



**DARE-RC**  
DATA AND RESEARCH IN EDUCATION  
RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

# PIE – DARE-RC Workshop on the Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping Gaps and Existing Evidence

December 20-21<sup>st</sup>, 2023

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction to DARE-RC</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction to Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE)</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Purpose of the PIE – DARE-RC Workshop on the Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping the Gaps and Identifying Existing Evidence</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Objectives of the Workshop: .....	3
Outcomes of the Workshop:.....	3
Participants of the Workshop: .....	3
<b>Inaugural Session</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Welcome Remarks.....	5
Overview of the DARE-RC Project and Objectives of the Workshop .....	6
Keynote Address by Chief Guest.....	6
Vote of Thanks.....	7
<b>Session 1 – Day 1 of the Workshop</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Evidence Gap Map: Analytical Overview of the Education System and Service Delivery in Pakistan.....	7
Group Work & Presentations: Feedback and Recommendations on how to Bridge Evidence Gaps within Institutional and Regional Contexts.....	10
<b>Session 2 – Day 1 of the Workshop</b> .....	<b>11</b>
PIE’s Evidence Trail: Navigating the National Education Landscape and Sharing Findings from Pakistan Education Statistics (PES) 2020-21 and National Achievement Test (NAT) 2023 Reports .....	11
PIE-Facilitated Reflection Group Work.....	12
Wrap up of Day 1.....	13
<b>Day 2 – Workshop on Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping Gaps and Existing Evidence</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Summary of Previous Day Proceedings and Outcomes.....	13
<b>Session 3 – Day 2 of the Workshop</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Presentation on the Institutional Research Capacity Mapping.....	14
Question & Answer on Institutional Research Capacity Mapping Presentation.....	15
Group Work: Preparation of Recommendations on how to Address Gaps in Capacities for Producing Quality Research and its Usage in Policy Formulation within Institutional and Regional Contexts .....	16
Panel Discussion: Importance of Using Research Evidence for Policy Making and Building Research Capacity: How can it be made Possible in Low-income Countries?.....	18
Question and Answer Session with Panellists.....	19
Plenary: Approach of DARE-RC Towards Strengthening Capacities for Quality Research Outputs with Policy Uptake .....	20
Question & Answer Session on Plenary.....	21
Closing Remarks.....	21
<b>Key Recommendations &amp; Lessons Learned</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Workshop Programme Agenda (Annex A)</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>List of Participants (Annex B)</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Workshop Satisfaction Survey (Annex C)</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Satisfaction Survey Analysis (Annex D)</b> .....	<b>31</b>

## Introduction to DARE-RC

The **Data and Research in Education-Research Consortium (DARE-RC)** project aims to develop a rigorous body of timely and accessible evidence on the key issues within education service delivery in Pakistan. A focus of DARE-RC is to strengthen research capacities and facilitate the culture of evidence-informed policy making. The key issues focused on include improving teaching quality, reaching out to marginalised children (including girls, those from minority communities and children with disabilities, etc.), as well as increasing their access to school, ensuring their retention, and improving their overall learning outcomes. Additionally, the project focus is around issues of building resilience in education service delivery with regards to responsiveness to climate change and other disruptive events as well as increasing accountability in the education system.

The project also aims to commission several research studies and research implementation pilots to scale up within the identified research agenda, undertake continuous policy engagement for moving towards an evidence basis in education policy and practice and make all evidence developed under DARE-RC publicly available to be accessible to relevant stakeholders and users and producers of research.

## Introduction to Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE)

The **Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE)** was established to address Pakistan's education sector challenges through data collection and capacity building. Its primary objective is to support the federal-level mandate by conducting nationwide education analysis and providing guidance on areas that require improvement. PIE serves the role of a national think tank by utilising research evidence for developing policy recommendations (and eventually engaging in research), development and coordination activities to support the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) in formulating education policies, as well as short and long-term education plans.

The organisation's core focus areas encompass education data collection, consolidation, dissemination, education assessment and both basic and applied research in the education sector. By fulfilling its aims and objectives, PIE endeavours to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education in Pakistan, fostering evidence-based decision-making, and driving positive transformations in the education landscape.

## Purpose of the PIE – DARE-RC Workshop on the Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping the Gaps and Identifying Existing Evidence

As a part of the overall strategy for capacity strengthening of the producers and users of research, a two-day workshop was organised jointly by DARE-RC and PIE on December 20 – 21<sup>st</sup> in Islamabad, Pakistan. The goal of the workshop was to examine the landscape of evidence on central education policy challenges in Pakistan and to come up with solutions to fill the gaps. The workshop brought together participants from PIE, provincial departments, and public sector universities. The overall outcome of the workshop was expected to be enhanced understanding of the evidence and research capacity gaps and the development and identification of a course of actionable recommendations for each of the participating entities.

### Objectives of the Workshop:

1. Share the findings of the research studies completed during the inception phase of the DARE-RC project:
  - Evidence Gap Map: Analytical Overview of the Education System and Service Delivery in Pakistan
  - Institutional Research Capacity Mapping (IRCM)
2. Brainstorm the causes of research evidence and capacity gaps as well as possible ways to fill the gaps.
3. Sharing an analysis of the data evidence from PES (Pakistan Education Statistics) 2021-22 and NAT 2023 (National Achievement Test) reports.
4. Discuss and develop recommendations to fill the gaps where they exist.

### Outcomes of the Workshop:

1. An enhanced understanding and consensus on the education evidence landscape in Pakistan – existing evidence and gaps.
2. An understanding of the current state of institutional research capacity in Pakistan.
3. Enhanced familiarity with the data evidence on key aspects of education.
4. The development of recommendations to fill the evidence/research gaps and research capacity gaps which are hindering the generation and use of high quality, relevant, timely and accessible research evidence.
5. Gain clarity on the scope of the DARE-RC project's contribution to filling the capacity gaps.

### Participants of the Workshop:

The workshop participants consisted of representatives from relevant government departments and academic institutions as well as several representatives from the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) and DARE-RC team members.

A total of 61 representatives attended from government departments and academia from Federal, Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and Gilgit Baltistan.

Representatives from *public sector academic institutions* included individuals from:

- **Balochistan:** University of Balochistan and Sardar Bahadur Khan University
- **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:** University of Peshawar and Hazara University
- **Punjab:** University of Education Lahore, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Punjab University, University of Gujrat, and Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan
- **Sindh:** Institute of Business Administration in Sukkur, Sindh University, Sindh Madressatul Islam University and Aga Khan University-Institute for Educational Development
- **Federal Area:** Allama Iqbal Open University and Muslim Youth University
- **Gilgit Baltistan:** Karakoram International University

Representatives associated with *government departments* included individuals from:

- **Balochistan:** Policy Planning & Implementation Unit (PPIU) of the School Education Department and Balochistan Assessment & Examination Commission (BAEC)
- **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Monitoring Authority (KPEMA)
- **Punjab:** Programme Monitoring & Implementation Unit (PMIU) from the School Education Department
- **Sindh:** Reform Support Unit (RSU), Sindh Education Management Information System (SEMIS) from the School Education & Literacy Department and the Planning & Development Department (P&D)
- **Federal Area:** PIE and MoFEPT
- **Gilgit Baltistan:** Education Management Information System (EMIS)

### **Ensuring Inclusivity**

DARE-RC is dedicated to fostering inclusivity among diverse groups. To achieve this, DARE-RC developed an inclusivity checklist that played a pivotal role in shaping the workshop. Participation was gender inclusive and included representatives from minorities as well as representation from all provinces. Aligning with the commitment to inclusivity was meticulously ensured.

The workshop had a total of 84 participants, 61 male and 23 female. In order to garner the perspective of minority communities, the representation of researchers belonging to minority faiths was ensured. Similarly, equitable representation from all provinces and administrative areas was achieved. The DARE-RC team made an effort to include women's universities and female staff from different government departments and PIE. The team also facilitated active participation of women and minority faith participants.

### **Workshop Programme Agenda (Annex A)**

### **List of Participants (Annex B)**





*Inaugural Session: Chief Guest, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani giving keynote address with Mr. Harris Khalique, Ms. Saima Anwer, Dr Shahid Soroya, and Mr. Saqib Farooq seated at the head table.*

## Inaugural Session

The two-day workshop co-hosted by PIE and DARE-RC on the Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping Gaps and Existing Evidence began with an inaugural session. The Deputy Director Policy Research Wing of PIE, Syeda Samana Ali Bukhari was the Master of Ceremony for this session.

Speakers at the inaugural session included Mr. Harris Khalique, Programme Director of DARE-RC, Ms. Saima Anwer, Acting Education Team Lead of FCDO, Dr Shahid Soroya, Director General of Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) and the Chief Guest—Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Special Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT).

### Welcome Remarks

*Ms. Saima Anwer, Acting Education Team Lead with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Pakistan delivered the welcome remarks. She discussed the importance of DARE as a bilateral programme working to strengthen data systems with PIE spearheading this effort and expressed the need for support from all participants and stakeholders to find the gaps in research that we can fill through this project.*

Furthermore, she expressed the reality of the disconnect amongst relevant stakeholders or the users and producers of research, and the fact that we do not see enough uptake of evidence in decision making and policy formulation in our context. Effort is needed from all parties as it is not common or simple to bring everyone together. Policy relevant research is also lacking in academic institutions and taken up by think tanks more commonly in Pakistan. The evidence gap map research study was conducted to further inform the work undertaken for developing the DARE-RC research agenda. Overall, the DARE-RC project hopes to accomplish an improved coordination and cooperation amongst stakeholders, to build capabilities and to frame a relevant research agenda that could be meaningfully utilised.

## Overview of the DARE-RC Project and Objectives of the Workshop

Mr. Harris Khalique, Programme Director, DARE-RC, thanked the participants for coming from across Pakistan to attend the workshop. He explained that the DARE-RC project is led by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) with the Research Consortium partners including Aga Khan University – Institute of Education Development (AKU-IED), Sightsavers and Oxford University Department of Education's Centre for Educational Assessment (OUCEA). Mr. Khalique discussed the key focus areas of the project being marginalised populations such as children with disabilities (CWD), minorities and girls and how we can reduce the gaps and disadvantages faced by these populations, particularly with regards to access to education and improved learning outcomes. He further explained how work on the project began by consulting relevant stakeholders across Pakistan to understand the current scenario and challenges to development of education, emphasising the importance of developing actionable and relatable policies around key areas.

The objective of the workshop is to share the process and key findings behind the evidence gap map and institutional research capacity mapping studies and to receive input and feedback from all participants to enrich our understanding and way forward. Additionally, the DARE-RC project will focus on commissioning around 40 research studies, developing 10-15 policy papers and conducting policy dialogues related to the research agenda. He added that the capacity strengthening workstream of the DARE-RC project has organised the two-day workshop to bring the producers of research, meaning academia, research organisations and the government entities, including PIE and provincial education departments together to examine the findings relating to evidence gaps in education and the institutional research capacity gaps.

He added that the workshop also provided a good opportunity for the stakeholders to understand the scope and approach of the DARE-RC capacity strengthening strategy that maintains a dual focus not only on research capacity but also the capacity of the governmental bodies to uptake research evidence in decisions and policymaking. He also expressed the hope that discussions on the capacity strengthening strategy under DARE-RC will be enriched further during the course of the workshop. He concluded by thanking everyone, including FCDO and PIE and stated that this is the first of many workshops and engagement opportunities related to the DARE project.

## Keynote Address by Chief Guest

The Chief Guest for the workshop, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Special Secretary at the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) began his keynote address by sharing an overview of a pilot project that was taken up at a school in Islamabad to upgrade the infrastructure and ensure and enhance the usage of current facilities. Within a 5-week span, the school was transformed with the integration of a new IT lab, library, math lab, art studio and more. He emphasised the goal is to replicate this renovation model in other public sector schools as he felt it was achievable. He also shared the immense impact just one intervention can have and the need to solve educational challenges through need-based evidence informing policies. For example, the 'Meals for Schools' initiative implemented in government schools showed that 13% of students transitioned from unhealthy to healthy due to access to nutritious meals and its impact went beyond health to significantly improve enrolment and retention rates as well.

He advocated for the integration of technology in education and shared that approximately 400 labs have been created across various public schools through the work being done by the Ministry. A video on interventions conducted in Gilgit Baltistan was shared and focused on initiatives around STEM education, entrepreneurship, robotics, IT, financial literacy, cultural curriculum, the 'meals for schools' programme, creating 'smart schools' and providing a 'pink bus' service to facilitate females. His motto was that it is "better to do something than to stand back."

Overall, there is a need to build the confidence of those who can implement policies and interventions to create meaningful change in the education landscape. He shared his thoughts on the need to include younger individuals in policy dialogues as well.

### Vote of Thanks

Dr Shahid Soroya the Director General of the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) concluded the inaugural session by pointing out the need to discuss the role and efforts of the Research Consortium, the importance of the assessment and data connection and who all we should be including in this discussion. He shared that PIE is the biggest beneficiary of the DARE-RC project and how the 2-day workshop was providing PIE the required platform for an open dialogue on the link between research evidence and education policy and practice. He deemed the workshop as one of critical importance as it brought together research producing institutions as well as the government entities that use research to inform policy. The idea is to identify evidence gaps and plug them via robust research findings to ensure context specific recommendations for education policies. He ended by emphasising that those involved in the DARE-RC project, including PIE, OPM, FCDO and the Research Consortium partners, all compliment and support each other in achieving our shared goals. He appreciated the fact that so many participants had arrived from all over Pakistan to participate in the activity.

### Session 1 – Day 1 of the Workshop

#### Evidence Gap Map: Analytical Overview of the Education System and Service Delivery in Pakistan

Dr Jamila Razzaq the Research Director of DARE-RC presented the *Evidence Gap Map* study conducted by Dr Faisal Bari, a Senior Fellow with the Institute of Development & Economic Alternatives (IDEAS). The study was further enriched by Dr Munazza Aslam, Thematic Lead, DARE-RC.

Dr Razzaq started by sharing the process for initiating a research study and how it must be rigorous and comprehensive. In the DARE-RC context, to develop the research agenda, the team collated input from government officials, policymakers, civil society organisations and the DARE-RC thematic leads to synthesise the key challenges that need to be investigated. As a second step, a co-creation workshop was organised where representatives from PIE, civil society organisations, INGOs, government officials and members from academia deliberated on the synthesised areas to determine the evidence needed for policy formulation to address key issues and concerns that education practitioners and policymakers should address.

She further explained that two research studies were commissioned during the inception phase of the project. These included: the *Evidence Gap Map- Analytical Overview of the Education System and Service Delivery in Pakistan* and *Institutional Research Capacity Mapping* which further contributed to the drafting of the research agenda for the DARE-RC project.



Dr Jamila Razzaq presenting the 'Evidence Gap Map: Analytical Overview of the Education System and Service Delivery in Pakistan.'



The *two key questions for priority themes* of the research study titled, 'the Evidence Gap Map- Analytical Overview of the Education System and Service Delivery in Pakistan' were:

1. What are the effects of different education interventions on enrolment, attendance, dropout rates, completion, and learning outcomes for primary and secondary school-age children in low-and middle-income countries?
2. What are the contextual barriers to, and facilitators of, the effectiveness of educational interventions?

The methodology for the *Evidence Gap Map* included a rapid scoping of evidence which needed to be identified, assessed, and synthesised while evaluating the gaps in the current evidence available. The quality standard, validity and scientific reliability needed to be identified as well as the gaps in the current literature. As part of the process of identifying quality research evidence, inclusion criteria with an assessment of cultural sensitivity, validity, reliability, and cogency were utilised as well as classifying evidence into quality categories, namely high, medium, and low. Low quality studies were not included in the gap map, only those classified as medium (some deficiencies in attention to principles of quality) and high (comprehensively addresses multiple principles of quality).

A total of 302 studies produced over the period of 2000-2023 were reviewed, with an emphasis on high-quality studies which used experimental/quasi-experimental designs and mixed methods approaches. Considering the limited local evidence, a rapid assessment of study titles/abstracts for quality classification was also conducted. Since Pakistan lacks strong quality and rigorous research, an additional more relaxed criterion was used for Pakistan. Evidence examined also included research generated worldwide with a focus on South-East Asia and Pakistan.

The evidence gap map analysis followed a theoretical and conceptual framework which has been used for identifying evidence that already exists. This framework places the child as a learner at the centre and looks at factors that influence his/her learning outcomes. The framework therefore includes: the *learner*, the *learning environment* and the *wider education system* and recognises the complexity of factors and the interlinkages between them.

Understanding of the learning experience of **individual learners** with a focus on marginalised girls, children with disabilities (CWD) and minorities was closely examined in the evidence gap analysis exercise. The analysis was broken down into priority areas of what has worked, what is unknown, priority issues and possible interventions for each priority. For example, the evidence found include the following but further research is required:

- Studies have found that increased access to improved schools in terms of infrastructure, bathroom facilities and hygiene (hygiene kits, i.e. sanitary pads) have shown positive impact on girls' attendance and test scores. Likewise, studies have documented the importance of school proximity, cultural norms, financial constraints, and community awareness campaigns in enhancing access to and continuation of education for girls. Dr Razzaq stated that a multi-dimensional approach over a longer period has the potential for more significant impact on outcomes for girls. Government entities have specifically asked for more studies on global citizenship education and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the context of Pakistan as quality research on factors impacting girls' learning outcomes remains limited.
- Regarding children with disabilities (CWD), the study found that there was evidence on the impact of some interventions under partnerships with stakeholders, for instance interventions relating to curriculum, teacher training and instruction. These partnerships have been effective in terms of addressing issues of inclusion, access, and improved learning outcomes, yet support and understanding from mainstream schools remains limited. More focused research is required to come up with contextually appropriate models that could be tested and eventually scaled up.

- There is a limited recognition of disabilities in the Population Census database and a geographic gap in research with the current focus on Punjab. The role of the stakeholders and practical model for inclusive schools has been identified as key research areas needed to be explored further.
- Also, studies examined pointed out continued challenges in education that children from minority groups face, such as access to schooling and low learning outcomes because of poor quality teaching. This raised the need for research on teacher training to come up with specific recommendations for building teachers' ability to properly meet the unique needs of children.

In terms of the **learning environment**, the fact that better teacher training leads to better performance and learning outcomes of students is well documented, especially for those from more underprivileged backgrounds. For example:

- Diagnostic feedback on teacher performance and the provision of school report cards to parents has also been noted to improve tests scores and enrolment. While illustrative of the usefulness of diagnostic feedback in classrooms and enhanced teacher education leading to improved educational outcomes, further context specific research is needed to fully understand and optimise these effects for these children.
- With regards to the integration of Edtech, many programmes and interventions are being implemented. However, the effectiveness has only been measured within the private sector mostly and the available research studies did not fulfil the inclusion criteria. There is a significant gap in quality studies available to measure the impact of Edtech on learning outcomes in Pakistan.

For **systemic provisions**, the study found minimal evidence and significant gaps pertaining to ensuring resilience of education delivery and monitoring and evaluation for accountability mechanisms.

- The study recommends future research on a localised understanding and on successful response strategies to climate change impact on education, exploring climate-responsive schools, communities, and learners.
- In terms of scaling innovation in education system service delivery, there is limited evidence on understanding pilot-to-scale processes and how education systems in Pakistan can build and sustain education reform.
- Implementing evaluation systems and accountability mechanisms have a positive impact on teacher motivation and educational outcomes. However, with the limited evidence on the effectiveness of previous interventions in Pakistan, there remains a need for more research on teacher-level accountability and a broader understanding of accountability in education's ecosystem, including community, school, and system levels to fill critical evidence gaps.



*Provincial groups presenting feedback and recommendations on Bridging Evidence Gaps within Institutional and Regional Contexts.*

There is a need to scale up innovation in the education system, yet there is limited evidence on what aspects of pilot studies and initiatives have worked well and are to be scaled up.

### **Group Work & Presentations: Feedback and Recommendations on how to Bridge Evidence Gaps within Institutional and Regional Contexts**

Groups were organised according to provinces, and they were asked to respond on the following:

1. Share group's view on the evidence gap map presented in terms of points that you agree or disagree with, share reasons for agreement/disagreement as well.
2. Do you know of other evidence gaps that need to be highlighted? Or do you know any evidence/research missed out by the researchers in their presentation?
3. Suggest concrete steps to overcome these gaps. Suggest what universities, think tanks, government departments and others concerned can do in this regard. (Provide suggestions for what can be done in the **short-, medium- and long-term perspectives**)

One of the two **Federal area** groups highlighted two key areas that should be included in the evidence gap map. One was that of the curriculum and textbook development processes particularly focusing on the prevailing level of coordination between stakeholders engaged in these processes and the other was evidence on the role of medium of instruction. The second **Federal area** group highlighted evidence gaps including the importance of technical and vocational education, the integration of technology, (especially for inclusivity purposes) and the role of madrasa education in preparing students for the workforce. To overcome these gaps, rigorous research design is needed, including baselines, proper statistical analysis and control for factors that may impact aspects of interventions.

The **Sindh** group mentioned retention and dropout, gender equity, missing facilities and in-service teacher training as areas not focused on in the evidence gap map. The urgent gaps to address should be around out-of-school children (as 44% never registered in schools in Sindh) and drop-outs. A short-term solution suggested was the integration of two shifts in schools (morning and evening) and to compensate teachers for this. The long-term solution recommended was building more schools or increasing the capacity of current schools.

The **Gilgit Baltistan** group shared that demand-driven initiatives are absent and only imposed initiatives are taken up which are conceptualised and designed without any real involvement of the stakeholders. Also, the challenge of sustainability due to turnover of government officials, lack of research behind initiatives and the ad-hoc interventions without policy or research basis should be examined and the evaluations brought under discussions with development partners. They believed there needs to be more focus on generating evidence on these aspects to come up with a policy and terms of engagement with development partners to ensure proper utilisation of available funds and a stronger M&E system.

One of the two **Punjab** groups discussed evidence gaps on social and cultural factors (i.e. child labour and marriage laws) and WASH (i.e. puberty, sanitary napkins, and functional toilets) as important areas that need to be studied. They expressed the need to highlight dropouts and the role of infrastructure as well. Overall, they suggested the need to focus on research relating to life-skills education, the role of nutrition and disabled learners to address some gaps. The second group from **Punjab** ranked teacher shortages, research gap, financing gap, skills and attitudinal gap and factors behind high dropout rate as key areas to consider. Research is lacking on the student-teacher ratio and background of teachers teaching various subjects, the impact of public-private partnerships on learning, enrolment, and dropout rate as well as the role of the population growth on access to education. Suggestions included sharing the research gap areas that should be conducted with stakeholders and procuring relevant resources needed to fill those research gaps.

The group from **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** shared the need to examine the role of the community (provincial and district levels) in education delivery and outcomes.

Additionally, gaps were reported in evidence that looks at technical and vocational education and its relevance to the job market. More research is needed on madrassah education in terms of teaching models, effectiveness, and mainstreaming children into society. A short-term recommendation was to examine how educational institutions and NGOs collaborate on pilots to determine the scalability of promising initiatives. A medium to long-term suggestion is the need to look at education in emergencies and how innovative solutions can support education continuity in conflict and emergency areas such as by offering homeschooling.

The **Balochistan** group mentioned considering the physical and nutritious needs of students, the role of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, aligning teaching methods with their training and assessment and distance learning for dispersed populations. The urgent issue areas that need further research include the impact of early childhood education, mono-grade curriculum on multi-grade classrooms and language policy. Suggestions for concrete steps consisted of the need for government-academia collaboration, conducting relevant applied and action research, creating research platforms and innovation in developing research topics.

## Session 2 – Day 1 of the Workshop

### **PIE's Evidence Trail: Navigating the National Education Landscape and Sharing Findings from Pakistan Education Statistics (PES) 2020-21 and National Achievement Test (NAT) 2023 Reports**

*Dr Muhammad Zaigham Qadeer the Director Policy Research Wing PIE* started by sharing the historical background, new branding, and role of PIE as an entity. He shared that PIE as a national body works on education data, policy research and achievement testing with the goal of strengthening coordination between national and provincial actors and supporting evidence-based planning and policymaking. PIE has 3 core wings: National Educational Management Information System (NEMIS), National Assessment Wing (NAW) and the Policy Research Wing (PRW).

The reality is that data is not commonly used to inform interventions and for policymaking purposes in Pakistan. However, when examining the quality and uptake of data in the education sector there proves a need for a course correction due to the non-standardisation of data collection and reporting as well as duplicate efforts which pose challenges in terms of area of coverage, timely availability, and lack of standards.

PIE as a federal and national entity is positioning itself to work with provincial partners for the planning and execution of research and there is a need to build stronger connections. The goal is for PIE's research and recommendations to become actionable across Pakistan by relevant stakeholders. PIE is currently working on developing an open data portal which will be available by 2025 to provide a platform for more accessible data to all stakeholders.

Under the data pillar component of the DARE programme, PIE is getting TA for strengthening the data system through support to the development of a data standardisation framework. An additional focus of the programme is on enhancing the National Achievement Testing process. The newly begun DARE-RC component of the DARE programme brings support for the generation of a research agenda with priority themes and TA for strengthening capacities for research and its uptake in education sector policy and practice.

Dr Qadeer then proceeded to share the Pakistan Education Statistics (PES) 2021-22 findings. For example, there has only been a 1% increase in enrolment recently in Pakistan and the transition rate from primary to middle school dropped from 84% in 2016 -17 to 81% in 2021-22. 65% of male student and 57% of female students are enrolled in primary to secondary education.



There has only been a 1% increase in the number of teachers since 2016. Dr Qadeer shared the alarming figure of 100,000 as the teacher shortage in just Punjab province alone.

He then went on to share some of the National Aptitude Test (NAT) 2023 findings which included that learning achievements are quite low, and Pakistan is currently the second to last country in terms of quality of learning in global terms. There is also a large disparity between high and low stakes assessment results. He asked the participants, why haven't we improved in the last 20 years with regards to learning?

Dr Qadeer shared that while the commonly referenced figure to represent the number of out-of-school children in Pakistan has been 22.8 million, the PES report shows the figure is larger at 26.21 million or 39% of children. PIE has developed a dashboard for tracking OOSC and is coordinating with implementing government organisations to reduce dropout rates as well. For example, 81,000 children were identified as OOSC, of which 71,000 of them have been enrolled in schools. The database uses coordinates to map students to nearby schools, thus they have leveraged the use of technology in supporting this effort. Yet, these issues remain systematic and there are no quick fixes. Overall, PIE aims to support data-driven policy formation and work on collaborative research initiatives with relevant partners.

### **PIE-Facilitated Reflection Group Work**

Following Dr Qadeer's presentation, he asked participants to brainstorm and come up with recommendations on 4 identified themes per the guiding template circulated to participants. The following suggestions were provided on the 4 themes:

#### **1. Robust Collaboration between Academia and Think Tanks**

Participants suggested building linkages through memorandums of understanding (MoUs), technical working groups within each province and data sharing portals. Key recommendations also included fostering connections through regular coordination meetings, seminars, conferences, joint projects, and internships to further strengthen the connection between academia and think tanks.

#### **2. Strategies for Enhancing the Quality of Evidence at PIE**

Participants underscored the importance of ensuring data health and the digitalisation of tools, along with the reduction of biases and the adoption of multi-paradigmatic research designs. Strong advocacy was expressed for the development of indigenous and reliable tools focused on transparent and accurate data collection and analysis. Recommendations also included engaging marginalised communities in the qualitative aspects of PIE's database. Furthermore, participants stressed the paramount importance of peer-reviewed research before dissemination.

#### **3. Utilising PIE's Evidence Base: Stakeholders, Levels, and Impact**

Participants identified key stakeholders, including policymakers, schools, academia, international NGOs, and government education ministries while emphasising the multifaceted usage of PIE's evidence at national, provincial, and institutional levels. Discussions focused on disseminating results widely across various levels and underscored the potential impact of PIE's evidence on critical aspects such as policy formulation, curriculum reforms and teacher training.

#### **4. Embedding Evidence into the Policy/Planning Process**

The participants advocated for the informed involvement of all stakeholders throughout policy and planning preparation. Practical suggestions included the creation of policy research briefs and communication through authentic publications. Additionally, emphasis was placed on the need for collaboration with federal, provincial and area departments for impactful research studies, highlighting the pivotal role of engagement with policymakers, planners, and implementers at various levels.

## Wrap up of Day 1

Dr Sajid Ali, Research Capacity Strengthening Co-Lead with the DARE-RC project wrapped up the day's proceedings by highlighting the critical need for identifying and addressing the evidence gap map towards which multiple-themed and rigorous robust research could be directed in Pakistan. Dr Sajid shared how numerous participants appreciated the workshop that brought together the academia and government departments from across the provinces. A satisfaction survey was conducted to gather feedback from participants and an analysis of the collected data revealed an overall satisfaction rate of 87%, averaging satisfaction across seven key aspects of the workshop: structure and design, venue, participant selection, content of presentations, moderation/facilitation skills, group work process, and cooperative space for questions. This rate is a culmination of the percentages of participants who reported being "Very Satisfied" and "Satisfied" (an excerpt from the satisfaction survey analysis report can be found in **Satisfaction Survey Analysis - Annex D.**)

Dr Sajid asked about the next steps related to the theme of the workshop. Several meaningful and relevant comments and recommendations came in from the participants, which are in line with the objectives and goals set out by the DARE-RC project:

- Enhancing accessibility and dissemination of thesis reports that are often only shelved.
- Accessibility to a database of current data that everyone can use.
- Developing a consensus on data collection standards and methods.
- Enhance the quality and number of research journals available in Pakistan.
- Increase collaborative efforts of provinces to conduct research and networking with stakeholders from different provinces.

Dr Sajid mentioned that day 2 of the workshop will focus on capacity gaps more specifically.

## Day 2 – Workshop on Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping Gaps and Existing Evidence

### Summary of Previous Day Proceedings and Outcomes

Dr Sajid Ali, Research Capacity Strengthening Co-Lead of DARE-RC, began by asking all participants to sit with individuals from other provinces than their own to generate a richer discussion and to provide the opportunity for cross learning. He referred to recommendations from the Day 1 wrap up session, on the need for collaboration among provinces and between the producers and users of research. Dr Sajid stated that all interventions aimed at establishing a culture of evidence basis for decision making should focus on active dialogue and coordination between those who produce research and those that use it. Further summarising discussions from Day 1 of the workshop, he highlighted the need for leveraging the rich data sets available with government entities by making them accessible.

While the theme of Day 1 was about understanding current evidence gaps, the theme of Day 2 of the workshop would focus on capacity gaps in producing research and discussion on the capacity of producers could be strengthened. Mr. Asfundyar Khan, Capacity Strengthening Lead of DARE-RC reiterated the need for a dual focus on both the producers and users of research to make progress towards establishing and nurturing evidence basis in the education sector of the country. He appreciated the active engagement of the participants and the rich discussions strewn with useful recommendations to bolster the quality and relevance of research and its uptake in policy. Before moving towards the presentation on the study entitled *Institutional Research Capacity Mapping*, he encouraged the participants to engage with the content of the sessions on institutional capacity for research.

He stated that this would help them in a more critical engagement with the DARE-RC Capacity Strengthening strategy and plan that will be presented at the end of the workshop for review and feedback.

### Session 3 – Day 2 of the Workshop

#### Presentation on the Institutional Research Capacity Mapping

*Dr Fatima Dar, an education expert and researcher* conducted and presented the *Institutional Research Capacity Mapping* study during the inception phase of the DARE-RC project. Dr Dar started her presentation by emphasising the need to take findings from this study forward as they relate to the needs of the participants and shed light on the current situation of research in the education sector of Pakistan. She explained that the focus of the study was to analyse research capacities of institutions, both degree awarding and think tanks with regards to conducting research on education in Pakistan. The investigation also included an examination of the curricula at the MS/MPhil and PhD levels with a keen eye to how well it supports the preparation of education researchers.

An added focus was on an inquiry into examining key partnerships among research institutions for establishing research practices in consideration of the gaps and challenges and ensuring quality research output at the tertiary level.

The tools and samples included:

- A *desk review* of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) website, institutional websites, and post-graduate curriculum documents.
- *Semi-structured interviews* with senior university faculty members and think tank representatives, 17 institutions in total of which 14 were from departments of education in universities in Punjab, KP, Sindh, GB, ICT and Balochistan and 3 from think tanks.
- Administration of a *questionnaire* to MPhil and PhD education students representing the same institutions as those engaged for faculty interviews.

Dr Dar noted that the study investigation was completed within a short span of 6 weeks. Sharing key highlights of the study, she informed participants that out of 247 universities in Pakistan, 61 have education degree programmes at the tertiary level. In these 61 universities, 67% of students were enrolled in the education programmes in the year 2021-2022. She pointed out that a significant number of students in Pakistan are graduating in education programmes. With regards to publications, there was a 13% increase in publications from 2018-2019 with a total of 25,300 publications and 1203 of those research publications were focused on education related topics.

Sharing the findings from interviews, she highlighted that respondents stated the introduction of innovation and generation of evidence-based recommendations to influence policy as responses to the question on the purpose of research. An additional purpose reported was to fulfil degree requirements and to publish for promotion to a higher position as per HEC requirement—to fulfil the “magic number.”

Participants were also asked about how academic preparation supports quality educational research output and the impact. Positive examples of output from respondents included the empowerment of principals in the public-private partnership with the Education Management Organisations (EMOs) model in Sindh; book publication and its use in schools on the important theme of healthy and safe schools; passing of national assembly bills on minority rights; and initiation of teachers' subject forums for pedagogical support in Punjab- these followed participatory processes and engagement of stakeholders at all levels.

Dr Dar shared key findings regarding the reasons cited for low research output and impact. These include poor quality of input given at the MPhil and PhD levels, supervisors taking on too many students and doing less independent research, publications are merely an output of research and a formality, 80-85% of research focused on quantitative studies, lack of research facilities and institutions, poor quality of academic writing skills, lack of research dissemination strategies and disconnect amongst various stakeholders leading to lower impact.

With regards to a core focus on building practical research skills in researchers, the findings indicate insufficient attention to development of research skills in the curriculum of higher degree programmes. Dr Dar highlighted the need for graduate level studies to become more research intensive as students are not well-prepared for research work upon graduation. Furthermore, they were asked to reflect on how quality of research is ensured, and responses included through Quality Assurance Departments at universities, research committees, research seminars to monitor the progress and quality of the research process, peer review processes and involving experienced and skilful researchers from the field.

Another key finding, she shared relates to the heavy workload on professors of teaching and supervision of research. Professors are generally publishing 1-2 research articles annually, coupled with teaching and supervision of multiple theses, thus it becomes difficult for faculty members to publish quality research. Another compounding factor found was that of the disconnect between academia and think tanks, lack of resources and societal values for research and low accountability.

Overall recommendations to improve the quality research in Pakistan, in light of the study include inter-university collaboration, adequate funding for need-based research, initiating research forums, universities as knowledge hubs, larger focus on qualitative studies, improve research skills of faculty and quality of peer review process and focus on the local context and to strengthen the system for the government to own research findings.

Finally, responses from MPhil and PhD students were shared as part of the questionnaire given to 53 respondents (28 women and 25 men) from the same universities selected for the semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire yielded insights that reinforced findings from the interviews, this included: low industry-academia linkage, research not being demand-driven, excessive faculty workload, limited support and availability of supervisors and the quality of supervision through a focus on training the faculty.

Dr Dar concluded her session by highlighting the critical need to build a strong research culture by following ethical standards, doing meaningful work, following an indigenous research agenda, and making research a strong component of organisational strategic planning. She added that for research quality to improve in Pakistan, it is imperative to conduct research for its intrinsic value, improve research capacities and make universities hubs of knowledge through active research partnerships and by bridging the gap and disconnect between different relevant entities.

### **Question & Answer on Institutional Research Capacity Mapping Presentation**

Participants engaged enthusiastically on the topic of institutional research capacity and the results of the study and its recommendations. For example, Dr Sajid Yousafzai from the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education felt the research findings reflect opinion-based information and not the direct findings of Dr Dar on the topic. Dr Dar clarified that qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used as the tools for research, thus direct quotes and feedback from respondents were included in the findings. The idea that quantitative studies are much more commonly conducted in Pakistan proved to be a controversial finding with regards to some participants who did not agree based on their personal experiences and understanding.



For example, Dr Rana Dilshad from Bahauddin Zakariya University expressed his own personal experience that there is large usage of qualitative methods, and that qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other.

Furthermore, several participants expressed concerns on the role of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and how that impacts their work within their respective institutions. It was suggested that HEC should be engaged more in such initiatives and that studies should be done with a focus on the role of HEC as well. Dr Shakeela Shah, Associate Professor at Sindh University expressed the need for appointing relevant and qualified faculty to ensure quality of teaching and learning at the university level as it is currently not done systematically. The feedback received from participants further reinforces the need for research capacity building in terms of the understanding and use of mixed methods, the disconnect between relevant stakeholders and the need for further evidence on the institutional research capacity scenario in Pakistan.

### Group Work: Preparation of Recommendations on how to Address Gaps in Capacities for Producing Quality Research and its Usage in Policy Formulation within Institutional and Regional Contexts

The group work guidelines and questions were similar in nature to those posed during the previous evidence gap map group work on Day 1.

Participants were asked to focus on answering the following three questions after deliberation within the group:

1. Share group's views on the research capacity gaps presented in terms of points that you agree or disagree with, share reasons for agreement/disagreement as well.
2. Do you know of other capacity gaps that need to be highlighted that may have been missed out by the researchers in their presentation?
3. Suggest concrete steps to overcome these capacity gaps. Suggest what universities, think tanks, government departments and others concerned can do in this regard. (Provide suggestions for what can be done in the **short-, medium- and long-term perspective**)



*Groups deliberating on and developing recommendations on Addressing Gaps in Capacities for Producing Quality Research and its Usage in Policy Formulation within Institutional and Regional Contexts.*

**Group 1** discussed the need to *build capacity on qualitative studies* as they are seen as difficult to analyse, thus sometimes avoided by researchers. The criteria for being able to conduct research should be merit-based. Also, that *faculty development* is a need and universities should reserve funds to promote the professional development of faculty to enhance the quality of research.

**Group 2** emphasised the need to look at the *impact of HEC policies* and how they potentially limit the autonomy of a university and by extension the quality of research being produced. Thus, the need to look at the effectiveness of their policies in contributing to quality outputs constitutes an area that needs to be critically explored.

Overall, there is a need for faculty training which is generally missing key elements such as the use of modern technology and capacity strengthening. **The short-term recommendation is to provide access to a research repository for think tanks and universities so that private research work is also made available to public institutions.** The long-term goal is to empower universities to improve the quality of research according to the needs of society.

**Group 3** discussed the essential need for *academic and grant proposal writing training for faculty* and the fact that we should *consider connecting and capacitating marginalised groups and individuals as well.*

**Group 4** highlighted *lack of funding for professional development, research opportunities and attending relevant events* as hindering capacity building. Additionally, the need to *enhance the role and capacity of the Quality Assurance Departments at institutions* was highlighted. It is suggested that a focus on even just developing the skills to do a literature review properly and academic writing in general is needed. Furthermore, *capacity strengthening of supervisors is recommended.*

**Group 5** mentioned the need to have a separate analysis of research needs and course content for both MPhil and PhD students as content, relevance, and quality matters. The short-term recommendations included *increasing the length and type of coursework, with more focus on research methodology* and strengthening the role of the Quality Assurance Department. Long-term suggestions consisted of *developing priority research areas*, establishing department level libraries, and having continuous professional development of researchers on conducting research.

**Group 6** highlighted gaps relating to the existence of *dormant research wings within departments* at various institutions, *lack of training*, and the *lack of linkages between departments, academia, and industries*. The suggestions included prioritising and incentivising research at the institutional level, activating the research wings and addressing ethnic, religious, rural, gender and abilities when considering capacity strengthening considering the diversity in the country.

Several suggestions and points raised by the participants coincide with the findings and recommendations in the *Institutional Capacity Mapping* study presented by Dr Dar, further supporting the need of capacity strengthening efforts planned by the DARE-RC.



*Panel Discussion includes Dr Fatima Dar, Dr Nasir Mehmood, Dr Nasir Jalil, and Dr Zaigham Qadeer (Dr Irfan Muzaffar not shown here as he joined via video call). The panel was moderated by Dr Sajid Ali.*

### **Panel Discussion: Importance of Using Research Evidence for Policy Making and Building Research Capacity: How can it be made Possible in Low-income Countries?**

To bring together the two main recurring themes of the workshop, a panel discussion was conducted, moderated by Dr Sajid Ali, Research Capacity Strengthening Co-Lead of DARE-RC. The panellists included: *Dr Fatima Dar (Education Expert)*, *Dr Nasir Jalil, (Thematic Lead DARE-RC)*, *Dr Nasir Mehmood, (Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University)*, *Dr Zaigham Qadeer (Director Policy Research Wing, PIE)* and *Dr Irfan Muzaffar, (Education Advisor, World Bank – via video call)*. The panel discussed how to overcome challenges with regards to the gaps in evidence and the institutional research capacity gaps in our context.

Each panellist shared their thoughts on the evidence gap in research on education sector themes. Dr Nasir Jalil shared that the policy making mechanism in Pakistan is ad-hoc and policy stance changes with change in the government. Also, that indigenous policy making is lacking since there is a focus on foreign-driven policy with research minimally being used in policy making. Dr Nasir Mehmood shared that without research evidence, proper policy making is not possible. He felt that considering that the current body of research evidence available lacks in content and quality, it is necessary fill the evidence gaps to ensure meaningful quality research is made available to informs policy. He emphasised that there is a need for credible and reliable evidence. Ethics are often compromised when conducting research as we find that in some instances research and numbers are modified and used to serve the interest of influential stakeholders.

Dr Irfan Muzaffar discussed that there is a difference between the use of research: instrumental (direct use of research to influence policy, which is minimal in Pakistan), symbolic (using research to justify policy decisions already taken) and conceptual use of research which does not have a connection to research informing policy.

Dr Fatima Dar opined that we need to define the research agenda which should be done at the national-level and that academic research currently produced is devoid of context with a need to define the research context for the required social impact.

There is a clear disconnect between relevant actors as all are working in silos. Dr Qadeer mentioned that PIE is positioning itself as the leading think tank on nurturing the evidence and policy link. However, in its nascence it is yet to evolve into this role and gain the trust of stakeholders. He added that PIE is still working on issues with quality and timely available of research, thus there is a need to build trust and to generate quality evidence.

When discussing how to enhance the capacity of researchers, the panellists shared their thoughts. Dr Nasir Mehmood condemned the lack of integrity and the culture of dishonesty and how addressing this challenge is more critical than methodological competence as that can more easily be capacitated. Dr Irfan Muzaffar also shared the view that methodological expertise can be capacitated and highlighted the need to train critical consumers of research on how to read, interpret and make sense of research evidence. First there should be a focus on the development of good research questions then on the methodology. He shared that not enough research falls in the instrumental category as previously discussed.

Dr Nasir Jalil felt that there is no acceptance for high level thinking and research. He reiterated the fact that research methods are low on the list of the initial focus needed. The capacity building of producers of research is needed considering the gaps mentioned. He emphasised to start with the philosophical background and epistemology to enhance the level of sophistication needed for research. There is a need to build the capacity of professors since there is still a narrow understanding of methodology. Dr Qadeer shared that in addition to building capacity for quality research, we need to focus on the research being produced to be relatable and accessible to a wide set of stakeholders. Since research products are often complex and full of jargon, there is a need to simplify the language and style to make it reader-friendly and effective. Dr Fatima Dar expressed that there is a disconnect between different levels of education and that students, from an earlier age should be learning how to become researchers. She also, stressed the need for better mentoring programmes in universities and a higher focus on coursework to build practical research skills and capacity.

### **Question and Answer Session with Panellists**

A few participants shared comments and posed questions following the panel discussion. A participant raised a question on if the spirit of inquiry is truly encouraged or welcomed in Pakistan.

A participant also commented on the need to consider the reality of the multi-grade context in Balochistan with regards to curriculum and other areas when thinking about relevant questions, research evidence and capacity building needs. Another participant also suggested developing a national-level platform for faculty who teach research to provide more support, collaboration, and innovation in research methodology. Furthermore, a question was raised on how we should disseminate research to users of research and the need to understand ground realities better without being guided by assumptions.

Final wrap up comments by the panellists included the reiteration of the current disconnect between academia and government bodies, the need to strengthen and enhance this connection with PIE as the anchor and to include voices of marginalised communities within the Research Advisory Group<sup>1</sup> (RAG).

---

<sup>1</sup> RAG is an advisory and steering committee comprising of members who are experts in different areas of education. Its purpose is to advise PIE on setting and operationalising the research agenda for Pakistan.



Also, how current research being published does not add value, thus the need to further develop the capacity of teaching faculty and consumers of research. Additionally, the need to bring together research institutions and universities in collaborative efforts with universities as the hub of research with a focus on need-based indigenous research coming from the research hub.

It is also important to create a more conducive environment for female researchers as barriers remain when it comes to field work, data collection and the interviewing of stakeholders. Lastly, knowledge, integrity, trust, curiosity, and the overall mindset of research around creating need-based research must be the focus of efforts at enhancing the quality of research in the country.

### **Plenary: Approach of DARE-RC Towards Strengthening Capacities for Quality Research Outputs with Policy Uptake**

Mr. Asfundyar Khan, Capacity Strengthening Lead of DARE-RC shared the capacity strengthening workstream of DARE-RC. He began by thanking the participants for having a rich discussion. He added that this workshop provided a rare opportunity to bring together producers of research (academia) and government entities (PIE and provincial education departments) and also provided them a platform to discuss the link between education related research evidence and policymaking.

He recapped the inception phase of DARE-RC on how the team consulted government entities and departments, civil society organisations and Edtech organisations to identify capacity needs to be addressed for moving towards evidence basis in education policy and practice. He added that the recommendations shared by participants during the workshop reinforced and added value to the process of formulating a capacity strengthening strategy for the DARE-RC project.

He began his presentation by drawing the participants' attention to the supply and demand side factors that play out to compound the disconnect between research evidence and policy in Pakistan. On the supply side, most research products are generated by producers (universities, research organisations and NGOs) which largely remain inaccessible, are of insufficient quality and remain irrelevant to policy needs. These research products are mostly complex, not properly articulated with limited dissemination.

He added that on the demand side, political economy considerations compel immediate action on the part of education sector managers. Moreover, anecdotal evidence and information from education departments and personal experiences of officials shape decisions and policies. The existing capacities in government entities and education departments limit the ability to interpret and use research and data evidence.

Universities (mostly public sector) and research organisations in less developed areas are disconnected from access to resources and face capacity and budgetary constraints. These are the ones located in areas riddled with the most complex issues pertaining to education. He added that this leads to a vast untapped potential for the said institutions to immerse in research on contextual issues on the ground and to disseminate the same for formulation of more informed education policy and practice.

The direct beneficiaries of the DARE-RC project are the producers of research whose capacity will be built. They will be selected on the basis of predefined criteria, which include: 1. Public sector institutions that have education departments; 2. geographical coverage and consideration of the population they cater to; 3. women's institutions; and 4. universities that demonstrate higher research productivity.

He added that the users' side whose capacity will be strengthened include PIE along with the education reform and EMIS units at the provincial education departments.

The overall goals of DARE-RC's proposed capacity strengthening strategy include:

1. **Researchers' capacity enhanced** to generate high quality research evidence and accessible knowledge products for informing policy and practice.
2. **PIEs and federal and provincial education departments' capacity enhanced** to use evidence and research in generating and presenting recommendations to policy makers enhanced.

For the producers of research (universities), the training programme will include two sequential workshops in selected universities that will work as the hubs for training its own faculty and MPhil and PhD students. The capacity strengthening training programme at these hubs will also accommodate faculty members from other universities. 5 such hubs will be established throughout the country to ensure provincial coverage. The first workshop will focus on developing knowledge and skills related to raising policy relevant research questions, developing robust research methodologies, conducting rigorous analysis, developing meta synthesis and actionable recommendations for policy makers. The second workshop organised at each hub after two months of the first one, will focus on developing skills for converting research findings into accessible and effective knowledge products such as policy briefs, conducting policy dialogues, developing white papers and effective communication and dissemination of research. An additional focus will be on strengthening capacities on upholding ethics and safeguarding in research.

For users of research, (PIE and provincial education departments' education reform and EMIS units) the training programme will include three packages based on the delivery of three modules: 1. Evaluating the strength of existing research and synthesising research into relatable reports; 2. developing policy briefs and conducting policy dialogues, and 3. commissioning research. Each sequential package will be delivered with a gap of no less than 2 months. After the delivery of each package, guidance and mentoring support will be provided to trainees in completing tasks assigned during the workshop. These will include development of outputs that are a regular feature of their work, for instance synthesis reports, policy papers and more.

### Question & Answer Session on Plenary

Participants reflected on the DARE-RC project overview. A participant asked what policy institutions can do to ensure political manifestos reflect a high priority towards education and view it as an emergency. Mr. Asfundyar Khan highlighted the fact that the project has a policy engagement component which is focused on advocacy and lobbying at all levels of government and civil society. It is currently engaging with all stakeholders including political parties regarding the importance of education concerns and the need for enhancing the quality of education research. In addition, the communication workstream will support messaging and keeping this matter sustainable. relates to this specific issue mentioned.

Dr Muhammad Ilyas Khan, Chairman of the Education Department at Hazara University expressed the need for more such collaborations as experienced during the workshop.

### Closing Remarks

Dr Sajid Ali emphasised the need to bridge the gap and close the disconnect between government departments, policymakers, research institutions and academia. A participant shared his experience of being a part of weekly Friday research seminar organised by AKU-IED during his time as a student where research was shared at this forum and how something similar could be done via the DARE-RC project. Additionally, participants shared the need for a checks and balances system regarding research ethics and making social science research more accessible to end-users.

Dr Fatima Dar stressed the need to translate research studies into Pakistani languages to make it more accessible. Dr Qadeer added that research products should be simplified so that they are easier to comprehend.

Mr. Harris Khalique spoke about the need for a deeper understanding of how the intersection between the circle of power (government entities and policymakers) with that of the circle of knowledge (academia, scholars, and research organisations) has diminished in Pakistan. The role of DARE-RC is to recreate that intersection to support meaningful policy development based on research evidence.

Dr Shahid Soroya discussed the importance of looking at research ethics and international best practices to guide us. Overall, he added that this collaborative workshop by DARE-RC and PIE is not only appreciated but clearly the need of the time. Collaboration is the ultimate goal, and it is essential for everyone to be open, share ideas and learn from each other. We need to focus on demand-driven initiatives, training, and research. He appreciated the time and contribution of all participants.

## Key Recommendations & Lessons Learned

The 2-day workshop jointly organised by PIE and DARE-RC proved to be a meaningful and much needed opportunity for individuals from academia and government entities across Pakistan to come together to collaborate and reflect on matters related to the current evidence gaps and capacity gaps in producing quality robust research which is actionable and informs policy. It became clear that this was one of the first opportunities for users and producers of research to engage within and across provinces in the country.

Overall, there is agreement amongst the participants and organisers of the workshop that collectively we are lacking a strong culture of research and relevant capacity to produce, use and understand quality, evidence-based research on critical issue pertaining to education.

*Key Evidence Gap Highlights:*

- Focusing more on indigenous research topics which are need-based for the context.
- Strengthening collaborative efforts with all relevant stakeholders such as academia, think tanks, NGOs, and government entities to determine the research agenda that has prioritised themes which are demand-driven and inform policy.
- Developing a database of current evidence available which is accessible to users and producers or research.
- Understanding the process behind developing a robust, quality, and relevant research agenda.
- Strengthening the culture of research amongst all stakeholders emphasising ethics, quality, and standards.
- Needing to strengthen data systems through the development a data standardisation framework.
- Identifying gaps in research areas which require more rigorous evidence in relation to educational challenges facing specific populations across various provinces in Pakistan.
- Analysing pilot interventions which have proven to be effective and have potential for scale up.

*Key Capacity Gaps Highlights:*

- Training of faculty and producers of research on enhancing research skills and academic and grant writing.
- Increasing course content within graduate study programmes around research capacity building and subsequent training and facilitation of faculty on teaching research and enhancing their supervisory role.
- Creating research evidence which is accessible and user-friendly for consumers and users of research such as policymakers.
- Considering the current HEC policy around publishing research for the purpose of promotions within academic institutions as it impacts quality and intention behind research.
- Bridging the gap between academia and think tanks and creating partnerships in research with universities being the hubs of knowledge.
- Building capacity on understanding and using qualitative and mixed methods for addressing meaningful educational challenges.
- Engaging with government entities and policymakers to ensure the uptake of evidence of research conducted around relevant issue areas.
- Increasing funding and professional development opportunities for faculty to further build capacity.
- Enhancing the Quality Assurance Departments and peer review processes to ensure high standards of research.



## Workshop Programme Agenda (Annex A)

### PIE - DARE-RC Workshop

#### Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping Gaps and Existing Evidence

20 – 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 | Roomy Hotel, F-6, Islamabad

#### Programme

Day 1 – 20 December, 2023		
Time	Session	Responsibility
9:00 - 9:15am	Registration and seating of participants	Participants
9:15 - 9:55am	Baseline collection exercise	Participants, DARE-RC MEL team
9:55 - 10:00am	Recitation	
	<b>Inaugural Session</b>	
10:00 – 10:10am	Welcome remarks	Ms. Saima Anwer, Acting Education Team Lead FCDO
10:10 – 10:20am	Overview of the DARE-RC project Objectives of the workshop	Mr. Harris Khalique, Programme Director DARE-RC
10:20 – 10:30am	Keynote Address by Chief Guest – Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Special Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT)	
10:30 – 10:40am	Vote of Thanks	Dr. Shahid Soroya, Director General Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE)
<b>10:40 – 11:00am</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>	
	<b>Session 1</b>	
11:00 – 11:30am	Evidence Gap Map: Analytical overview of the education system and service delivery in Pakistan	Dr. Jamila Razzaq, Research Director DARE-RC
11:30 – 11:50am	Q&A	Participants
11:50am – 12:50pm	<b>Group Work:</b> Preparation of recommendations on how to bridge evidence gaps within institutional and regional contexts	Participants
12:50 – 1:30pm	<b>Presentations</b> on outcome of group work	Participants
<b>1:30 – 2:30pm</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
	<b>Session 2</b>	
2:30 – 3:10pm	<b>PIE's Evidence Trail:</b> Navigating the National Education Landscape. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pakistan Education Statistics (PES) 2020-21; report findings &amp; potential deep dive areas for research</li> <li>NAT 2023; report findings &amp; potential deep dive areas for research</li> </ul>	Dr. Muhammad Zaigham Qadeer Director Policy Research Wing, PIE
3:10 – 3:40pm	Q&A	Participants
3:40 – 4:10pm	<b>Plenary: Reflections on recommendations</b> in the light of the evidence gap map and potential of the PIE data/evidence bank	Participants
4:10pm	Wrap up of Day 1 and Tea	Dr. Sajid Ali, Research Capacity Strengthening Co-Lead DARE-RC

Day 2 – 21 December, 2023		
Time	Session	Responsibility
9:15am	Recitation	
9:20 – 9:30am	Summary of previous day's proceedings and outcomes	Dr. Sajid Ali, Research Capacity Strengthening Co-Lead DARE-RC
	<b>Session 3</b>	
9:30 – 10:00am	Presentation on the Institutional Research Capacity Mapping	Dr. Fatima Dar, Education Expert and Senior Researcher
10:00 -10:20 am	Q&A	Participants
10:20 – 11:10am	<b>Group Work:</b> Preparation of recommendations on how to address gaps in capacities for producing quality research, its usage in policy formulation within institutional and regional contexts	Participants
11:10 – 11:40am	<b>Presentations</b> on outcome of groupwork	Participants
<b>11:40 – 12:00pm</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>	
	<b>Session 3</b>	
12:00 – 12:40pm	<b>Panel discussion:</b> Importance of using research evidence for policy making and building research capacity; how can it be made possible in low-income countries?	Professor Dr. Nasir Mehmood, Vice Chancellor AIOU Dr. Shahid Soroya, Director General PIE Dr. Fatima Dar, Education Expert and Senior Researcher Dr. Nasir Jalil, Thematic Lead DARE-RC
12:40 – 1:00pm	Q&A	Participants
<b>1:00 – 2:15pm</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
2:15 – 2:40pm	<b>Plenary:</b> Approach of DARE-RC towards strengthening capacities for quality research outputs with policy uptake	Mr. Asfundyar Khan, Capacity Strengthening Lead DARE-RC Dr. Sajid Ali, Research Capacity Strengthening Co-Lead DARE-RC
2:40 – 3:10pm	Q&A	Participants
3:10 – 3:30pm	Post workshop feedback form	DARE-RC MEL Team
3:30 – 3:40pm	Wrap up	Asfundyar Khan, Capacity Strengthening Lead DARE-RC
3:40 – 4:00pm	Closing remarks	Dr. Shahid Soroya, Director General PIE
<b>4:00pm</b>	<b>Tea and end of workshop</b>	

## List of Participants (Annex B)

Capacity Strengthening Stakeholders List					
S. No	Name	Designation	Organisation	City	Stakeholder
<b>Inaugural Guests</b>					
1.	Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani	Special Secretary	Federal Education and Vocational Training Division	Federal	Government
2.	Mr. Amjad Ahmed	Joint Secretary	MoFEPT	Federal	Government
3.	Ms. Saima Anwer	Senior Education Advisor	FCDO	Federal	Donor
4.	Ms. Maryum Khan	PRO DARE	FCDO	Federal	Donor
5.	Mr. Saqib Farooq	Advisor	MoFEPT	Federal	Government
6.	Prof Dr. Nasir Mahmood	Vice Chancellor	Allama Iqbal Open University	Federal	Academia
7.	Prof. Dr. Muhammad Bilal	Professor, Chairperson	Fatimah Jinnah University	Federal	Academia
<b>Participants from Government Sector Organisations</b>					
8.	Dr. Shahid Soroya	Director General	PIE	Federal	Government
9.	Dr. M. Zaigham Gadeer	Director (Research) Research and Policy Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
10.	Dr. Safeer Ullah	Director National Education Management Information System (NEMIS)	PIE	Federal	Government
11.	Mr. Shahzad Arif	Consultant Education Management Information System (EMIS)	PIE	Federal	Government
12.	Mr. Shahzad Mithani	Consultant National Assessment Wing (NAW)	PIE	Federal	Government
13.	Ms. Shaista Bano	Joint Director Policy Research Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
14.	Dr. Kanwal Ejaz	Deputy Director Assessment Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
15.	Dr. Shazad Ahmad	Subject Specialist Assessment Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
16.	Ms. Samanna Ali Bokhari	Deputy Director Research	PIE	Federal	Government
17.	Mr. Sohail Ajmal	Deputy Director Policy Research Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
18.	Mr. Haider Ali	Research Associate	PIE	Federal	Government
19.	Mr. Bilal Kakli	System Analyst, Education Management Information System	PIE	Federal	Government
20.	Mr. Zubair Piracha	Data Management Officer Education Management Information Systems (EMIS)	PIE	Federal	Government
21.	Ms. Misbah Azhar	Research Officer Research and Policy Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
22.	Mr. Muhammad Saddam	Research Assistant, Research and Policy Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
23.	Ms. Humaira Aziz	Research Assistant, Research and Policy Wing	PIE	Federal	Government
24.	Ms. Mahrukh Fatima	Staff	PIE	Federal	Government
25.	Mr. Muhammad Tariq	Staff	PIE	Federal	Government
26.	Mr. Shoaib Rasool	Research Assistant	PIE	Federal	Government

27.	Mr. Muhammad Omer Daraz	Staff	PIE	Federal	Government
28.	Mr. Affan Ummar	OS	PIE	Federal	Government
29.	Mr. Muhammad Sameer	Senior Superintendent	PIE	Federal	Government
30.	Ms. Tehreem Shoukat	Staff	PIE	Federal	Government
31.	Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Joya	APS	PIE	Federal	Government
32.	Mr. Tahir Taj	Joint Director Coordination	PIE	Federal	Government
33.	Mr. Suhail Bin Aziz	Assistant Educational Advisor, Curriculum Expert	National Curriculum Council (NCC)	Federal	Government
34.	Dr. Nasir Mahmood	Director, Assessment and Framework	Punjab Examination Commission (PEC)	Punjab	Government
35.	Mr. Irfan Muzaffar	Education Advisor	World Bank	Federal	Government
36.	Mr. Abid Ali Naeem	Deputy Director	EMIS, GB	Federal	Government
37.	Mr. Takwir Ahmed	Deputy Director General Operations	Federal Directorate of Education	Federal	Government
38.	Mr. Asim Ijaz Cheema	Section Officer, Education Department	School Education Department Lahore	Punjab	Government
39.	Dr. Aftab Alam	Head	RSU, SEMIS	Sindh	Government
40.	Mr. Abdul Khaliq	Chief Planning Officer	School Education Department (SED)	Balochistan	Government
41.	Mr. Muhammad Ijaz	Section Officer Training	RSU, SEMIS	Sindh	Government
42.	Mr. Abdul Razzaq	Assessment Expert	BAEC	Balochistan	Government
<b>Participants from Universities, Think Tanks, and NGOs</b>					
43.	Dr. Ayub Buzdaar	Professor	Allama Iqbal Open University, Education Department	Federal	Academia
44.	Prof Dr. Hafiz Inamullah	Director IER	IER Department University of Peshawar	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Academia
45.	Dr. Intezar Hussain Butt	Professor	Education Department University of Education Lahore	Punjab	Academia
46.	Dr. Asif	Dean, Education Department	Karakoram International University	Gilgit Baltistan	Academia
47.	Dr. Sadruddin Qutoshi	Assistant Professor, Education Department	Karakoram International University	Gilgit Baltistan	Academia
48.	Dr. Muhammad Ilyas Khan	Chairperson, Education Department	Hazara University	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Academia
49.	Dr. Dhani Bux	HoD, Education Department	Sukkur IBA University	Sindh	Academia
50.	Dr. Amir Hashmi	Associate Professor	Assessment Department Punjab University	Punjab	Academia
51.	Dr. Sher Zaman	Associate Professor HoD (Education, Psychology, Assessment in Education)	University of Gujrat	Punjab	Academia
52.	Dr. Rana Dilshad	Professor, Education Department	BZU Multan	South Punjab	Academia
53.	Dr. Shakeela Shah	Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum Development and Special Education	Sindh University	Sindh	Academia
54.	Dr. Saubia Ramzan	Professor, Faculty Training and Development Center	University of Balochistan	Balochistan	Academia



55.	Dr. Sajid Ali Yousafzai	Psychometrician, Researcher	Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education	Federal	Academia
56.	Mr. Affan Shoukat	Data Analyst	KPEMA	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Academia
57.	Ms. Sadia Hussain	Technical Lead	Education and Protection ACTED	Federal	NGO
58.	Dr. Aliya Ayub	Professor	Sardar Bahadur Khan University	Balochistan	Academia
59.	Mr. Sohail Ahmed	PhD Candidate, Researcher	AKU-IED	Sindh	Academia
60.	Mr. Waseem Khokhar	Researcher, Lecturer	Muslim Youth University	Federal	Academia
61.	Mr. Asif Aqeel	Researcher, Center for Law and Justice	Lahore School of Law	Punjab	Academia
62.	Dr. Stephen John	HoD, Associate Professor	Sindh Madressatul Islam University	Sindh	Academia
63.	Prof. Afadia Hussain	Assistant Professor	Govt. Graduate College for Women, Gujranwala	Punjab	Academia
64.	Dr. Sonia Omer	Director	Sughra Begum Center for Education, Policy, and Development	Punjab	Academia
65.	Dr. Fatima Dar	Education Expert and CEO	Oak Consulting	Sindh	Academia

**Participants from DARE-RC**

66.	Mr. Harris Khalique	Programme Director	DARE-RC	Federal	
67.	Ms. Naila Baqir	Deputy Programme Director	DARE-RC	Federal	
68.	Dr. Jamila Razzaq	Research Director	DARE-RC	Federal	
69.	Ms. Nida Khan	Programme Manager	DARE-RC	Federal	
70.	Mr. Hafiz Inam Ullah	Deputy Programme Manager	DARE-RC	Federal	
71.	Mr. Asfundyar Khan	Capacity Building Lead	DARE-RC	Federal	
72.	Dr. Sajid Ali	Research Capacity Building Co-lead	DARE-RC	Sindh	
73.	Ms. Ayesha Fazlur Rehman	Inclusion Lead	DARE-RC	Federal	
74.	Dr. Nasir Jalil	Thematic Lead	DARE-RC	Federal	
75.	Ms. Zahra Moulvi	MEL Lead	DARE-RC	Federal	
76.	Ms. Yamna Rashid	MEL Specialist	DARE-RC	Federal	
77.	Ms. Fizza Ali	MEL Manager	DARE-RC	Federal	
78.	Mr. Areej Ahmed Khan	Programme Coordinator, Capacity Building	DARE-RC	Federal	
79.	Mr. Farhad Jarral	Communications Lead	DARE-RC	Federal	
80.	Mr. Azfar Ansari	Policy Engagement Manager	DARE-RC	Federal	
81.	Mr. Ghaffar Bangash	Fund Management Officer	DARE-RC	Federal	
82.	Ms. Jasmine Abraham	Consultant	DARE-RC	Federal	
83.	Mr. Farhan Ghalib	Junior Coordinator	DARE-RC	Federal	
84.	Mr. Abdur Rauf Khan Gandapur	Policy Engagement Co-Lead	DARE-RC	Federal	

## Workshop Satisfaction Survey (Annex C)

### PIE - DARE-RC Workshop Evidence Landscape of Pakistan: Mapping Gaps and Existing Evidence 20 – 21st December 2023 | Roomy Hotel, F-6, Islamabad

Thank you for attending our workshop! Your feedback is essential for improving our future events. Please take a moment to share your thoughts about today's workshop.

What is your organisation affiliation (Please check one)

- Federal Government
- Provincial Government
- University
- Think tank
- Others - Please specify: -----

1. Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the workshop (Please check the appropriate box for each aspect):

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
a) Structure and design of the workshop					
b) Venue of the workshop					
c) Selection of participants for the workshop (i.e. were relevant people present for the content that was presented)					
d) Content of the presentations, in terms of providing you with new knowledge					
e) Moderation/facilitation skills of the organisers					
f) Group work process of coming up with recommendations					
e) Cooperative space to ask questions and gain clarity for anything that is unclear					

P.T.O

2. Any specific topics or areas related to research capacity strengthening you would like us to cover in future workshops?
3. If you have any other comments about the workshop, please share with us below.

Thank you for your valuable feedback!

## Satisfaction Survey Analysis (Annex D)

Participants were provided with a post-workshop survey to provide feedback and the results were analysed by the DARE-RC MEL team. Some of the key points are represented below:

### Direct Feedback

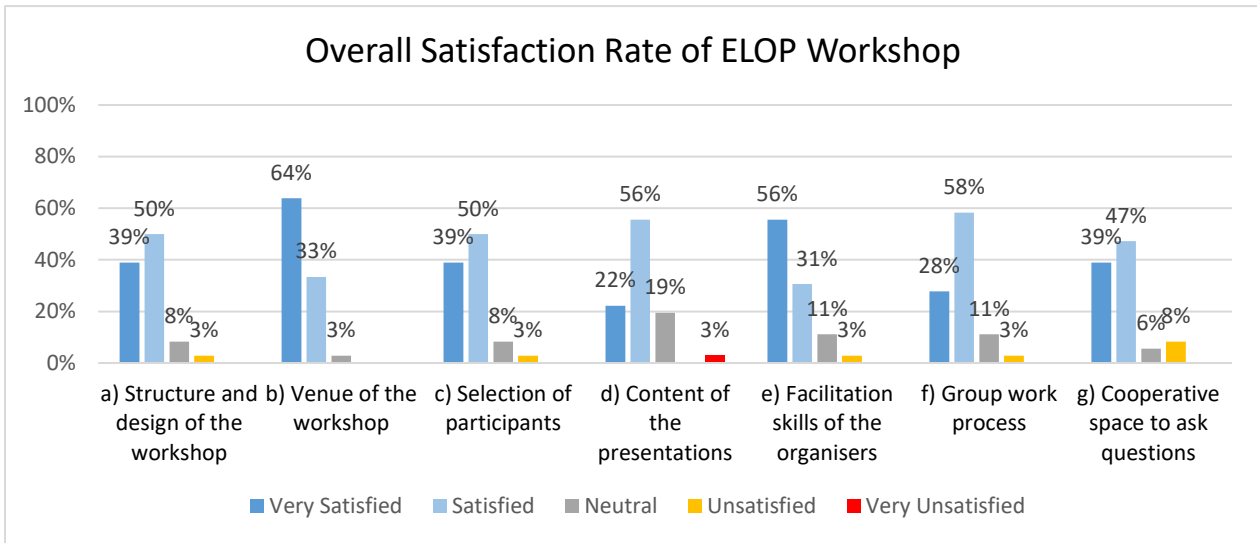
1. Group Work Process: Participants were largely content with the group work process, with 28% "Very Satisfied" and 58% "Satisfied."
  - One participant shared, **"It has been an extremely great conference in terms of learning and connecting with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, talking about policy implications for future course of action."**
2. Participant Selection: Relevant participation was appreciated, as reflected in the 39% "Very Satisfied" and 50% "Satisfied" responses.
  - Another participant stated, **"Involvement of various stakeholders such as universities, departments etc. was excellent."**
  - A participant wrote, **"The training was fruitful, and it provided the platform to coordinate with the provincial/federal government and universities. The workshop was well managed, and it will help to promote research culture in their context."**
3. Content of Presentations: Most participants demonstrated their satisfaction with the content of the presentations.
  - One participant shared, **"Theme was very close to my heart. It is the need of the time. Overall sequence of topics was good."** Another commented, **"The workshop is quite satisfying and uncover the different avenues of gaps in existing research areas."**

### Key Findings and Figures

Overall Satisfaction Rate: The survey assessed satisfaction across seven key aspects of the workshop: structure and design, venue, participant selection, content of presentations, moderation/facilitation skills, group work process, and cooperative space for questions. **An analysis of the collected data revealed an impressive overall satisfaction rate of 87.3%. This rate is a culmination of the percentages of participants who reported being "Very Satisfied" and "Satisfied."**



1. Figure 2: Overall Satisfaction Rate of ELOP Workshop



2. Figure 3: Disaggregated Satisfaction Rate of ELOP Workshop

