knowledge. The development of the curriculum is heavily tied in with the development of textbooks, which until very recently was a monopoly, responsible for poor quality materials. However, although textbooks generally bear little relationship to the curriculum, they often in fact form the curriculum for the teachers, who may have never seen the actual curriculum document that is often locked away in a cupboard. There is also little follow-up with regard to the actual implementation of the curriculum in the classroom and no evaluation and feedback so that the curriculum can be improved. Further ‘each step in curriculum development process tends to occur in isolation from others and there is no visible coherent curriculum development activity’. The curriculum has drawn heavy criticism in Pakistan for being outdated, irrelevant, biased, of poor technical and pedagogical quality, and for it only paying lip service to developing higher order skills and creative thinking. Trying to break the monopoly can be like walking through a minefield. However, one factor in TRC’s favour was that it was not so much trying to change the curriculum as that one did not exist for the kachchi age group. In this respect it was not treading on anyone’s toes. This was an untouched area and therefore provided a relatively easier (although still difficult) and timely

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111 IBCC Book of Equivalences of Educational Qualifications in Pakistan (date unknown) states that the Parliamentary Act No. X of 1976 makes provision for Federal supervision of curriculum, textbooks and maintenance of standards of education and allows it to appoint ‘Competent Authorities’ to carry out the work.
112 The GoP recently allowed the development of private textbooks and examination boards to raise the standard of materials through competition.
opportunity, given the importance of ECE promoted in the government's own EFA and ESR plans.

TRC’s experience showed that the Government sector in Sindh revealed pockets of kachchi children in a number of schools. Teachers generally did not know how to approach these children and they often ended up chanting, copying the alphabet being taught, the odd rhyme, or being left unattended, often sitting in corridors. TRC felt the injustice of the situation: ‘It hurt’ and felt that the schools lacked a systematic way of dealing with kachchi children appropriately. This led to the idea of developing a curriculum for this neglected sector of children. The desire was to have the importance of ECE recognised and valued by becoming part of government policy and that a curriculum would be a starting point to develop ECE policy.

Developing the ECE Curriculum

In 1997, TRC collected materials for the development of the ECE curriculum and discussed these within a consultative group. In 1998, project school teachers were consulted with regard to what the content of the ECE curriculum should be and the draft curriculum was developed. Parental feedback was incorporated into the revision, revealing the importance they gave to developing acceptable social habits and verbal language proficiency, the alphabet and numbers, Islamic values and using computers. During 1999, the draft curriculum document was passed onto the government and DMC supervisors for review, and was then completed. It was also given to the ICPD Laboratory School, 2 private schools, a Community-based Organisation school in Lyari and an NGO school in Sheikhupura in order to obtain feedback from a range of schools that were not included in the project. A rural perspective was also gained from government primary school teachers in Shikarpur and Thatta districts. Such wide consultation and participation is truly rare in developing countries like Pakistan. Eventually five hundred copies of the ECE Curriculum draft were printed and copies given to the Minister and Secretary of Education, Sindh, during the ECE Seminar of 1999.

During 2000, further work took place on adapting the curriculum for the Pakistan rural context. TRC decided to include topics such as conflict resolution, tolerance and peace education to broaden the akhlaq (conduct) section, and to also collect poems and traditional rhymes in Sindhi. The whole curriculum was translated into Sindhi, ready for training to take place during 2001. Detailed feedback from teachers and parents indicated that the curriculum was found to be extremely useful and easy to understand and use. In 2002, TRC’s visits and observations in schools found that the correct use of the curriculum and materials had increased in classrooms and that there was an increased demand for them. The urban and rural curriculum models were now being successfully implemented in 38 urban and 7 rural schools, bringing the total to 45 schools.

Policy Dialogue with the Government on the ECE Curriculum Framework

Although determined to get the ECE Curriculum recognised at a national level, TRC had no idea of how to tackle the formal and very bureaucratic curriculum development process in Pakistan. The Director of the Bureau of Curriculum and Education Wing (BCEW), Sindh, agreed to review the curriculum and forward it to the Federal Curriculum Wing. However, this was not possible as the Director was transferred. Frequent government transfers meant that TRC had to continually re-start relationships. Again, trying to work through the Provincial Government to elevate the status of ECE, a meeting was held with the Provincial Education Secretary, Sindh, during 1999 to enlist support for introducing kachchi classes in government schools. She requested that TRC make a presentation to the Directors of Education in June. She was very positive about the kind of changes that would need to be made, including the transfer of teachers, and was also happy to attend and indeed co-host the ECE Seminar planned for November. TRC subsequently made a presentation to the Directors of Education, Sindh, in June 1999, and discussions took place on space, teacher shortages, and the political changes needed to establish kachchi classes.

TRC and visitors from the proposed Canadian linkage partners also visited the Director of the BCEW in Jamshoro, Sindh, to discuss the ECEP and share a copy of the draft curriculum. Eventually feedback was received stating that:

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114 Information is drawn from interviews with senior management of TRC in Sep./Oct. 2002. See Chapter 2 for more information on ECE.
115 ibid.
116 See Chapter 6 for an account of the ECE National Seminar which, in effect, was the first ‘formal’ event in relation to policy dialogue with the Government on the importance of ECE and developing better practice in schools.
The experts/curriculum developers have opined that the content-matter as outlined in the booklet does not refer or conform to any of the “models” to be adopted for curriculum design, but are directions for teachers. The Curriculum Wing of the Federal Ministry of Education are to be approached for policy guidance on this behalf.\(^{117}\)

However, TRC was unsuccessful in trying to obtain policy guidelines for curriculum design, the existence of which was also questioned. A decision was made that TRC would review the curriculum and the provincial BCEW expert would ‘polish’ it up later. The local curriculum committee, consisting of members from public and private schools, met six times to review and edit the document, of which 500 copies were printed. In 2000, the ECE Curriculum was yet again revised, this time by practitioners in all divisions in Sindh, and feedback was received from Hyderabad. In early 2000, TRC met the Provincial Education Secretary again, to discuss the review of the ECE curriculum framework and to follow up on the Seminar recommendations. On her suggestion, copies were sent to her office to be distributed to a review committee, but soon after this meeting, a new Provincial Secretary was appointed and no further action was taken.

In March 2000, TRC senior management, frustrated with not knowing the way to enter the government curriculum development process, decided to meet the Federal Minister of Education, Zobaida Jalal, herself.\(^{118}\) Senior management of TRC first met the Joint Educational Advisor (JEA), Federal Curriculum Wing, who was very open to the idea of an ECE curriculum. TRC learning materials were presented to both her and the Federal Minister for Education and discussed at length. The Joint Educational Advisor asked for a formal letter to be submitted with regard to the draft curriculum, and also that the Pehla Taleemi Basta (Readiness Bag) be reviewed. TRC had purposely included the Readiness Bag in discussions, thinking that having something tangible to review would help make the process of formalisation easier. In summary, it was agreed that TRC would send a formal request, after which the curriculum guidelines would be reviewed by the provincial BCEWs, who would provide feedback to the Federal Curriculum Wing, who would then inform TRC.

Under the direction of the Joint Educational Advisor, Curriculum Wing, the Director of the Technical Panel for Teacher Education (TPTE) asked TRC to also forward the ECE curriculum and materials to the Provincial Institutes for Teacher Education (PITEs)\(^{119}\) for review and comment. The PITEs showed an appreciation of TRC’s efforts but expressed, for example, the following concerns:

- The curriculum guide was unrealistic with regard to classroom organisation and set-up within government schools. (It assumed that it had yet to be piloted.)
- That the first poem in the video should be a hamd (a prayer in praise of God).
- That some of the nazms (poems) were inappropriate for children; others were suggested.

Given the nature of the feedback, TRC felt that it would be useful to get the relevant people together to share views, especially as a strong feeling had emerged in the Federal Curriculum Wing that the curriculum could not be implemented in government schools. Consequently, TRC suggested to the Director of the TPTE that a joint review session be held in Karachi. In the meantime, the Government had launched the Education Sector Reforms, dated October 2000, a section of which was titled ‘Innovative Programmes to Support Education Sector Reforms’. Unbeknown to TRC, it stated that the ‘the EFA wing is to engage TRC as a resource institution for providing policy and professional back-up at the national, provincial and district levels’.\(^{120}\) During this time, the Minister had also phoned as she wanted to send a paper on ECE for the E9 EFA Conference in Beijing. An Education Advisor to the Minister also asked for copies of the ECE Seminar Report.


\(^{118}\) Ms Zobaida Jalal was part of the new military and ‘NGO friendly’ government and was known within education circles for the educational development work carried out by her NGO within disadvantaged areas of Balochistan. She is reputed to be trying to bring change within a very difficult environment.

\(^{119}\) The four regional PITEs are meant to be centres of excellence, technically responsible for pre-service and in-service education, some aspects of which are shared with the BCEWs, although the lines of responsibility seem blurred in practice. Original funding for PITEs came from ADB.

The next step of the policy dialogue occurred when the curriculum’s national review team and the ECEP partners met in January 2001 to consider feedback that they had received from the Federal Curriculum Wing. During the review, as planned, TRC gave the Government representatives the freedom to look into the project schools themselves. They were very impressed and found it hard to believe the level of quality work that was evident. It was clear that the visit was not a show put on for them as the children were so comfortable, even though some of them were also tested by the visitors. The materials seen in the classrooms had obviously been developed over time and were being used. Some Government representatives had tried to confuse the children to see if they really knew things but the children responded appropriately. The representative from the Government of Punjab was so impressed by the level of motivation of the teachers, that he asked TRC how they had managed to accomplish this, given the lack of the normal kind of incentives such as pay and salary. To answer such queries, TRC invited some head teachers, teachers and supervisors to meetings with the Government and asked that comments and questions be addressed to the teachers, who would speak for themselves. This in itself, revealed a high level of confidence of TRC in the teachers, and on the part of the teachers themselves. All the objections and queries, much to TRC’s delight, were thus dealt with by the curriculum users themselves - teachers.

The concerns of the national review team included the following:

- That the activities proposed for religious and moral uplift were too demanding compared to the others;
- That although goshas (learning corners) were a good idea, they were practically impossible in government schools, for want of proper teachers and facilities;
- The list of rhyming words is of too high an order for 3-5 year old children. A lot of the activities and concepts do not conform to the mental level required and need to be revised.
- The detailed observation and recording requirements are not practical for public schools, given the number of children in classes.

Each point was discussed and the teachers were questioned about their experience. The group eventually reached a consensus that the approach was indeed possible in government schools.

When the next steps were discussed, it was suggested by the Head of TPTE, that TRC present the curriculum at an inter-secretary meeting in Islamabad. However, transfers and changes led to a new Joint Educational Advisor, Federal Curriculum Wing, being appointed. The new Advisor was in his post for only six weeks, but was very responsive. However, he too ended up being transferred! Such constant changes obviously led to a decrease in morale, but the Senior Manager of TRC had learnt to live with these by talking herself out of despondency, making herself think that something good will eventually transpire out of it all, and that other opportunities will arise.

The revival of the process took place later in 2001, when Ms Haroona Jatoi was appointed the new Joint Educational Advisor within the Federal Curriculum Wing. Ms Jatoi was familiar with TRC, as she had conducted an evaluation of TRC in 1993/4, and was very impressed with visits to ICPD Schools and the fact that government teachers had become or been made enthusiastic enough to spend their own money on developing materials. After discussion, TRC sent all past documents and correspondence to Ms Jatoi and followed this up with a call. These were received favourably and a meeting was arranged. Another meeting took place in September, in which Ms Jatoi told them that there should be a committee for a formal review, and suggested who to invite, etc. The idea for developing a ‘Teachers’ Guide in fact also came from her.

The formal National Review eventually took place over two days in December 2001. A critical and extremely favourable factor was that the Federal Minister of Education, Ms Zobaida Jalal, reaffirmed government commitment to ECE by ‘dropping in’ while she was in Karachi at the same time. This thus impressed others. The Minister reconfirmed the government’s sincere efforts to promote public-private partnerships:

> ‘We all realise that children’s needs at this age group (3-5) are very important and can provide a sound basis for preparing them to join the formal school system’[^121].

The National Review Committee consisted of the Joint Educational Advisor (JEA), Federal Ministry of Education, Deputy Education Advisor, Assistant Education Advisor, Assistant Education Advisor of the EFA wing, members of the Bureau of Curriculum in the four provinces, a child psychologist, representatives from public and private schools, and TRC staff. It was decided that TRC would reorganise and rewrite some parts of the curriculum document according to the format provided by the Federal Curriculum Wing. Copies in English and Urdu would then be taken to Islamabad for final approval.

In 2002, TRC extensively revised the Urdu and English curriculum, also keeping in mind the needs of rural areas. The National Curriculum Development (Select) Committee met again with the JEA in February 2002 for further revisions. The experts from MoE and TRC gave each other feedback, argued their philosophical points of view, and finally agreed on what should be included: "It was an extremely useful and enlightening exercise for both."

The MoE handed TRC a letter which formally recommended the approval of the draft ECE Curriculum as a national document. After finalisation of the curriculum, TRC sent a copy to the MoE for printing in April 2002. Obviously, this was for TRC a "critical first step in this long, long journey towards appropriate practice for young children."

The finalised curriculum guidelines - National Curriculum Early Childhood Education - has both Urdu and English versions, as well as a Teachers' Guide called 'Strong Foundations', also formally approved by the government. The National ECE Curriculum sections highlight the importance of ECE as a basic education strategy and introduce the Curriculum framework objectives, its philosophy, values and beliefs. Specific learning outcomes are given for 3-5 year olds in the topic areas (in line with EFA goals) of the development of language and literacy (listening and speaking skills, reading and writing skills), numeracy and life skills. The next section provides information on the importance of the learning environment for active learning, and planning the learning content. Classroom organisation, creating learning corners, and the daily routine are elaborated upon before giving tables, which detail methods that can be used to meet the learning outcomes within each learning and development area. The final section is on how to assess young children and keep appropriate records. The Teachers' Guide is an extension of the National Curriculum ECE in that it helps teachers to implement the curriculum by explaining the methods and approaches and by providing encouragement and examples.

The preface by Zobaida Jalal, Federal Education Minister, to the National ECE Curriculum states that:

‘Besides careful examination of the National Education Policy (1998-2010), current Primary Education curriculum documents, regional and international research on ECE, students, teachers, parents, heads, supervisors and DEOs have been consulted throughout the curriculum development process."

In her final sentence she states that:

‘If we succeed in implementing this child-friendly curriculum, in the spirit in which it is written, our children will grow up as confident, aware and conscientious citizens of Pakistan."

The curriculum was at last formally owned by the Government of Pakistan as the National Curriculum Early Childhood Education, during the well-attended formal launch that took place in Islamabad on 22nd August 2002, and that was jointly hosted by the Federal Curriculum Wing, MoE, and TRC. Since the launch of the ECE Curriculum, the Ministry of Education has sent directives to all the provinces to start work in ECE centres and kachchi classes. However, a level of confusion prevails about implementation without a coherent implementation strategy.

In 2003, TRC continued to dialogue with the Curriculum Wing, Ministry of Education, bearing in mind the need to assist with effective implementation of the National ECE Curriculum. Issues discussed included a national conference to devise an ECE implementation strategy, quality assurance and a regulatory body to set standards.

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123 ibid.
127 ibid.
and monitor ECE services, and institutions offering ECE certification and grading systems for students seeking certification in ECE. However, to date it has been difficult to fix a date or find funding for the conference. During this period the focal point for ECE had also been moved from the EFA Wing to the Curriculum Wing.

Summary

The term policy dialogue in development circles generally refers to talking and negotiating with the government in order to influence policy making, with the assumption that change in practice will flow from this. Curriculum change is very difficult in Pakistan and under the control of the Federal Government. It is traditionally closely linked to the monopoly attached to the development of textbooks. Teachers are often unaware of the actual curriculum and more concerned with following and completing the textbook. The curriculum in Pakistan has been severely criticised for its irrelevant content and its lack of attention to the development of skills needed for the 21st Century.

Seeing the neglect of kachchi children in primary schools, TRC wanted to develop a curriculum as a starting point to developing appropriate ECE policy that recognised the value of quality ECE. It was to TRC’s advantage that no curriculum existed for this young age group and there were therefore no toes to be stepped on, so to speak. However, enabling change was still difficult. The curriculum was developed over a number of years, starting in 1997, and received feedback from educators at all levels, including parents from rural and urban areas. It was adapted several times in order to be responsive to the range of stakeholders. Teachers generally found it to be extremely useful and easy to understand and use. In 2002, the ECE curriculum was being successfully implemented in the project’s 38 urban and 7 rural schools.

Although determined to get the ECE Curriculum recognised at a national level, TRC had no idea of how to tackle the formal and very bureaucratic curriculum development process in Pakistan. Frequent transfers of key officials in the government frustrated efforts at various stages. Presentations to government staff in Sindh did not result in obtaining curriculum policy guidelines that may have aided the process. Despairing of efforts to find a way into the world of curriculum bureaucracy, TRC management decided to meet the Federal Minister, Education, in 2000, along with the Joint Educational Advisor, Federal Curriculum Wing. It was agreed that TRC would send a formal request, after which the draft curriculum would be reviewed by the provincial BCEWs, who would provide feedback to the Federal Curriculum Wing. The Curriculum was also shared with the Provincial Institutes for Teacher Education. Given the nature of the collective feedback received from the Government, TRC felt that it would be useful to get the relevant people together to share views, especially as a strong feeling had emerged in the Federal Curriculum Wing that the curriculum could not be implemented in government schools.

The curriculum’s national review team and ECEP partners met in January 2001 to consider feedback that they had received from the Federal Curriculum Wing. During the review, TRC gave the Government representatives the freedom to look into the project schools themselves. They were very impressed and found it hard to believe the level of quality work that was evident. During discussions, TRC requested that queries be addressed to the teachers, head teachers and supervisors themselves, who dealt with them competently and truthfully.

Staff changes at the Federal level led to another delay in progress, until a new JEA was appointed who fortunately was already familiar with TRC’s work. A meeting led to a formal National Review in December 2001, which was given the wholehearted support of the Federal Minister, Education, who made a surprise personal appearance. Further discussions and revision of the Curriculum took place after the review. The Curriculum was eventually finalised and a formal letter received from the Federal Government recommending its approval as the National Curriculum Early Childhood Education, Pakistan.

The National Curriculum ECE has both English and Urdu versions and a Teachers’ Guide, Strong Foundations, which was requested and also approved by the Government. In addition to describing the philosophy, values and beliefs of good ECE practice, the Curriculum outlines the learning outcomes for 3-5 year old children in literacy, numeracy and life skills. In addition, it explains appropriate methodology and assessment techniques. The Teachers’ Guide elaborates on this, providing encouragement and examples for teachers.

The Government of Pakistan and TRC formally launched the National Curriculum ECE in August 2002, thus creating an innovation in the educational history of Pakistan, where a curriculum developed by grassroots teachers working with an NGO became government policy, and where a formal curriculum for our youngest children in schools was established. The uniqueness of this should not be underestimated. The Government has since directed provinces to start work in ECE. Bearing in mind the difficulties of implementation, TRC has continued to dialogue with the Federal Curriculum Wing, suggesting, among other things, a national conference to devise an ECE implementation strategy.
The Importance of Partnerships

As with ‘policy dialogue’, so with the term ‘partnerships’ - a very popular term with donors and developmental agencies to denote, in theory (the practice may be very different), a more mature and equal way of working with others, be they the donor agency and the government, the international (Northern) NGO, with the Southern NGO, or the national NGO with the government. Hill, in describing the relationship between donors, government and civil society within the Sector-wide Approach to development, refers to an appeal to the values of equity, access, participation and sustainability. Wang states that public-private partnerships seek to achieve social objectives, and ‘to explore and utilize each sector’s respective strengths and resources, and to minimize each other’s weaknesses’.

The Functions of NGOs

Various definitions of NGOs exist, although their variety in terms of roles and functions renders it difficult to define authoritatively. Bowden describes the development NGO as one that aims to raise the capacity of rural and urban people in developing countries to generate a better life for themselves. Gordenker and Weiss refer to the nature of non-profit organisations as ‘private in form but public in purpose’, and that NGOs as advocacy organisations today form the ‘global conscience’. Although self-help organisation has always existed, the global movement and shifts of power have assisted the rise of the private/citizen/NGO/voluntary sector to take on what the government cannot or will not. There has been a rapid expansion of NGO work in various development fields, estimated to reach 250 million people in developing countries. NGOs are a way to reach the people and deliver services more effectively. Allison refers to ‘an attack on the failed state in which civic society can add resources, reach the poor, include community participation, and improve management and accountability, within a “schizophrenic” relationship with the government. They are also able to experiment and innovate, and build up practical experience at the grassroots level. Moreover they have significantly “enhanced implementational honesty and predictability” and are deemed to be more fair, thereby gaining a higher level of public trust than that put in the government. Charlton and May call this the “rehabilitation of policy implementation”.

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However, there are some who say that the achievements of NGOs are overstated and seeing them as a panacea for development is wrong as the ‘only likely alternative to state failure, is the state itself’. The varied NGO sector itself has many weaknesses, such as its increasing reliance on donor funding, which questions the sustainability of programmes, whose themes have to follow donor priorities that often seem to be short-term. Management of NGOs has been a problem, enhanced by the demand of donor requirements for reporting, for example, and institutional development systems required to manage larger programmes (as opposed to small projects), and increased finances. Also, there appears to be little co-ordination between NGOs and no real systematic evaluation of the work of NGOs overall, to ascertain if they deserve the praise generally received.
However, NGOs are being expected to do more and more within the ‘New Policy Agenda’, in which the international donor community look to NGOs to implement their policies, as ‘units of social life’ closest to people. One of the problems recognised is how successful smaller NGO projects can be ‘taken to scale’ and how their learning can be used to shape national policy - what Berg calls ‘bridging micro-level experiences with macro-level challenges’. Attempts to ‘scale up’ and thus venture into policy influence and policy making have only been partially successful and face a number of constraints.

NGO-Government Relationships in Pakistan

The rise of NGOs in Pakistan over the last few decades has had to contend with around 9 different governments, alternating between civilian and military rule, and periods of political disorder and civil unrest. NGOs have often had a confrontational role allowed by its traditional independence and desire to be unlike the government: ‘not rigid, not bureaucratic, not slow, not distant from the people they work with’. However, relations with the government tend to be shaped by the political climate and changing perceptions of NGOs, which have improved in Pakistan. The environment is at times negative, at times positive, and sometimes both, depending on with whom one is dealing.

The changing nature of the relationship arises from the increasing need for governments to involve NGOs in educational development efforts, following donor concerns and pressures, the need to lessen antagonism against NGOs (often seen as following a western secular and anti-government stance), and provide a more enabling and self-regulatory environment. It is not a relationship without tension on either side. When the late Minister of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development, Mr Omar Asghar Khan, who also headed the NGO Sungi, was asked about the involvement of this sector with the government, he responded, referring to the challenges and opportunities for civil society:

‘Civil society... needs to develop critical engagement with the state, so that the voices of the deprived and marginalized are heard and included in developing a new social contract.’

A very strong constraint in the government-NGO relationship is perhaps the government’s lack of understanding of NGOs, and its hostility and suspicion, particularly among mid-level and senior staff.

Relationships are often based on that between individuals and have to be constantly renewed as they are ‘highly personalised, especially at the programming level, where a friendly and constructive government officer may be followed by the precise opposite’. The nature of the inevitable tension between the government and non-governmental sectors cannot be ignored or hidden:

‘Even when they work in unison and demonstrate the friendliest of relations, the tension remains palpable; when they don’t, it becomes inescapable. This tension – sometimes latent, sometimes patent; sometimes constructive, sometimes destructive; but always present – it is the defining feature of all NGO-government relations.’

Smillie & Hailey tell us that successful NGOs have learned to navigate on a dangerous sea, fraught with peril and unpredictability. However, the more successful ones have a long-term perspective and memories that outlast both donors and the government.

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145 ibid., p. 27.
146 ibid.
147 ibid., p. 44.
148 ibid., p. 44.
150 op. cit.
The NGO Role in Education in Pakistan

There has been a huge rise in the growth of private sector schooling in Pakistan, which tripled in the ‘90s, and in 2000 accounted for almost 30% of enrolment\(^{151}\). NGO schools in Pakistan have received praise for being more successful than other private and government schools, particularly in the area of management. The key ingredient for success has been identified as the changing of power relations between administration, teachers and parents\(^{152}\). NGOs, unlike the government, have been able to experiment on a small scale with educational development programmes, and achieve a number of scattered successes in Pakistan. The ESR 2001-2004 formalises several NGO experiments in education, and has a section promoting public-private partnerships. The reforms provide incentives to encourage the private sector to get involved in education and help build the capacity of the government. However, building on these experiments is not easy - both NGOs and the government in their struggling partnerships need to keep in mind the end goal:

'It is the pursuit of genuinely participatory development which should be the motivating force in improving state-NGO relations and in fostering a more enabling environment for NGOs'\(^{153}\).

Models for Describing and Analysing Relationships and Partnerships:

Model 1: Mutuality and Organisational Identity

In seeking to describe relationships between government and non-profit organisations, Brinkerhoff uses a model drawing on the two dimensions of ‘mutuality’ and ‘organisational identity’. ‘Mutuality’ encompasses the spirit of partnership principles, where there is a strong mutual commitment to and benefit from the goals of the partnership, which are consistent with each partner’s organisation’s mission and objectives. Each partner can influence the other within an environment of mutual trust and respect. ‘Organisational identity’ is what is distinctive and enduring in an organisation, such as its mission and values, which it pursues and maintains through the partnership. It also includes its stakeholders, to which it is answerable. The degree of match between these two dimensions determines whether the relationship is one of contracting, partnership, extension or co-optation and gradual absorption.

From TRC’s perspective, and using the Brinkerhoff model, we can see that the motivation for a partnership with the government stemmed from TRC’s own mission and objectives as well as the deep desire of the senior management to correct the injustice caused by inequity in the government sector. The Senior Manager had a passion to see ‘what was behind the walls of government schools’\(^{154}\). Its comparative advantage was its skills and practical in-school and teacher training/education experience, whereas the government had the infrastructure and human resources, but lacked capacity and sometimes will, to build expertise in the area of pre-primary and primary education. We can see that there are elements of a true partnership - the government at all its levels was able to influence TRC and vice versa. However, it should be noted that there were some sound principles from which TRC would not move and thus remained consistent to its organisational identity, which included retaining some content in the curriculum about which it felt strongly, and not paying teachers daily and travel allowances. Its perseverance to its mission and principles had gained the admiration of the government, leading to mutual respect and accountability. From the results of TRC’s and government’s interaction with each other we can see that ‘it is conceivable that an NGO could instil new values in the population that it encounters’\(^{155}\), which could then gradually change government practice.

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154 Meeting with Senior Manager, TRC, September 2002.
Model 2: Ends and Means

Najam uses a model based on strategic institutional interests, in which the government and the NGO are trying to realise their goals within the policy arena - sometimes the goals (ends) are similar and sometimes not, and sometimes the strategies they prefer to use (means) are similar and sometimes not. When they ‘bump into each other in the policy stream’, they emerge into possible combinations: seeking similar ends with similar means; similar ends but dissimilar means; similar means for dissimilar ends; and dissimilar means with dissimilar ends. These give rise to the four Cs of government-NGO relations: Co-operation, Complementarity, Co-optation and Confrontation.

Applying Najam’s model, based on ends and means, perhaps we can identify the relationship between TRC and the government as one that is co-operative and complementary at the same time. Ultimately the goals are the same, and with some sectors of the government the preferred means are the same with regard to how to achieve effective ECE. The government is generally collaborating, but there are elements in terms of people and bureaucracy that may make the process of entering the policy stream more difficult than it need be. Perhaps where government members feel an individual power being encroached upon, or become jealous of TRC’s success, as in the example of being approached by project staff rather than government staff to help to set up PTAs in the earlier work with the government. TRC had a credible background in working with the government, being quietly effective, and speaking from a point of knowledge. However, like other NGOs, frustrations also occurred. This was despite TRC’s efforts to maintain some stability with the government personnel that it works with, in order to have some continuity in progress. Changes such as the transfer of good teachers and officials, or the replacement of a very good DEO with a person who was unhelpful, would lead to ‘khoon kay aansu’. This affected morale and motivation, leading to disillusionment, and had an effect on other colleagues within the project as well as on TRC itself.

TRC’s relationship with the government is also a complementary one, according to Najam’s model, as the strategies that TRC uses are ones that the government has not developed the capacity to use, or is unable to in the current circumstances. Although the government is not paying for the project, it is providing resources in terms of human resources and school infrastructure. Project success has also helped release some financial resources, such as school development funds. There is also the element of luck in timing in terms of formation of a military government and then an elected government that continued with the same Minister of Education, national policy and action plans for education. Perhaps, also, the appointments of key committed female individuals lubricated the relationship and ensured that progress on the curriculum could be seen through to the end of actual acceptance by the government as the national curriculum.

However, contrary to the demands of a true partnership according to both Brinkerhoff and Najam, the original development of the objectives in terms of the SIDP proposal, was more the work of TRC and AKF(P), rather than originating from discussions or initiatives from the government. It was clearly TRC’s, the donor’s and international development’s/NGO’s agenda which TRC then managed to get the government to buy into - thus revealing an element of co-optation and acting as a catalyst. However, a strong degree of mutuality could be developed as the ECE (and PEP) initiatives were very timely and fitted into the government’s international and national concerns in education as expressed in the National Education Policy 1998-2010, the EFA and ESR Action Plans, and poverty reduction strategies. However, despite the government being under pressure to deliver in these areas, and naming TRC as a resource, it did not make the approaches. TRC was constantly being pro-active and kept the agenda alive and the process moving. However, the Federal Minister made herself available during very busy and hectic times, as did other key persons, such as the Head of the TPTE, responsible for PITEs, and the JEA, Federal Curriculum Wing. They may each have had their own agendas, but the goals were the same, and this therefore assisted the relationship between TRC and the government. Despite these different and complementary agendas, TRC was like a ‘woodpecker constantly pecking’, sometimes falling and picking itself up. The nature

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157 ibid., p. 25.
158 ‘khoon kay aansu’ means ‘tears of blood’, indicating the level of frustration and despair, after all the hard work involved in building the capacity of key people in key positions. From a discussion with TRC senior management
of the partnership was also not discussed in the beginning, leading to a formal agreement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding, which may have assisted the process, and has been used by other NGOs working with the government, in order to clarify expectations and roles\footnote{Hussain, M. (1996) gives the example of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme which draws up Terms of Partnerships with village organisations and a Memorandum of Understanding with the collaborating agency, developed jointly by all concerned.}. However, it could also have inhibited flexibility and the development of informal relationships.

**The Personal Nature of Relationships**

What is clear from TRC’s partnership with the government, is the strong personal and individual nature of the relationship with people at all levels of the hierarchy – an aspect that does not seem to be often discussed in literature. To achieve effective policy dialogue, it was important to have had a history of effective work with government schools and teachers and supervisors, giving rise to a good reputation and credibility with the government. The professional standing and the commitment of the two senior management staff of TRC mattered, as did the way that they approached the government, and conducted themselves throughout the relationship. The personal relationships and rapport built with the Secretary of Education, Sindh, the Joint Educational Advisor, Federal Curriculum Wing, and the Federal Minister of Education were all critical to the success of getting the ECE curriculum accepted. However, what is also significant with these particular relationships, as mentioned earlier, was that the key partners were all female, which may have added to mutual understanding and commitment to the cause.

Developing collaborative relationships with the government is not without its risks of getting involved in corruption or inappropriate ways of working, and having to accept a reduced level of much cherished NGO independence\footnote{Clarke, J (1995): ‘The State, Popular Participation, and the Voluntary Sector’, in *World Development*, Vol. 23, No. 4.}. The roles of the Director and Senior Manager of TRC have been crucial in the building of relationships. Lister informs us that in the analysis of NGOs, the role of the individual is often ignored, and that successful partnerships take place when strong personal relationships have developed\footnote{Lister, S. (2000): ‘Power in Partnership? An Analysis of An NGO’s Relationship with its Partners’, in *Journal of International Development*, 2000:12, pp. 227-239.}. TRC has had moments of thinking hard about its relationship with the government and when to compromise, and has had to develop a thick skin and accept failure at times, in the hope that another opportunity will arise. It had also to think about how to ‘lubricate’ relationships by, for example, going out of the way to show appreciation to government employees, who themselves may be demoralised within such an oppressive hierarchical bureaucracy. An example would be meeting people at the airport personally, or serving biryani (spicy rice) to all the personnel in the Federal Bureau of Curriculum, as a means of showing appreciation, and including them in the celebration while the National Curriculum Early Childhood Education was being launched in August 2002.

In addition, the very strong personal relationships built with the teachers, head teachers and supervisors on the ground were critical to the success of the project, and shows how one cannot implement change from the top down only, but must take note of the change required at a personal level and in classrooms, which is what is needed to influence educational practice with children. This naturally leads us now to look at what the teachers, head teachers, supervisors and government officials have to say about their partnership with TRC. Have they implemented change because of the power wielded by their superiors, or because of TRC itself? The voices of ECEP government and DMC teachers:

‘WE made the National Curriculum!’

Although I was meeting most of the teachers for the first time, it was clearly evident that they were bubbling with enthusiasm and just bursting to speak and share their experiences of working with TRC\footnote{Meeting with government teachers and supervisors on 1 Oct. 2002, at TRC.}. Through their work with the TRC, the teachers felt that their capacity to learn as teachers had been kindled. Teachers referred to always being ready for school and learning something new. One of the teachers referred to the need to work together, in recognition of the fact that this is necessary in order to achieve what one cannot do alone. She had learnt ‘bardaasht karna’, that is to put up with things and be more tolerant, and she had increased in self-confidence. Many teachers referred to an increase in self-confidence. Before the project, they felt unable to express
themselves and were transferring their worries onto children, who then feared education. Teachers no longer felt the pressures of a long day at school:

‘We used to be bored as teachers but now the time flies!’

Change, however, was not easy. Teachers expressed fear at the start and had a lot to contend with, as, for example, the other teachers in the school feeling unhappy with the fact that children in project classes were only ‘playing’. TRC worked with individual teachers, giving them the specific help each needed. However, an essential part of their learning was learning to collaborate with each other. Teachers felt that they lost their hesitation, and there was now a lack of hierarchy:

‘The “I” becomes “we”’. 

Parents were also happier and reinforced the confidence the teachers were beginning to have in themselves. Parents come to parent meetings; they too want consolation and encouragement, and laugh and chat and tell the teachers how they have learnt from their children at home. Personal changes arise as a natural part of trying to change the professional person. One teacher talked about how she used to be very irritable at home, and did not listen to her own children. However, once she started to train at the TRC, her children noted the change in her attitude and mood. Teachers now had more care for children and concern for their well-being. They noted that children did not cry so much when they started school, and that there was very little absence.

When the teachers were asked what part they had to play in the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, the response was an overwhelming, proud and joyous ‘WE MADE IT!’ They talked of the experimentation they conducted through play with the children, the poetry, and the questions they asked. Their involvement had clearly created ownership of the ECEP. The voices of ECEP government and DMC supervisors:

‘OUR teachers did it!’

A meeting with supervisors came up with many similar observations and comments. The biggest difference they had observed as a result of their partnership with TRC was the real increase in the confidence of children, who no longer feared the teacher, and even clung to her and wanted to be with her. The supervisors observed that both teacher and children were so busy that they did not need supervision. They now have teachers who care for children and are constantly thinking about how they can improve their practice. The children are involved and are very active in their learning and sharing with each other. Above all, they want to come to school every day.

Supervisors commented on the personal nature of change, and that the relationship with TRC ‘brings changes in one’s self’. In the words of one supervisor: ‘TRC brings out the “husn” in us’. They felt that the partnership with TRC ‘reveals the expertise in the teacher’, showing that a government teacher can be as good as any other teacher. The supervisors felt that the change in their personal and professional selves depended on the environment, and the continued contact with TRC. They felt that the Senior Manager of TRC acted as a role model who taught them how, for example, to negotiate with others. They stated that she worked so hard that it felt bad if they in turn did not try hard enough. They could now see how to be a proper supervisor for other teachers, and how to support teachers in a useful way. Instead of teachers fearing them and feeling frustrated, they were now much more satisfied. Supervisors had become more professional. They never used to plan their school visits before, but they now do, being sure to include aspects such as expressing appreciation of teachers’ work. Friendships were being formed between the regular government schools and the DMC schools. The isolation was lessening, and they were now advising each other, and even forming a network for professional women, thus forming a support system.

Meeting with government and DMC supervisors on a school site, 1 Oct. 2002.

‘husn’ means ‘beauty’ or ‘goodness’.

Meeting held with Ms Mahtab Rashdi at GoS, on 1 Oct. 2002.
The Voices of Government Educational Officials in Sindh:

The Former Secretary, Education, GoS:

I met with the former Secretary of Education\textsuperscript{165}, Government of Sindh, who played a key role in the events before, and including, the 1999 ECE Seminar held jointly by TRC and the GoS. When asked about the relationship between the government and the TRC, she was quite clear that this depended on ‘the person in the chair on the part of the government’. She felt that TRC was able to establish a proper relationship with the government and was able to ‘realise the potential in our teachers’, and was ‘cool-minded and sincere’. She stated that the people in TRC have the ability to deal with an unusual range of people, from kachchi children to the Federal Minister of Education: ‘They are effective, and therefore their relationships go far’. She felt that TRC had proved itself and therefore gained credibility. Further, ‘they mix with all, and have no airs and graces’.

Additional Secretary, Education, Government of Sindh:

A meeting with the Additional Secretary of Education for the Government of Sindh, revealed similar thinking about the partnership with TRC\textsuperscript{166}. The Additional Secretary thought that TRC had one of the better relationships with the government, due to the fact that it understands the limitations of the government, and accepts this as a fact (unlike other NGOs); their expectations are therefore realistic. He described the ECEP as a programme that was developed with teachers from the first day, in which teachers and the TRC worked side by side, with the government realising that TRC was ‘really working for the government’. He stated that TRC was one of the ‘most active and responsive NGOs’.

Summary

The term ‘partnership’ is used within development circles to suggest a more mature and equal way for agencies to work together, maximising each other’s strengths, and creating more sustainable development results.

Development NGOs have been variously defined and are generally viewed as organisations that aim to build the capacity of people in developing countries to improve their own lives. The rapid expansion of NGOs underlies a feeling that NGOs can take on work that governments cannot or will not do. They are able to be more innovative and accountable, and involve people at grassroots. However, there are some criticisms of the NGO sector, such as those relating to its micro-focus, reliance on donor funding, management problems, and lack of co-ordination. However, the international donor agencies look to NGOs to take on more and more. One of the problems recognised is how successful smaller projects can be taken to scale and how learning from them can shape national policy. Attempts to date have only been partially successful.

In Pakistan, the rise in NGOs has to contend with constant political change and crises. The relationship between the NGO and government has traditionally been a confrontational one, but this has improved lately, although it still often depends on with whom one is dealing. There seems to be a lack of understanding and trust. Relationships are often highly personalised and have to deal with a persistent underlying tension. Within the education sector, the Education Sector Reforms formalised several NGO experiments in education, and promote the development of public-private partnerships to build the capacity of government to improve education.

When we analyse the relationship between TRC and the government, we can see that the initial motivation to work with the government came from TRC, with its comparative advantage of being skilled and experienced in improving education. Elements of a true partnership were evident in that the government and TRC were able to influence each other at all levels. However, TRC held onto its primary mission and principles, thus gaining the respect of the government. The relationship was both complementary and co-operative, where the goals of both partners were basically the same. Collaboration exists but TRC also employs strategies and capacities that the government does not have, to meet its goals in ECE. However, TRC was clearly the instigator of the relationship and constantly pro-active in keeping the ECE agenda alive amidst constant delays and frustrations.

\textsuperscript{166} Meeting with Mr Anwar Ahmed Zai at GoS, 2 Oct. 2002.
What is clear from TRC’s successful partnership with the government is the strong personal and individual nature of the relationship with people at all levels of the hierarchy, and the importance of having a history of effective work with the government. The professional standing and commitment of the individuals in TRC’s senior management added to the positive reputation and credibility of the organisation. In relating to the government, TRC has had to think hard about when to – politely but firmly – dig its heels in, and when to compromise; and also when to show appreciation in order to ‘lubricate’ the relationship.

On a basic level, the strong personal relationships with the teachers, head teachers and supervisors were crucial. Personal accounts of relationships clearly portray the positive impact working with TRC has had on both personal and professional lives. Government educators refer to an increase in self-confidence and tolerance, as well as an increased ability to express themselves and relate better to colleagues and children. Above all, they feel that TRC had enabled their inner beauty to emerge. Supervisors became more professional and supported teachers more effectively. Parents were consulted and were happier and, last but not least, children were eager to come to school and learn. All the educators involved in the development of the National Curriculum ECE were joyous to have been part of its creation, saying with great pride: ‘WE created it!’ More senior government officials at the provincial level referred to the success of the partnership with TRC being related to aspects such as its ability to relate to an unusual range of people; its sincerity; its understanding of the government; and its ability to work with government teachers in difficult circumstances and still be effective.
Engaging Teacher and Student Perspectives in Policy Formulation

As we have seen, donors at an international and national level have begun to realise the importance of involving civil society in the formulation of public policy, but active efforts to engage people in this process as true partners are rare. Although policy is supposed to influence practice, it often seems to ignore and disregard the voices of those responsible for the implementation of the policy. The works of Dyer and VSO show clearly the failure of projects and increasing de-motivation among teachers and other stakeholders, who are alienated from policy formulation. We need to bring out the voices and perspectives of teachers and students in order to counteract policies that disregard them, and gain a proper understanding of the reality of education, and teachers, and pupils, in order to have better formulated and better implemented policy.

Research and policy-making seems to be a coveted domain, and dominated by the positivistic stance and quantitative approach that many developing countries inherited through colonialism. Smith tells us that in Pakistan the ‘research landscape is dominated by people counting numbers in one form or another’ and that education policy may be shaped by research that is ‘little more than folklore dressed up with statistics’. There has generally been remarkably little research on the primary sector, the lowest rung of the ladder of policy implementation, despite its importance within the EFA agenda. The elitist policy-makers in Pakistan seem to assume that policies will be automatically implemented, although the recent creation of an Action Plan for Education Sector Reforms 2001-2004, rather than a new policy, seems to recognise Pakistan’s abysmal record in implementing change. There is little research that informs us about how to implement policy, and policy makers frequently misjudge the ease of implementation.

TRC as a Policy Entrepreneur

Despite the obstacles and constraints, TRC though a small NGO, was able to influence policy and use the valued work of teachers, students and the whole school community as the basis for this. It has managed to put ECE onto the educational map of Pakistan, and has developed a continuing relationship with it and the government, to ensure it does not get forgotten. Using a two-dimensional matrix analysis framework, described in Najam’s Organisations as Policy Entrepreneurs, we can map, describe and analyse the way that TRC has occupied the policy space. Najam, in discussing the all-consuming nature of policy, uses Kingdon’s term of the ‘policy primeval soup’, in which ideas are bumping into each other, forming new ideas through what Majone describes as ‘dialectical argumentation and persuasion’. Action within the policy stream is constantly evolving through dialogue. Najam states that NGOs as change agents are trying to actualise their social vision, through their contributions to this primeval policy soup, and hence the term ‘policy entrepreneur’.

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167 Some of this section draws on an assignment that was submitted to the University of Bristol, UK, as part of the Ed. D course, in April 2002.
168 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2001): Civil Society and the OECD Policy Brief. The OECD has also prepared a handbook containing ten tips to strengthen government-citizen relations for government officials.
Chapter 10 - TRC as a Policy Entrepreneur

Najam, within his matrix, outlines three arenas of the policy process: agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. Within these three policy areas are four roles that cut across - when NGOs act as monitors, advocates, innovators and service providers. The top row of Table 1 summarises what kind of activities an NGO or citizen organisation could be involved in, within the various parts of the matrix. These are not totally separate boxes in terms of stages and there may well be overlap. An NGO may primarily work more in one role and arena than in the others, or it could even progress from one to another. However, analysing the work of an NGO, like TRC, with the government, in terms of influencing policy in this way, allows us to map how TRC does this in terms of the roles that it undertakes.

Applying Najam’s matrix, Table 1 exemplifies how TRC as a policy entrepreneur has been occupying space in the policy stream, through its work with the government. For example, within the agenda-setting arena, TRC as a monitor has shown how kachchi children are neglected within education and suffer from the lowest quality of teaching. As an advocate in the policy development stage, it held the National ECE Seminar to mobilise support. As an innovator in the policy development arena, it has influenced the GoP to take on the innovative curriculum framework as the National Curriculum for ECE. Also as an innovator, but in the implementation stage, it has applied innovative and appropriate skills and knowledge with regard to ECE teaching and learning in government schools, and thrown light on the transition of children from kachchi to class 1. As a service provider, it serves as a resource for the government in the implementation of ECE as dictated in the ESR, and by actually implementing ECE through its donor funded SIDP project, that aimed to influence policy from the start.

Such a map shows how TRC’s influence goes beyond the conventional advocacy role of many international and national NGOs. It also shows how its policy dialogue with the GoP cuts across all three arenas of policy: agenda setting, development and implementation, and all the roles of monitor, advocate, innovator and service provider, that cut across these. As a research tool for organising data and analysing it, the matrix can be used to explore a single policy episode, as can be done with TRC’s policy dialogue with the GoP in order to develop a National Curriculum for ECE. It can also explore the work of a single citizen organisation generally, or explore work within a single country, region or substantive issue178.

Table 1: TRC as POLICY ENTREPRENEURS: OCCUPYING SPACE IN THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>MONITOR</th>
<th>ADVOCATE</th>
<th>INNOVATOR</th>
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<tr>
<td>(Summary of role and example provided)</td>
<td>Ensure government does what it is supposed to. Keep track of implementation. Note events that may have an impact on shaping of policy. Keep policy ‘honest’.</td>
<td>Pro/ lobby government agencies to do what the NGO considers is the right thing. The mouthpiece of interests otherwise not represented in the policy stream. Building strategic alliances and public support e.g. information &amp; public education</td>
<td>Suggest and show how things might be done differently - policy value. Distinctive contribution. Testing innovation. Catalyst for social change.</td>
<td>Acting directly to do what in NGO’s opinion needs to be done, especially for the disadvantaged. Services to government as advisors/ consultants. Buffer between state policy and service delivery.</td>
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<td>ARENA</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGENDA SETTING</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting Priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Highlight importance of issues and interests with which the NGO most closely identifies.</td>
<td>· Collect &amp; publish information to shape policy agenda. Identify problems</td>
<td>· Pro-action: action FOR: · Mobilising public opinion/ media through credibility · Negotiating/ building capacity/ mobilising resources and training-opportunities.</td>
<td>· Seeding role: demonstrating, publishing ideas and encouraging spread e.g. participatory planning</td>
<td>· Called in to prepare process/ conferences/ agenda setting events</td>
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<td>2. Decide issues for policy focus.</td>
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<td>3. Prioritisation is key, given limited resources such as time and money.</td>
<td>· TRC projects show that kachchi children are neglected and also raise issues of quality.</td>
<td>· Negotiating with government, joint ECE Seminar · Building capacity · Creating NEW space for ECE · 1990 TRC case study for EFA · Annual edu-tainment events · All publications: children’s magazine on environment, newsletter · News releases and articles e.g. ECE Curriculum Launch · Use data from ECEP as base for policy advocacy · Sharing experiences at meetings/ conferences e.g. poster presentation on ECCD, UNICEF review of programmes</td>
<td>· TRC Case Study for World Conference on EFA (1990) · ICPD project: shows what is possible in government schools. · ECE Seminar - novel approach. · 1991 ECE project · Annual edu-tainment events · Government pre-primary painting event · Showing how joint events with the government can work · Developing training manuals, videos, booklets, etc. Various publications</td>
<td>· ECE curriculum review process · Advice to government; called to various donor/ government conferences (e.g. World Bank) · National Advisory Board for Education – Education Committee on Private Education · GoS Elementary Think Tank</td>
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<th>ROLE</th>
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<td>DEVELOPMENT</td>
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<td>Choosing from alternative options</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Policy takes formal (sometimes legal) binding shape.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Which option for desired effect? What approach?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Monitoring of project in government and DMC schools. Regular meetings and reports.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mobilise government teachers, head teachers and officials.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enabling government staff to be the advocates.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meeting with Provincial Education Secretary, Additional Secretary, GoS, and Federal Minister of Education, on kachchi / early years education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECE Seminar.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use of GoP Education Sector Reforms and EFA as validation and catalyst</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TRC named as resource in GoP Education Sector Reforms 2001-2004.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECE curriculum accepted as GoP National Early Childhood Education Curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increasing requests for TRC training and assistance to develop quality ECE.</td>
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<td>Joint ECE Seminar.</td>
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<td>Joint curriculum reviews.</td>
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<td>PITE Academic Advisory Committee, GoS.</td>
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<td>EFA Meetings (UNICEF and GoP).</td>
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<td>Think tank on Education 2002.</td>
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<td>ROLE</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLICY IMPLEMENTATION</td>
<td>• Document violations</td>
<td>• Protesting against particular policy implementation / choices</td>
<td>• Nurturing ‘strategic knowledge’, e.g. research.</td>
<td>• Use NGOs to implement - strategic value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitor as part of implementation</td>
<td>• Feedback - can change decisions</td>
<td>• Technical innovation meeting grassroot needs, not forgetting traditional practices.</td>
<td>• Fill a void: government responsibility but cannot do efficiently or effectively</td>
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<td>Action from intent</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Community/ government mobilisation - people do</td>
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<td>• Broad policy statements often turn into projects.</td>
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<td>• Ensure policy tasks are carried out.</td>
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<td>• Not clear-cut, often action reformulates policy.</td>
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<td>Broad policy statements</td>
<td>• Monitoring performance of projects teachers, students’ learning</td>
<td>• Adhering to principle beliefs with regard to ECE curriculum content</td>
<td>• Activity-based and child-centred teaching and learning in selected</td>
<td>• ICPD, ECEP and PEP programme implementation in government and DMC schools.</td>
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<td>often turn into projects.</td>
<td>and school environment measured and observed.</td>
<td>and approach during discussions.</td>
<td>government schools.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Monitoring formation and training of PTAs.</td>
<td>• Being flexible, where this can help without losing quality.</td>
<td>• Starting from where the teacher and child are.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Data provides base for policy advocacy.</td>
<td>• Advocating for implementation, monitoring and quality control processes.</td>
<td>• Publications as dialogue between teachers and other professionals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Developing monitoring tools and guidance for supervisors for</td>
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<td>• Culturally and gender sensitive, relevant materials.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>classroom assessment.</td>
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<td>• Introduction of phonic approach to reading.</td>
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<td>• Negotiating with the government with regard to and implementation of</td>
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<td>• Research on kachchi to class 1 transition.</td>
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<td>the National ECE Curriculum.</td>
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<td>ECE Teachers’ Guide and Workshop Leaders’ Manual.</td>
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Table 1 (Continued)
Steps in the Process of Policy Dialogue?

It would be nice, useful and perhaps ‘neat’ to be able to outline the sequence of steps of the policy dialogue with the GoP that were taken by TRC or that emerged with hindsight. This study has observed TRC’s journey of working with the government. However, looking back at the evolution of the partnership and the acceptance of the importance of ECE and a national curriculum, I feel it is not really possible to state that the first step is to do this and then the second to do that, etc. as there is no sure route or sure steps in the process. The process is affected by so many internal and external factors relating to global and national environments and change; the nature of relationships and partnerships; the actual personalities involved in this; the opportunities and challenges thrown up at different times; those opportunities created; and the traditional and changing culture of the concerned organisations. In the next section, I do attempt, however, to provide some guidance that can be taken from TRC’s experience, but this can only serve as a guide. Each NGO partnership with the government on a particular substantive issue is bound to be unique in many ways. Fullan tells us that we cannot ‘control’ the complexity that is a feature of our times, but we can understand better how it works in order to develop ways to exploit its power, so that we can unleash and put to great use the ‘energies, passion and commitment of people heaven bent on making a difference and getting more meaning and satisfaction from their daily lives’.

Summary

The importance of involving civil society in the formation of public policy is increasingly recognised by the development community, but active efforts to engage people at all levels, such as teachers and students, are rare. In Pakistan, policy-making and research is a coveted domain dominated by a quantitative approach, bearing little relation to the reality of schools. Despite the importance of primary education in the EFA targets, there is little research in this area. Assumptions are made that top-down policies will automatically and easily be implemented. Despite this scenario, TRC, though a small NGO, was able to influence policy and use the valued work of teachers, pupils, and the wider educational community as a basis for this. It has managed to put ECE onto the educational map of Pakistan, and furthermore place teachers and pupils at the centre of this. The historical achievement of this cannot be underestimated.

Using Najam’s two-dimensional matrix analysis framework, we can map, describe and analyse the way TRC has occupied policy space. As a ‘policy entrepreneur’ it has worked in all three policy areas of agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation. In each of these areas it has acted in the roles of monitor, advocate, innovator and service provider. Thus, through its policy dialogue, TRC had raised the issue of neglected kachchi children, mobilised the educational community to address the issue, worked with teachers and children to develop and pilot the curriculum, and negotiated with the national government to have the curriculum accepted as the National Curriculum Early Childhood Education. However, TRC’s engagement with the Government continues, in striving for the effective implementation of the Curriculum on a national scale, and seeking to address issues of quality and monitoring.

It would be beneficial to be able to outline the sequence of steps necessary to undertake successful policy dialogue with the government, but this is not really possible. There are so many contextual and influencing factors, constraints and opportunities that cannot be fully planned for in the complexity of our times. However, the next chapter does attempt to give some guidelines that can be taken from TRC’s experience in order to try to better understand and be prepared for working with the government and grassroot educators to influence educational policy for the better.

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TRC: APPROACHES, LEARNING AND SUCCESSES
TRC brings out the “husn” in us.

The TRC Approach

In studying the approach TRC uses in its partnership with the government and its everyday work in the arena of pre-primary and primary education, it seems hard to separate its approach from its learning, and both its learning and approach from its successes. All three are interlinked and each constantly evolves in relation to the other. In this section, I have looked at the approach that TRC uses that has led and leads to its success, and why it is useful to learn from a study of TRC, even when we know that we cannot fully replicate the circumstances or determine the environment, and therefore cannot ensure that using the same approaches would guarantee success. We can only hope to understand what factors may have led to TRC’s success, and take note of approaches that may work elsewhere, and principles that would stand us in good stead within a working partnership with the government.

What then are the approaches and processes which have enabled TRC to succeed in an area that is hard to tackle in Pakistan, and gain the credibility it has with the Government of Pakistan? What made it possible for a small NGO to establish a curriculum framework as the National Curriculum for ECE?

Courage for the Seemingly Impossible

TRC’s initial reaction to its ability to work with the government was one that began with a healthy degree of scepticism, but its first major experience in the form of the ‘Initiating Change through Professional Development’ project showed what could be done to improve teacher-performance. As we have seen, one of TRC’s goals within the subsequent SIDP Early Childhood Education programme is ‘to systematically learn about educational reform and through this to contribute to policy dialogue and educational reform in Pakistan’. Like many educational projects, donors put pressure on a five-year project to be ‘successful’ and show ‘results’ of proven policy dialogue according to the Logical Framework Analysis. These results seem impossible to achieve within the time available, but are demanded in this age of accountability (a fact that ignores the length of time it has taken for education to change in the North). Institutionalising the processes and results of learning has proved difficult to achieve in practice for many donors. This may be why many attempts by NGOs to scale up programmes and thus to venture ‘into policy-influence and policy-making’ have met with only partial success. However, TRC has managed to enter the policy arena and place learning at the heart of its work.

From TRC, we can learn how a small NGO works with a distant, hierarchical and bureaucratic government, and with grassroot teachers, in a complementary relationship. It has established credibility and gained the trust of the government, which respects its work, negotiation skills and dedication. Here we have an NGO entering the policy arena, not having the slightest idea of the processes of developing a curriculum to be accepted by the Federal Government. Preparing the curriculum with teachers, getting it reviewed, and commented upon, and refined by a team of practitioners, seemed a relatively easy start compared to the delicate manoeuvring among the corridors of the federal and provincial ministries and the Bureau of Curriculum, all of whom jealously guard their arena of curriculum control and policy-making. The policy process often seemed authoritarian and secretive, and showed a lack of policy literacy among those outside the corridors. The achievement of TRC cannot be overstated. The Government of Pakistan has never before owned a curriculum that was prepared by teachers working with an NGO. This achievement is thus a remarkable innovation within the bureaucratic system of education in Pakistan.

A study of the TRC gives us profound insight into the lives of teachers and the relationship with TRC staff as mentors and facilitators. As we have seen, the teachers and supervisors ‘own’ the TRC project and proudly claim that they created the curriculum that the Federal Government of Pakistan has accepted. A special effort is made to educate...
those in management positions, given their crucial role in being able to hinder or enable change. Yet, those at the other end of the school hierarchy, such as the peons and cleaners, are also not forgotten, and are involved in change efforts. Such ownership stands in sharp contrast to the lack of ownership and true partnership for the initiatives for the Social Action Programme. Crossley cites Samoff who states that effective educational reforms need strong local roots and the participation of stakeholders, and that ‘unless the beneficiaries of the reform become its bearers, it is likely to be still-born’.

The sheer determination and commitment of TRC and ‘the courage to undertake the seemingly impossible’ underlies its success. However, luck also had a part to play in the changing political circumstances with the representation of NGO personalities among Ministers, particularly the Minister of Education, and hence a degree of softening towards NGOs. Also the international EFA agenda calling for a review of progress, acted as a spur to find organisations that work well in the area of early childhood education. In addition, we have seen TRC is named as a resource organisation within the GoP’s Action Plan for the Education Sector Reforms, and information about it was presented in an international review of EFA.

Making It Happen

For TRC, success means doing really well and making it happen. There is conviction despite human and resource constraints, and a desire to achieve excellence, whatever the circumstances. The ‘go for it’ attitude of the Senior Manager balances well with the more cautious (but still daring) attitude of the Director, the latter having learnt to trust the former’s ideas, however seemingly outrageous, and somehow finding the budget for actualising them. Such flights into achieving the seemingly impossible include a gathering of 5,000 school children from Karachi’s public and private sectors, to give a pledge for saving the earth on Earth Day.

Seeking Participation and Breaking Down Barriers

TRC takes pains to make its programme as participatory as possible, never losing an opportunity to build the skills of teachers and government personnel, and to bring together people from different sectors of education and different levels of power. An example that epitomises this is the 1999 National Seminar: From Awareness to Action. As we have seen, this was planned to be as interactive as possible, with people from different sectors and positions encouraged to mix, and with the project schools and other stakeholders leading and demonstrating in sessions. All participants observed kachchi classrooms which compared favourably seen against international standards, surprising participants who are used to Pakistan being at the bottom of most international scales.

Government attendance was unusually pleasing, given that one of the two days was a holiday, and that government attendance at such functions tends to dwindle over the course of proceedings. Through the Seminar, TRC raised confidence in the ability of government schools to develop good quality practice and proved wrong popular myths about government teachers that centre around a teacher deficit discourse.

One of the aims of TRC is to ‘bridge the gap between less privileged schools in the public and private sectors and well-resourced private schools, by sharing resources, information and expertise’, the gap which can be seen to be a legacy from colonial education systems. The gap between high-class education for the global elite and well-resourced private schools, by sharing resources, information and expertise, bridge the gap between less privileged schools in the public and private sectors, to give a pledge for saving the earth on Earth Day.

For an interesting study on teacher motivation, the teacher deficit discourse and the making of policy in developing countries, see VSO (2002); Valuing Teachers: What Makes Teachers Tick? A Policy Research Report on Teachers’ Motivation in Developing Countries, London, VSO.

191 For an interesting study on teacher motivation, the teacher deficit discourse and the making of policy in developing countries, see VSO (2002); Valuing Teachers: What Makes Teachers Tick? A Policy Research Report on Teachers’ Motivation in Developing Countries, London, VSO.
programmes, and pressure to adopt international priorities in order to obtain funds\textsuperscript{194}. TRC puts teachers from the private and public sector together at every useful opportunity, to try to change the traditional climate of competition to one of co-operation.

**Putting the Teacher and Child First**

TRC’s sound and unshifting attitudes and values pervade all its work. While it believes in the importance of its work and has a high commitment to good quality, it puts the teacher and the child at the forefront at all times. It asks ‘What difference is this making to the child?’. Teachers are viewed as equals who are to be empowered to take on decision-making for themselves. TRC, as the facilitating NGO, does not wish to be given special treatment - it would prefer to ‘become part of the furniture rather than Chief Guest’\textsuperscript{195}. This humble attitude is a strength, enabling TRC to take people as they are, where they are. In the words of the former Secretary, Education, of the Government of Sindh, staff members of the TRC ‘mix with all and have no airs and graces’\textsuperscript{196}.

The element of knowing that one’s product is good is mixed with a degree of humility and respect. The Senior Manager of TRC has taken great pains ‘not to be an entity’ with regard to getting access to schools. All teachers express an interest in her social background and ask about it. The manager being aware that living in Defence (a well-off area in Karachi), having taught in Karachi Grammar School (an ‘elitist’ school), and having lived a relatively sheltered life, could form a barrier for effective communication with government teachers. However, wanting to be honest would lead to giving slightly veiled answers e.g. ‘I live near x’, at least initially. A conscious desire to understand what the teachers may go through, has also led the Senior Manager to share similar experiences in order to be able to relate to teachers better. Examples include travelling on public transport, being jostled in a queue, or missing buses because she cannot get onto them.

With regard to children, instead of seeing kachchi children, in corners and corridors, laboriously copying out the letters of the Urdu alphabet again and again, we have the rare sight of children smiling, laughing and singing and engaged in meaningful learning activities in TRC project schools. The children ‘seem to have a glow in their eyes’\textsuperscript{197}. An even rarer sight is a teacher on all fours pretending to be cat, delighting the children. Children are keen to come to school and refuse to miss it. The standard of education is such that parents have taken their children out of private schools and into those government schools. Teachers are proud to be able to compare their government school favourably with the private sector, and are able to share their learning with private school teacher counterparts. Livingstone, cited in Broadfoot\textsuperscript{198}, states that successful education is when the ‘school sends out children with the desire for knowledge and some idea of how to acquire and use it’.

**From Practice to Policy**

By concentrating on teachers and children in the classroom, the whole school community, and the head teachers and supervisors responsible for monitoring, TRC starts from the needs and experience of the teachers and children, to gradually build up expertise to develop a curriculum that is trialled with young children and which eventually becomes policy for Early Childhood Education. We thus move from practice to policy, rather than the usual top-down policy to practice model, where policy is made by far and distant people and passed onto schools. This is somewhat reminiscent of Dyer who uses a ‘backward mapping’ approach that starts with the point and place to the Economic Support Fund, of which a fraction is for education. The aid was said to be conditional on Pakistan meeting international and US concerns.


\textsuperscript{195} b) In 2003, President Musharraf returned from the USA with $3 billion for aid, of which 50% was to be spent on defence and the rest go to the Economic Support Fund, of which a fraction is for education. The aid was said to be conditional on Pakistan meeting international and US concerns. News International, on Sunday, 6 July 2003, Islamabad.

\textsuperscript{196} Interview with Senior Management of TRC, September 2002.

\textsuperscript{197} Meeting with former Secretary, Education, GoS, 1 Oct. 2002.


Passionate Commitment

Interviews with and observation of TRC brings to mind the concepts of ‘emotion’, ‘passion’ and ‘commitment’. Once convinced, TRC management are committed to putting something into action, and put their hearts and souls into it. There is, however, always a healthy degree of scepticism, a ‘let’s wait and see what happens’. There is also questioning, and never-ending reflection, and analysis on what happened and why. Could it have been done differently? What have we learnt from this?

Constraints and difficulties are overcome with persistence, much soul-searching, and strategic planning. Ways are found around obstacles, and an optimistic and patient stance always sought. TRC has learnt how to deal with the government, TRC, while respectful, will still be provocative as well as saying the ‘right’ things. Management is not subservient and remains true to the issue, always having TRC’s mission in mind - that is, their moral purpose. Nevertheless, TRC’s idealism and conviction that what they are doing is right and their persistence and tenacity in trying has proved successful in the end.

Much of TRC’s approach with the government sector officials, schools, teachers and children is heavily dictated by the personality, attitudes, experience and professionalism of the Senior Manager who holds within her enormous resources of skill and determination. She set out purposefully to prove that government teachers can teach children in the way that Karachi Grammar School teachers do. She felt that children need to be given the same opportunities, and teachers shown how to improve with regard to changing attitudes and improving their interaction with children. Her previous experience with Lyari Street Schools showed that children ‘needed a break’ and that teachers were the way to it. The Senior Manager ensured that every teacher was observed and given personal feedback in order to improve the learning experience of the children.

Her passion and commitment worked very well as a counter balance to the sceptism of the Director that success was possible when working with the government sector. The Senior Manager believed that teachers needed love and support. If teachers are not treated well, how can they treat children well? She knew that teachers needed to feel good about themselves first - ‘That had to change’. She thought it was completely wrong that teachers be blamed when they have needs that are ignored. They needed to develop skills of how to interact with, and change the way they deal with, children. On the other hand, the sceptical Director of TRC felt that the TRC Board would need to be given tangible evidence that working with the government ‘worked’ and was not too difficult. She thought the degree of success of the ICPD programme would be the deciding factor for TRC’s continuing work and focus on the government sector. To her surprise, it proved successful beyond expectations.

The ICPD proved in fact to be a watershed for TRC’s work with the government, the understanding of which was hitherto quite limited. There were frustrations around which the contrasting roles of the Director and the Senior Manager proved useful. An example would be the response to the growing frustration with teachers in a workshop leader training, where some participants were clearly not interested. The attitude of the Director was that ‘some hard truths needed to be said’. TRC did not want to waste time and asked teachers not to continue if they were not interested. Some did in fact leave. Whereas the stance of the Senior Manager would be one of providing ‘positive strokes’ and being encouraging and understanding, the Director’s attitude would be one of ‘get real’ and saying something to make people want to prove her wrong, or even become very angry. What is clear is that a balance between both approaches was and is needed. Teachers are now more aware of what happens in TRC training, and further, they are not provided the travel allowance and daily allowances (TA/ DA) that form part of the extrinsic motivation for such courses.

Nurturing Relationships

The development of relationships with teachers was critical to success, and TRC reports that the very first and second sessions of training were crucial for a good start. The Senior Manager made a real effort to conduct

training in Urdu, the national language and medium of instruction in many schools of Pakistan (but not her mother tongue), despite the difficulties this raised for her initially. She would be quite honest with the teachers, apologising for the standard of her Urdu and her limited knowledge, which would immediately gain their empathy. She would ask for their help, showing her vulnerability from the very beginning as opposed to adopting the customary role of the ‘expert’ about to impart her knowledge. She and the teachers thus started on the path of learning to trust and empathise. She would then explicitly build on this relationship. The relationship of the Senior Manager with the Director was important for providing the opportunities to share frustrations and the ‘little highs’ during the breaks or after the sessions. The Director served as a sounding board, sharing learning and giving feedback. They also planned together in the beginning and the Director was involved in the detail of initial workshops, doubling as a facilitator if needed.

The Director too would play her part in gently challenging attitudes. An example would be the Director herself serving tea in the first decision-makers workshop, which would make teachers uncomfortable, given her status as a Director. Here she would be getting them to question their attitudes and explore their feelings through consciously breaking deep stereotypes that exist in the traditional hierarchy of Pakistan. Other provoking events would be staged or allowed to be witnessed. The Senior Manager and the Director would disagree, showing explicitly that it was OK to have disagreements, even with one’s ‘superior’ and that disagreements needed to be discussed. Thoughts would be consciously provoked in response to ultimate questions such as what one would do if one knew that one was going to die. Instead of the customary response of reading the Qur’an or praying, the Senior Manager would respond that she would meet her friends. This would stimulate questioning and exploratory reflection. However, to embark on such an approach, a climate of trust and a safe environment is crucial. One way of doing this would be for the Senior Manager to share her own life through a life-line discussion. At all times, valuing and respecting teachers as people with feelings and lives of value, is paramount. Asking questions about them, and giving positive reinforcement, helped to build confidence as individuals, as a group, and as teachers.

TRC seems to be constantly aware of power differentials, believing in teachers being equals, and always tries to play down its own power in the process of empowering others. Acting with humility and respect and yet determination, TRC gently challenges attitudes and beliefs, while being culturally respectful and sensitive. According to Edwards and Sen, sustainable development requires changes in power relations and demands “constant attention to personal change and a series of reversals in attitudes and behaviour”. Further, personal/inner change and social/outer change are inseparably linked. If we do not develop caring and compassion in our personal behaviour, then we will not be able to display them in our professional lives; but such change requires ‘a disciplined process of selfreflection and contemplation about the values and purposes of our lives, and the desire and willingness to change ourselves’. Thus, TRC does not separate the personal self from the professional, and indeed, believes that the two cannot be divorced. Goleman tells us that leaders who developed their range and depth of emotional intelligences, found that ‘they find themselves bringing home heightened levels of self-awareness and empathic understanding, self-mastery, and attuned relationships’.

**Holistic Learning**

TRC believes that learning is a holistic process, in which listening is essential, and the raising of teachers’ self-esteem crucial. Its mission shows that it aspires to contribute to improving the quality of children’s learning through ‘changing teachers’ perceptions of the learning process’. TRC provides a safe environment for trying things out, and learning to criticise each other constructively, believing that commitment follows competence. It caters to the affective as well as cognitive, and has high expectations of teachers. We have heard from teachers and supervisors about how TRC has instigated both professional and personal attitudinal change, that has impacted on their life at home. The process of teaching/mentoring/facilitating and learning seems to draw out something...
from deep within the teachers, so that they start to believe in themselves and their capacity to change their teaching and personal lives. TRC acknowledges that educational change is slow and starts with small changes, e.g. getting chanting to stop in 10 schools, moving on to no physical punishment and no abusive language. It learnt very fast how to work towards success. It looked for people with some ‘spark’ in order to have potential success, that others would want to replicate. The rewards the teachers get from the children, and the support from head teachers and supervisors, spurs them along. They become emotionally committed to TRC for having instigated this change, and are keen to keep learning, and devote energy and resources to help themselves and the children they teach to succeed. This is, we must remind ourselves, within the regional context where the morale and commitment of teachers ‘depends to a large extent on the ways in which their recruitment, initial training, posting, in-service training, transfer, promotion, appraisal, administration and professional supervision’ are conducted.

TRC consciously seeks to empower teachers. It puts them at the forefront of training and seminars, in order to develop them professionally, so that they acquire new skills and increase in morale. TRC shows teachers that they can speak up in front of superiors, and to do this it pays tremendous personal attention to the development of individuals and their self-confidence. The teachers discovered that it was O K to say ‘I don’t understand’ as a freeing and starting point. Activities such as making the poetry video, gave teachers a ‘new sense of self’ after completion. Teachers were so committed to the development of the draft curriculum, that they put in all the hours needed, showing that ‘people change when they are emotionally engaged and committed’

In their excitement within the partnership with TRC, educators would just turn up at TRC and expect attention. Despite being very busy, the TRC management would just stop everything for them. The Senior Manager felt that she ‘couldn’t let them down’, despite the fact that she had to therefore make up for work doing extra hours and working on Sundays. The educators were eager for feedback to improve - a very different stance from when they first met TRC and were used to negative feedback. TRC felt that counselling teachers during the change process was a necessary part of the relationship, as they had no other outlet. Listening was such a crucial skill. The teachers in turn kept an open door for TRC members. On occasion, they would challenge TRC; for example, teachers in one school wanted the Senior Manager to give feedback about individuals in front of all the other teachers, so that they could all learn. She felt some discomfort in doing this, but the teachers were in fact ahead of her in this, and were quite comfortable, thus showing their ease with the TRC philosophy of developing firm but fair and caring relationships with teachers.

Broadfoot211 reminds us of the key role that perceived relevance and emotion play in learning. It may be attention to this that enables TRC to help teachers reach the ‘flow’ of ‘optimal experience’212 whereby intrinsic motivation carries them along to more opportunities for new learning and experiences. Elsewhere Broadfoot also tells us that cultural influences are very strong, and that while teachers may change aspects of their practice, their deeply rooted values underlying their professional behaviour do not change. Thus, the key to effective policy change is ‘finding ways of changing teachers’ own thinking’213.

The spirit of action or ‘practitioner’ research pervades TRC’s practice of getting teachers to reflect and document their work and feelings, which can include ‘personal feelings of exhilaration, depression, excitement, frustration,
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etc’. TRC recognises that change involves all sorts of emotions, including anxiety. Smith calls for greater training and recognition of the potential of teachers as researchers in Pakistan. The rich data collected through TRC project’s research element, was called ‘a gift to a research student’ by Canadian linkage partners working with TRC. Enabling Pakistan teacher-researchers to analyse it, would make it even richer.

Becoming a Learning Organisation

What is also significant about TRC is, that in seeking to change the culture of schools, it also concentrates on its own development into a learning organisation where all in the organisation are expected to continually learn by doing, give of their best, reflect, and to model and encourage this behaviour in teachers, head teachers, etc. with whom it works. This is in contrast to Smillie & Hailey citing Fowler, who states that a universal weakness of development NGOs, is a ‘limited capacity to learn, adapt, and continually improve the quality of what they do’. Regular TRC study circles, and staff meetings have been replicated in project schools, and journals of reflection are encouraged, thus creating the beginnings for learning schools. Jarvis tells us that reflective learning itself is a sign of the times and enables us to live in a rapidly changing society. The future is full of uncertainties but ‘one of the few certainties seems to be a consensus that the promotion of more and better learning will be central to it’. One of TRC’s objectives is to develop teachers as life-long learners and recognising the centrality of this concept, to raise the status and skills of teachers, and the status of the profession.

TRC staff members are also first and foremost learners themselves, who practise what they preach, and are not afraid that they do not have all the answers. TRC accepts people where they are, and helps them to move on, but with realistic targets. Teachers are given liberty by being encouraged to say what they feel, given equality by being valued and learning to value others, and a sense of community where caring for each other dissolves fear. It has learned that as well as being a ‘doer’ and being an ‘achiever’ who gets things done, it also needs to be seen as a ‘thinker’. This has led to a gradual increase in documentation, reflection, monitoring and evaluation, and research elements attached to programmes and institutional development.

Leading with Emotional Intelligence

In pulling all the strands together, we can see that the skilled leadership of the TRC has been crucial in developing and maintaining its approach, enabling it to learn and earn success. It makes heroes of the teachers by inspiring them from within. TRC awakens a commitment to improve that comes from deep within, enables people to realise professional responsibilities and make meaningful changes in their everyday lives, and enables them to become leaders too. Effective leadership, as summarised by Fullan, is that which has an explicit ‘making-a-difference’ sense of purpose; uses strategies that mobilise many people to tackle tough problems; is held accountable by measured and debatable indicators of success; and is ultimately assessed by the extent to which it awakens people’s intrinsic commitment - in effect:

‘none other than the mobilizing of everyone’s sense of moral purpose’.

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217Senge (1990) defines the learning organisation as one in which ‘people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together’, p. 5.
The senior management of TRC combines the more positive styles of leadership described by Goleman\textsuperscript{223}, namely the visionary, coaching, affiliative and democratic and, to a lesser extent, the not so positive but sometimes needed pacesetting and commanding styles\textsuperscript{224}. They display an intuitive and learned use of key emotional intelligences, attached to the personal and social competence domains, needed to employ these particular styles of leadership as appropriate. Table 2 lists the individual competencies within the personal and social domains that TRC management uses, and that institutions can learn to develop. Hence TRC has managed to lead in its work, with educators from the government sector, in such a way that creates ‘resonance - a reservoir of positivity that frees the best in people’\textsuperscript{225}.

\textsuperscript{223}Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. & McKee, A. (2002): \textit{The New Leaders: Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results.}

\textsuperscript{224}Fullan, M. (2001): cites Goleman (2000:82-83) in explaining these in terms of statements: The visionary (called authoritative in this earlier version of Goleman’s work), would say ‘come with me’; the coach ‘try this’; the affiliative style: ‘people come first’; the democratic: ‘what do you think?’; the pacesetter: ‘do as I do, now’ and the commanding style (called coercive here): ‘do what I tell you’.

\textsuperscript{225}ibid., p. ix.
Table 2: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DOMAINS AND ASSOCIATED COMPETENCIES

PERSONAL COMPETENCE: These competencies determine how we manage ourselves

SELF-AWARENESS

- Emotional self-awareness: Reading one’s own emotions and recognizing their impact; using ‘gut sense’ to guide decisions
- Accurate self-assessment: Knowing one’s strengths and limits
- Self-confidence: A sound sense of one’s self-worth and capabilities

SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Emotional self-control: Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control
- Transparency: Displaying honesty and integrity; trustworthiness
- Adaptability: Flexibility in adapting to changing situations or overwhelming obstacles
- Achievement: The drive to improve performance to meet inner standards of excellence
- Initiative: Readiness to act and seize opportunities
- Optimism: Seeing the upside in events

SOCIAL COMPETENCE: These capabilities determine how we manage relationships

SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Empathy: Sensing others’ emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking interest in their concerns
- Organizational awareness: Reading the currents, decision networks, and politics at the organizational level
- Service: Recognizing and meeting follower, client or customer needs

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

- Inspirational leadership: Guiding and motivating with a compelling vision
- Influence: Wielding a range of tactics for persuasion
- Developing others: Bolstering others’ abilities through feedback and guidance
- Change catalyst: Initiating, managing, leading in a new direction
- Conflict management: Resolving disagreements
- Building bonds: Cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships
- Teamwork and collaboration: Co-operation and team building

Learning from a Study of TRC

After relating the story of TRC, one may well question what can be gained from learning about the success of a particular organization within a particular culture at a particular time and history in Pakistan; when one cannot reproduce the exact conditions. Although this study cannot claim to have been planned as a thorough piece of research, it is a case study looking at a particular aspect of an institution, from which we hope to be able to learn.

There is the general criticism that there is a lack of connection between research and practice, and that research needs to be more authoritative, relevant and accessible as well as cost-effective and valuable by having an impact on policy and practice. Vulliamy tells us there is widespread agreement that research should usefully, inform the process of educational policy-making, especially in developing countries where resources are scarce. Research then has to be proved to be useful, but policy-makers are often far removed from researchers, and both are usually distant from practitioners.

The case study seems basically to be a qualitative research strategy. It is an in-depth study of one case, be that an individual, group or institution, using the whole spectrum of methods, and taking in the whole national setting and local context, and the intersection of conditions. It allows for a more intensive study, at the grassroots level, and can answer relevant questions that have not hitherto been asked. As the cases are so unique, however, the ability to make generalisations from them has been controversial, and the reader is said to be left with the task of seeing how they fit in with their own situation. However, the use of ‘fuzzy generalisations’ may prove more useful for the policy arena.

In order to improve and replicate the potential success of educational development in developing countries, it is argued that we need to understand the processes of education and particular innovations, and the interface between policy and practice. Stenhouse, cited by Crossley & Vulliamy, states that comparative and international education research needs to develop a better grounded representation of the daily educational reality, by careful study of particular cases. Such studies can ‘tutor our judgement’ and provide ‘insight rather than laws’ as the basis of understanding.

There has been generally remarkably little research on the pre-primary and primary sector in developing countries, the lowest rung of the ladder of policy implementation, despite its importance within the EFA agenda. In addition, the donor community seem unable (unwilling?) to theorise on the failure of development theory and add to the discussion. The educational researcher needs to develop a better grounded representation of the daily educational reality, by careful study of particular cases. Such studies can ‘tutor our judgement’ and provide ‘insight rather than laws’ as the basis of understanding.

References:

'developed countries' and uses the ‘tacit donor-recipient’ paradigm\textsuperscript{239}, that seems to pervade North-South relations. Little\textsuperscript{240} in a review of articles in the Comparative Education journal between 1977 and 1998, shows that only 35% of the titles published were on Asia, and of these 107 articles only 2 were on Pakistan.

It can be seen from the above that it is thus important to fill the gap in Pakistan of more relevant and high quality research, looking at the process of change and projects that are successful. The nature of donor-funded projects inevitably limit the sustainability of programmes that must end, through lack of funding, or changing donor priorities, that may or may not match those of the national government or NGO sector. Smillie & Thompson noted this concern in 1995, in relation to TRC, along with the need to disseminate the progress of projects more widely:

\begin{quote}
'It must be a cause of concern that such projects, which have already demonstrated their effectiveness, are allowed to either end, or be at risk, because of a lack of external funding and support. There is no question about the need for much wider dissemination of such projects in the government sector.'
\end{quote}

The approach and the story of TRC’s partnership with the government, related above, provides us with lessons we can learn from studying the case of the TRC. We learn how a small NGO manages, against all odds, to persuade the national government to adopt a curriculum for Early Childhood Education that has been developed by teachers for teachers, when a huge government and donor Social Action Programme has proved to be such a disaster. We hear the voices of the stakeholders, and can follow the development of the projects, and the nurturing of trusting relationships. We could, therefore, from this study of TRC gain some insights that may ‘tutor our judgements’ in any future partnerships with the government.

Possible Guidelines for Working in Partnership with the Government to Improve the Quality of Education:

Is it then possible to pull out some guidelines, for those organisations wishing to work successfully with the government, in raising the quality of education in Pakistan? In trying to draw together some of the insights and learning that we can extract from this study of TRC’s partnership with the government, I offer the following as possible guidelines for other organisations and educators embarking on, or reflecting on how to build, positive and successful relations with the government.

❖ Preparing the Ground

- Conduct a thorough need analysis with the stakeholders - know the background, facts and issues.
- Try to find policies, national or international development agreements, that lend strength to your cause, and provide windows of opportunity. Timing is very important.
- Find research that backs your cause. Know the content of what you do in order to advocate well.
- Plan well but allow time to be flexible and responsive to opportunities. Include some funds for possible unforeseen opportunities for policy dialogue.

❖ Passionate Commitment

- Be passionately committed to the cause. Does it engage your emotions?
- Be clear about what it is you want to achieve and why. What difference will it make to children?
- Be aware of and prepared for the huge investment required - energy, stamina, time, emotion, as well as money.
- Remain optimistic and persevere with patience.

Establishing Credibility with the Government

- Develop a history of quiet, effective working with the government.
- Pilot and create success in a school/s that has been tried and tested and can be shown to others to prove it works. Start at the point of policy-implementation gap - the teachers.
- Let the government take the limelight - empower others.

Understanding Government Systems

- Seek allies in the government at all levels, people who care. Network and find out as much as you can about government systems and structures.
- Build a rapport with those in leadership positions who can navigate and guide people and results.
- Try to negotiate the stability of posts held by the government personnel that you are working with.

Nurturing Relationships

- Nurture relationships with care - they form the foundation of partnerships.
- Gently challenge hierarchical barriers while being respectful of culture. Be sensitive.
- Be aware of equity issues and the way power plays in relationships.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for all partners.
- Involve all stakeholders from bottom to top - the whole school community from the peons to the managers and parents, as well as senior, middle and district government officials.
- Develop a safe learning environment.
- Build the capacity of others and give them opportunities to practise new skills.

Making It Happen

- Have high standards - but be realistic, knowing that sustainable change takes time.
- Don’t take on too much and other large, demanding projects. Prioritise and focus.
- Aim for excellence and be convinced you can make it happen.
- Use the media and events wisely to publicise your cause.
- Develop varied strategies to solve problems. Be flexible if possible.

Becoming a Learning Organisation

- Work on becoming a learning organisation, developing an open culture that values people, who are encouraged to develop professionally and personally.
- Reflect critically, analyse and learn. Apply new learning, and share learning with the wider educational community.
- Create support networks for all involved, including yourself.
- Co-ordinate and network with other players in the field.
- Set up monitoring, evaluation and research systems in a participatory manner.
- Allow for failure. Much learning can emerge.

Putting the Teacher and Child First

- Don’t compromise on quality, as far as possible.
- Value teachers, value teachers, value teachers - and don’t forget the children!
- Ask ‘What difference is this making to the child?’
Developing Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Skills

- Develop key leadership skills. Enhance the range and depth of emotional intelligences.
- Develop teachers, head teachers and supervisors as leaders of change.

Summary

TRC’s approaches, learning, and successes are all intertwined, and evolve in relation to each other. Understanding the factors that have led to its success in working with the government may assist others wishing to replicate such success. The lack of institutional learning from donor projects may be why NGOs have not been able to scale up successful smaller projects and influence policy-making. However, TRC has placed learning at the heart of its approach. It shows us how a small NGO can work with a distant, hierarchical and bureaucratic government and grassroots teachers, in a complementary and co-operative relationship, developing a curriculum that becomes national policy, despite a lack of policy literacy. We gain profound insight into the lives of teachers and the relationship with TRC staff as mentors. We see how they become owners of the project and writers of the ECE curriculum that was accepted by their national government as the National Curriculum ECE.

While luck had a role to play in providing NGO and female personalities in the government and the timely EFA agenda, the sheer determination and commitment of TRC, and the courage to undertake the seemingly impossible, underlies its success. There is conviction despite human resource constraints, and a desire to achieve excellence and turn dreams into reality.

TRC makes programmes as participatory as possible, constantly building upon the skills of practitioners, and bringing together educators from different sectors, as can be seen in the 1999 National Seminar: From Awareness to Action, which proved how ECE can be implemented in government schools. A traditional climate of competition between public and private sectors, and different levels of hierarchical power, is changed to one of co-operation towards achieving the best education for children.

In putting the teacher and child first, TRC constantly asks what difference its interactions are making to children. The quality of humility is integrated with the skill of understanding the teacher’s lot, and empowering teachers to become active agents of change in and out of the classroom. The result is laughing and smiling children, keen to learn, and engaged in meaningful learning, in government classrooms.

By starting with addressing the needs of children and teachers, and getting them to develop and pilot an appropriate curriculum for ECE, TRC turns curriculum and educational policy convention on its head, and moves from practice to policy, rather than the more common policy to practice. This truly innovative intervention is unheard of in developing countries, where policy is delivered top-down and expected to be automatically implemented.

Passionate commitment exudes from TRC’s approach, along with a healthy questioning approach. Constraints and difficulties are overcome with persistence, much soul searching and strategic planning. Always mindful of its moral purpose, TRC remains both respectful and ‘provocative’ in its interactions with members from the government.

The Senior Manager of TRC holds enormous resources of personal and professional skill and determination that heavily dictate TRC’s approach. This is balanced well with the more down to earth scepticism of the Director. However, both believe deeply in the need to value teachers, and build their skills as life-long learners, and effective teachers of young children. The development of nurturing relationships with teachers is crucial to laying the foundation – and indeed being the foundation – for changing attitudes and practice in government ECE classrooms. Vulnerability, empathy and a safe learning environment, where mistakes are ways to learn, are significant features in the learning environment created. Personal and professional attitudes are gently challenged, and the skill of constructive criticism developed, within a climate designed to build the self-confidence of teachers.

Aware of power differentials in society, TRC treats teachers as equals, in contrast to the norms in Pakistan. It recognises the integration of the personal and professional selves, and the need to address personal change,
which then affects professional behaviour. TRC’s holistic approach to learning addresses the need to build the self-esteem of teachers. It addresses the cognitive and affective, and holds high expectations of teachers. The process of working with teachers seems to draw out something from deep within, so that they start to believe in themselves and their capacity to change for the better. All opportunities are utilised, and time given freely, to build teachers’ practical and personal skills.

In seeking to change the culture of schools, TRC also concentrates on its own development as a learning organisation, in which all members of the programme are expected to, and assisted to, learn by doing; to give of their best, and to reflect and present as a model this behaviour to the government teachers, head teachers and supervisors they work with. This has led to a gradual increase in reflection, monitoring, evaluation, research and documentation attached to programmes, and institutional development.

In pulling all the strands together, we can see that skilled leadership of TRC has been essential in developing and maintaining its approach, enabling it to learn and earn success, inspiring teachers from within. An intuitive and learned use of emotional intelligences has enabled TRC to most effectively combine the right blend of leadership styles to serve its moral purpose and free the best in the educators it works with.

While a case study of TRC cannot dictate an exact strategy to use to successfully work with the government, it can provide in-depth information of a successful project that brings together the often wide-apart domains of policy-makers, researchers and practitioners. It addresses a gap in educational development literature, and provides some insight into what factors may enable others to achieve more success working with traditional governments in developing countries in the field of education. A number of possible guidelines emerge from our learning from TRC, grouped under the areas of:

- preparing the ground well;
- having a passionate commitment to the cause;
- establishing credibility with the government;
- understanding government systems;
- nurturing relationships;
- having the conviction and determination to make it happen;
- becoming a learning organisation;
- putting the teacher and child first; and
- developing emotional intelligences and leadership skills.
In order to enhance children’s well-being, interventions need to be intensive, integrated, high quality and continuing. In other words, they are not inexpensive.

- Jeane Brooks-Gunn

**Challenges, Questions and Possibilities**

In this final chapter of the study, I raise a number of challenges, questions and possibilities pertaining to the future of TRC, and the implementation of the National Early Childhood Education Curriculum.

TRC has clearly achieved its goals for the ECE programme – it has introduced ECE activities in new areas and has improved the quality and delivery of ECE in at least 45 public sector schools in disadvantaged urban areas in Karachi and rural settings in Sindh. It has raised awareness and knowledge and, more significantly, TRC has fostered a love of learning in children who now smile and laugh in schools and confidently interact with their peers and adults. It has developed, as intended, a culturally appropriate curriculum and materials, and institutionalised ECE in its partner schools. In doing so, it has increased the number of teachers with a level of expertise in ECE, some of whom can now lead workshops to train other teachers, and all of whom have grown in self-confidence. It has exceeded its own desires for policy dialogue, in getting a curriculum made by teachers, for teachers, accepted as the National Curriculum, Early Childhood Education for Pakistan. This is an incredible achievement for a small NGO, and indicative of the tremendous effort that has been made by the senior management of TRC, its staff and, last but not least, the children, teachers, head teachers and supervisors of partner schools, as well as key people within the provincial and Federal Ministries of Education. However, now that the Curriculum is established, the greater challenge lies ahead. How does one train and support kachchi teachers in every school in the public sector of Pakistan to follow a National Curriculum without a textbook, and to teach and learn in a manner to which they are unaccustomed, and with materials with which they are unfamiliar?

**Making the National ECE Curriculum an Active Document**

One of the challenges TRC faces for the future, includes the danger of the National Early Childhood Education Curriculum policy going the way of many other policies in Pakistan: hidden in drawers. The Curriculum, Teachers’ Guide, and materials are clearly designed to be extremely teacher-friendly, and used with the minimum of help, yet the project schools received training and ongoing classroom support in order to grow in confidence and skill, and to feel at ease with the curriculum, materials and new approaches to teaching and learning. There may be adventurous individuals in each of the provinces, who will try out an activity or so, but will most other schools in different parts of the country be able to really replicate the success without such help? Although it has been stated that there will not be a textbook for the kachchi age group, there is still the danger that this will eventually happen unless TRC and other concerned bodies can monitor the situation to make sure it does not happen, and that the Curriculum is honestly adhered to.

**The Challenges of Scaling Up and Maintaining Quality**

We have seen that a difficulty that many NGO development projects face is in scaling up successes that have come from smaller, more experimental projects. This also applies to TRC: How does it move from the impact of well run kachchi classrooms and motivated teachers, head teachers and supervisors in 45 schools, to the wider national public sector? It has indeed already moved into the wider field in response to the many requests from various bodies, but although rewarding, this has been ad hoc rather than a planned wider intervention. In continuing its policy dialogue with the Federal Ministry of Education, TRC is rightly pressing for the need to have a national implementation strategy, so that the Curriculum can be effectively taught in all schools. Along with this, TRC realises the need for quality assurance and monitoring systems, and an accredited certification system for teachers wishing to qualify in this area. There is also a need to create a critical core of people in the public sector, who understand the importance of ECE from federal to district levels, and who are ready to invest resources into

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developing good practice and policy. These attempts to keep the policy dialogue alive and ongoing, will need to continue, in order to keep quality ECE on the agenda. A major concern is how TRC can scale up the success of its programme and still maintain the intensive human interaction and role modelling input that teachers tell us has had such an impact on their personal and professional selves. Such changes do not take place overnight, but require time and patience and unstinting efforts. Berg states that there is a need for NGOs to act on their successes and that:

‘there is no greater sin in development than to ignore success or to replicate failure’

However, if the success of TRC’s work is a result of its attention to detail, and the development of intrinsic motivation in teachers, does this mean that going to scale automatically implies a dilution in quality? When it struggled with provincial and federal bureaucracy in implementing a relatively small pilot project and establishing a curriculum, can TRC take on the change needed to implement the ECE Curriculum on a national scale? Is a dilution in quality then acceptable, given that institutional change in the government is likely to occur at a very slow pace? Pragmatically, one may say it is inevitable, but TRC would argue that it is the right of every kachchi child and teacher to reach their potential as learners and teachers, and that this forms the basis of educational reform in Pakistan’s primary schools.

The Development of Lead Trainers

Smaller attempts to replicate have started within the last year or so of TRC’s work. There has been a lot of demand from the government for training, much related to the recent changes due to the devolution of power to the local level. Indeed, we know that TRC is named in the ESR as the resource organisation that would train lead facilitators. It has also responded to requests to assist with the finalisation of the EFA National Plan of Action. TRC had thought that they would develop modules which donors would fund to help teachers implement the curriculum. The extension of the SIDP for two more years until 2004, does in fact, allow for the training of an advanced level of workshop leaders for ECEP. There is the possibility of TRC contacting provinces and providing the usual model of training for lead trainers (more commonly known as ‘master trainers’) who would then train others, using the cascade model. However, this can dilute quality and is contrary to TRC’s belief that the trainers should be practitioners.

Another route lies in TRC’s relationship with the recently created AKF and USAID funded ‘Releasing Confidence and Creativity’ programme. In accordance with its aim to become a leader in the field of ECE within Pakistan, TRC agreed to play a key role within this project, but its outreach is limited. TRC is keen for organisations to visit the project schools to see for themselves what is happening with teachers and children in the classroom, and the demonstration effect proves to be very powerful. However, TRC is well aware of the need for a coherent, national implementation strategy to ensure that quality teaching and learning of kachchi children remain at the forefront of Pakistan’s education policy.

Educating ECE Leaders in Provincial Institutes for Teacher Education

More long term visions could include TRC becoming involved with the provincial PITEs in the provision of in-service and pre-service education. TRC has already been involved in these to some extent, and ongoing policy dialogue could see the development of a longer term relationship in enabling PITE faculty to train teachers in ECE. An implication not yet thought about is that TRC has worked mainly with female teachers, TRC programme officers and management in female schools. This has lent itself to creating a more open atmosphere that is conducive to the type of learning TRC promotes. However, in PITEs TRC would be working with mostly senior men, with no practical background in primary, let alone kachchi, level classrooms. Wanting them to be taught by younger and female practitioners, and to use and promote an activity-based methodology, is bound to bring its own challenges that would be worth exploring and researching.

244 ‘Releasing Confidence and Creativity: Building a Sound Foundation for Early Learning in Pakistan’ AKF/USAID, Proposal to USAID, August 2002.
Developing other TRCs

Another possibility for TRC, which makes the most of its experiences in a more holistic sense, is for TRC to assist others in the setting up of TRCs elsewhere. This has been attempted in the past in the Punjab and Sindh for instance, and occasional requests for assistance have been met by TRC. There is now also the backing needed in the Education Sector Reforms 2001-2004, which has an innovative programme of setting up Tehsil District Resource Centres for field-based professional development and improving community participation in education, under the thrust area of Improving the Quality of Teacher Education and Training, Exam Reform and Assessment.245

Establishing the ECE Certificate Course

TRC has already embarked on its own cherished long term vision for ECE, through developing the year-long ECE Certificate course, with its linkage partner, Sheridan College, Canada. TRC sees this as the next level in its growth as institution and lead ECE service provider. The course would cater for both the private and public sector, in the hope that fees from the former would help subsidise courses for government teachers. TRC was also asked to provide consultancy services to the Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, which is preparing a Diploma course in ECE. A possible future development would be to pilot integrated ECCD programmes in particular disadvantaged communities, working with parents and government health and education departments.

Replicating the Quality of Leadership

We have seen how much effective policy dialogue, from the point of view of all the partners in the ECE programme, depended on rich personal and professional relationships that, in turn, rely heavily on the personalities of the leaders of TRC. Senior government partners also related how much success depends on the nature of the persons concerned heading the organisation. NGOs are often reliant on the quality of their leadership, and we can see this is very much the case with TRC, dependent on dynamic senior management personalities, rather than the capacity of the organisation as a whole. While TRC has recently been trying to institutionalise practices and systems, and to increasingly become more of a learning organisation, to make the TRC philosophy clear, there is still a difficult task with regard to leadership that requires passionate commitment, and the whole range of emotional intelligence skills. If the personal drive and passion of TRC lies primarily with its leadership and is so important to its success, can this be replicated in other organisations? Partnerships are obviously vulnerable to changes in individuals and patterns of organisational leadership, so changes in TRC may affect potential success in the future. Although the current leadership of TRC uses many intuitive resources, these emotional intelligences will have to be learnt by future leaders if they do not already have them in the range needed. This suggests that a steep personal learning curve would be required of any future leaders of TRC, and the government teachers and officers who wish to become effective trainers for TRC.

Institutional Development and Dependency on External Resources

Another challenge to TRC, is the fact that it is an NGO dependent on external resources. Pakistani NGOs have been criticised by some writers, claiming that the hype about NGOs is ‘grossly exaggerated’, that there are too few successful NGOs, and these are limited by a micro-level focus. They cannot thus constitute an alternative development paradigm, their work at the best being ‘band-aid social welfare’. Hence Zaidi claims that the only alternative to state failure is the state itself. TRC cannot fulfil the state’s responsibility to deliver quality kachchi education, but how can it best spread its influence and training? Funds for the SIDP programme will end in 2004, and there is uncertainty about whether another donor would be found and for what, given that donor and TRC agendas need to be aligned. Thus TRC faces a risk to its sustainability as an organisation, let alone its ECE

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248 ibid.
249 ibid.
programme. Fund raising efforts have been sporadic in the past. In 2003, a concerned citizen ‘adopted’ TRC and was co-opted onto the Governing Body as Chairperson, Fund Raising, with the task of developing a planning strategy to raise funds through regular corporate donations and events. Indeed, a very successful Fashion Show event raised a lot of money. In 2003, TRC also raised considerable funds from training and materials, and the endowment fund was enhanced by 30%. However, much rests on the economic climate of Pakistan and the ability of TRC to raise its own funds, in order to become sustainable for the future, and not be reliant on donor funding. Alternatively, donors could be more imaginative and have a longer term vision for funding NGOs; but TRC will still have to face the tension between expansion and remaining close to its original values. Edwards and Holmes state that the critical task facing NGOs in their search for sustainable development is ‘institution-building’.

However, the biggest challenge, he states, is:

‘how to achieve greater impact (with all that this implies by way of evaluation, strategic thinking, and improved systems) while maintaining their traditional strengths such as flexibility, innovation and attachment to values and principles’.

Any scaling up of programmes then has implications for TRC itself as an institution. How much can TRC do with its current capacity? As we have seen, it has suffered the staffing problems common to NGOs in Pakistan, although there has been a recent and significant improvement, but it also has had to deal with increasing requests for assistance from donors, other international and national NGOs, and government. With the SIDP programme, came a growth that has required a restructuring of organisational structure and the development of systems, which TRC has managed to keep aligned with its own values and missions, while at the same time being able to meet donor demands. If TRC were to expand even further, would it perhaps lose its personal touch and accessibility? Will managers still have the time to pursue the long process of policy dialogue and building fruitful relationships with teachers, which it has shown needs ‘smiles and hugs along the way’?

Attempts to find a new home for TRC and the ECE Certificate course with the government fell through in 2003. With all these challenges, a future study could look at the ongoing institutional development of TRC, and how far it can really help the state to deliver its constitutional responsibilities.

Another question we can ask, is whether we can calculate how much effective development of ECE really costs? TRC says that it works with low-cost interventions, but can we call the ECEP interventions low-cost when all aspects are calculated - and low-cost compared to what? What is clearly evident is that it is far more effective than government training in PTC and in-service training. We would not just look at training hours, classroom support and follow-up, but also the costs of counselling teachers, time taken to develop relationships, and capacity building, material preparation, monitoring, research and documentation, and centre costs. Then, on top of this, we would need to add the time of the senior management too, and the Senior Manager in particular, who spent a great deal of personal time on the programme. TRC’s 2003 report tells us that teachers as workshop leaders had truly internalised ECE, and could not revert to old practice. These teachers had been with the project from the start, and had received continuous training and support to get to this stage. Is it then possible to find out how much it takes for ECE philosophy, values and practice to be internalised? Can we work out how much time, effort and intensity has gone into these teachers? Brooks-Gunn confirms the need for intensive training - which therefore costs - when she states that:

‘In order to enhance children’s well-being, interventions need to be intensive, integrated, high-quality and continuing. In other words they are not inexpensive’.

If we can work out the actual cost and timing, we may gain a closer idea of what is needed to replicate TRC’s successful interventions in other areas, and perhaps also whether there are ways of improving it, and finding alternative modes of providing support through local and regional level teacher networks that would not need to rely on the expertise of the senior management of TRC alone. We would then need to ask if the funds available

251 ibid., p. 215.
252 Meeting with Senior Manager, TRC, February 2003.
in the ESR could cover this on the scale needed. There may be opportunities under the other sections of the ESR on Public-Private Partnerships, Quality of Education and Good Governance, and Decentralisation in Education. With the push for EFA and the need to report back, the money should become available from government or donor funds, if we really want tangible and lasting results.

Meeting the Demands for High Quality

The possible dilution in quality would have to be countered. It is very important that those providing support and monitoring are very comfortable with ECE philosophy and methods. The teacher trainers/educators would therefore need to gain practical experience in the classroom as part of their training, and be skilled enough to role model the approaches desired in the classroom in their training of teachers, head teachers and supervisors, in a participatory way. Success will breed success, and as we have seen, teachers want to continue contact with TRC in order to maintain progress and feel encouraged. Therefore, ongoing systems of support will need to be developed through possible networks and district level resource centres, that could be based in schools. In the long term, whole schools will need support, as we have seen we cannot treat the kachchi class in isolation.

Teacher and children in the other classes need to become involved in what is, after all, good educational practice, rather than just good ECE practice. The continued training of teachers and trainers, as well as highlighting the need for cluster workshops, may indeed raise the need to have some form of continuing education for teachers, bearing in mind the importance of the level of teachers’ education to the achievement of the children they teach. The development of ongoing and sequenced graded courses would allow teachers to take their education further and gain recognised qualifications.

Networking and Co-ordination

To move to another issue, Shakil has identified the lack of networking and co-ordination as a major shortcoming in the ECE sector, a worrying factor, given the more holistic nature of ECE practices that one would want to see modelled in the behaviour of its advocates. TRC, as a resource centre, could indeed be a catalyst for developing networking and co-ordination. However, progress so far has proved worrying. The ECE sector, with its recent increase in the number of players, has shown a worrying continuing trend of competition rather than co-operation. Donors and perhaps managers seem to want to claim success and are not willing to share materials and learning. There seem to be programmes that are reinventing the wheel, in terms of adapting a western curriculum and materials, or providing advice to the government on the development of an implementation strategy, working in isolation from organisations already involved in the sector.

To be able to gain a greater impact on the ground, and in terms of policy dialogue, there is a need to create a truly functioning network, but this requires of partners the same kind of attitudes we have seen required of successful policy dialogue: a willingness to let go of their egos, to be humble, learn and share, listen and have the goal firmly in mind - that is, of more and more young children wishing to come to schools, enjoying learning, and achieving their potential. There is room for all NGO and development agency partners, and many more, to cover all the young children of Pakistan. Can the Ministry of Education induce this to happen? It may be able to put a network structure in place, but the need for it to work requires participants to view each other as equal colleagues, working towards a shared moral purpose. In requiring teachers to be professional, the implementing organisations also need to become more professional. In the words of Smillie:

“Development spreading” and self-improvement, aimed at making life better for poor people, can only come about if organizations are able to learn, remember and share; if they are prepared, when they seek to influence policy, to take well-aimed rifle shots and give up their scattered guns.”

A National ECE Resource Centre

Another possibility for networking and co-ordination is for TRC, along with its ECE Certificate course, to develop a National ECE Resource Centre, having already gained much valuable experience as a centre for teachers. It could collect materials and information on projects; issue a newsletter, network and help members visit each other and grow; and have regional chapters and assist other potential teacher resource centres; educate trainers to build the capacity of the government and provide teacher education for ECE for PITs.

Spreading the Knowledge with Heart and Commitment

This study has shown that TRC set out to learn about developing ECE in government schools, and becoming a more efficient and effective organisation, and it has successfully done this. A part of this learning is the continued documentation of its efforts, which has led to the commissioning of this study for dissemination. It is very important for TRC to continue with such learning, and to spread the learning from its model. Edwards and Holmes state that to enhance the developmental impact of NGOs, there needs to be more emphasis on research, documentation and dissemination of experience. In addition Smillie tells us that:

‘Knowledge, combined with heart and commitment, has always been a key to development, and moving away from ad hoc charitable amateurism towards lasting, longer-term solutions, and the policies needed to sustain them, will require politically aware, focused, specialized organizations that can learn, that can remember and share what they learn, and that are prepared to build on what they remember.’

TRC has painstakingly collected much useful and rich data on the ECE programme, that is awaiting analysis, that would prove very constructive. The future of research and learning from TRC could usefully include more longitudinal studies and case studies on different aspects of implementation, the development of the process of working with the government, and the implementation of the National Curriculum Early Childhood Education. Autobiographies or narratives of teacher’s lives would also be a more creative idea to gain a deeper insight into teacher motivation, and change at both the personal and professional level. A number of research studies could be developed to build the capacity of nationals to conduct qualitative studies of local relevance in partnership with more experienced colleagues within the country and abroad - namely research that combines product and process goals while generating new knowledge that can inform policy and practice. Sharing and exchanging research across developing countries would also help address the lack of research, the importance of diverse perspectives, and the possibilities of drawing out fuzzy generalisations that can assist theory, practice and policy.

TRC has developed a linkage with two Canadian institutions to which it has brought its awareness of postcolonial perspectives and ‘dependency’. The relationship was established on an equal basis from the start, with each organisation discussing what it can bring and will gain from the linkage collaboration. The need for collaborative research has been increasingly recognised, to counter-affct the negative impact of the increasing number of international consultants who are not in tune with contextual and cultural factors, and to reap benefits that can be gained. Can one really understand another culture if one is not bicultural and bilingual? Working with national researchers from the developing country can provide a more realistic range of perspectives, allowing both researchers to take on different roles. The complementary roles allow for more insight, access to more people,

257 op. cit., p. 241.
greater depth of knowledge, an ability to represent the disadvantaged to those higher up within hierarchical societies, and a two-way flow of cultural insight and technical expertise. They do, however, demand a high, and sometimes painful, degree of cultural awareness and self-reflection.

TRC as a Role Model Crossing Bridges between Policy and Practice

Through a case study or studies of TRC, we can cross the bridges between policy and practice, macro- and micro-levels of analysis, and yet more, given future systematic planning for research. TRC itself serves as a role model for other NGOs working in education. In this study, I have shown how a close study of TRC can offer lessons on relationships and challenges, namely by showing how a small NGO can work effectively with the Pakistani government against the odds, to the extent of getting a curriculum written by ordinary teachers to become the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education. In a way, it has put back the ‘public’ into ‘public service’, in a situation where public servants are not trusted by the people and known for their corruption and lack of commitment to education of the masses. The study has shown the possibility of complementary and co-operative partnerships with the government, and collaborative and equal relationships with Northern linkage partners. TRC shows us how teachers can become the centre of the policy-making process, and be developed both professionally and personally in a holistic manner, while being challenged and respected. Last but not least, TRC shows how, as a result of this investment and care, young children have the desire and enthusiasm to learn within a happy and safe environment. Ultimately, however, what the study has learnt from TRC’s work is that implementation of policy cannot work without teachers, and that ‘when teachers are empowered, almost anything is possible’.

Summary

In this chapter, I raised a number of questions, challenges and possibilities for TRC and the implementation of the National Curriculum ECE. While the TRC has clearly achieved its goals for the ECE project, in establishing quality ECE in at least 45 disadvantaged public-sector schools, greater challenges lie ahead. One of the challenges TRC faces for the future includes the danger of the National Curriculum Early Childhood Education policy going the way of many other policies in Pakistan - hidden in drawers. TRC, as with many other successful educational development projects, faces the challenges of scaling up from a small project to a national scale. It has recognised the need to develop an effective implementation strategy, and policy dialogue on this must continue. A critical concern will be how to achieve and maintain the level of quality that has hitherto depended on intensive human interaction between TRC mentors/facilitators and practitioners.

TRC has made small attempts to replicate efforts in the last year or so. These include the development of lead trainers. Working with PITE to produce ECE leaders could be a long-term extension of this. Developing other TRCs is also a possibility, as is the development of a National ECE Resource Centre, with an effective networking structure. Establishing the ECE Certificate Course will be important for quality, as will attempts to replicate and maintain effective leaders with the required range of emotional intelligences.

Institutional development and dependency on external resources will remain ongoing challenges. Being able to raise one’s own resources depends on a number of vulnerable factors. Dangers also lie in expanding into a larger institution and possibly losing TRC’s critical characteristic of commitment to developing the effective personal relationships pertinent to its mission and values. In addition, spreading its knowledge and developing research in the areas of ECE are important concerns for the future which address the lack of documentation in ECE in developing countries.

Learning from TRC as a role model, can help us see how to bridge the policy-practice divide in education. We learn how teachers can become the heart of policy-making and how children can subsequently become happy and enthusiastic learners. TRC’s work on ECE shows how educational policy cannot be effectively implemented without teachers owning it; and, moreover, that ‘when teachers are empowered, almost anything is possible’.

Core Values of the Teachers’ Resource Centre

The Child
TRC’s focus is improving the children’s learning experience in the school environment. We are committed to this concept in its totality.

Challenge
To stretch towards challenge and accept challenge as part of our daily working life.

Communication
To be open and honest in our communication, and to share whatever information we have, which can be of benefit to each other and the organisation.

Confidentiality
To maintain confidentiality of information, in relation to organisations and individuals that we work with on behalf of TRC.

Creativity and Innovation
To be innovative in our approach, in order to create new ideas, which will enhance the child’s learning experience.

Environment
To use resources in a sustainable manner, and actively encourage re-cycling. TRC is committed to the environment and its preservation.

Equal Opportunities
To positively encourage equality of opportunity in both employment and provision of services.

Ethics
To be ethical and maintain integrity in all our work and relationships.

Flexibility
To be flexible in meeting challenges in a changing environment, in organisational roles and directions.

Respect
To ensure that at all times we are courteous and respect others, be they within or outside the organisation, and regardless of their socio-economic position in society, their gender, regional or religious affiliations.

Teamwork
To work in collaboration with colleagues, on the basis that through the contribution of diverse individuals, teams can achieve what an individual cannot. To view our work with schools and their staff as a partnership - partners in the child’s educational development.

Vision
To have a broad vision which encompasses not only our own organisational goals, but the goals of the community in which we are working.
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