

## **Analyzing the Role of UK aid in School Education in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

UK Aid has been aiding school education in Pakistan since long. Historically, Pakistan has received the largest aid from UK aid in education sector but little research is done to evaluate the role of this aid. For this purpose, an evaluative case study research design was used to evaluate the role of UK Aid. Qualitative research approach was employed to do this evaluative study. Five programs were selected to study UK aid as a case in this research. Two programs were in post-completion stage and three programs were in implementation stage. Data triangulation was done to incorporate different aspects related to the aid in the five selected programs. Purposive sampling technique was used. Semi-structured interviews from the recipients of UK aid were conducted. Document analysis was carried out to specific, formal documents to critically review the donor's perspective. Following strict ethical guidelines, thematic analysis for the interviews and document analysis was performed. After evaluating the programs and comparing outcomes with education indicators, contextual discussion points were raised. It was found that the aid is used for multipurpose to enhance the educational outcomes but the problems are grave and require consistent long-term combined efforts. Recommendations were given to enhance the effectiveness and utility of UK Aid.

**Keywords:** UK Aid; school education; evaluative case study program evaluation.

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## **Introduction**

The education system of Pakistan is progressing under foreign aid assistance by several multi-lateral and bi-lateral aid organizations. There are still many improvements desirable in the education system that include basic indicators of quality education such as enrollment rates, retention rates, quality aspects, and learning outcomes of students. Pakistan has inherited basic education system from the British courtesy their above 100-year rule over the sub-continent.

According to Asim and Shah (2014) the British education system for combined sub-continent started from 1813 and lasted till 1947. They termed it a seven-term period having different educational policies. Asim and Shah (2014) have divided the British education system in sub-continent into seven terms. These terms span over the following periods: 1st term (1813-1835), 2nd term (1835-1854), 3rd term (1854-1882), 4th term (1882-1904), 5th term (1904-1919), 6th term (1919-1929), 7th term (1929-1947). This is how the roots of current education system of Pakistan originate from old British education system. UK Aid has a history of reform programs in the education system of Pakistan. Despite a trail of hefty aid programs of UK Aid, the education indicators of Pakistan are still demeaning (Abdullah & Akhtar, 2019a). Therefore, there is a need to critically investigate UK Aid and its role in the education system in Pakistan.

## **UK aid and DFID**

UK aid is a bi-lateral foreign aid organization that provides international developmental funding through its Department for International Development (DFID). DFID has initiated multiple projects throughout Pakistan. Its projects range from each province, including Punjab, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Baluchistan, and Sindh to other regions, like Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The nature of these projects varies from one region to another. UK Aid has funded the highest in Pakistan; even more than Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Syria (Development Tracker, 2016). Education has been on their priority list. UK Aid has offered 414.83 Million pounds in Pakistan for the year 2016-17.

For every coming year, there are new commitments by DFID with Pakistan. The planned budget of DFID in Pakistan for the year 2017-18 was £ 373 million and the planned budget for the year 2018-19 is £ 345 million (DFID, 2018). The contribution of UK Aid in education sector of Pakistan for the period 2011-12 till 2015-16 is displayed in table 1. The targets and values have been taken from the official DFID source (DFID Operational Plan, 2014).

DFID has taken baseline targets from 2010 and the progress has been measured till March 2016. Table 1 has displayed the progress track of all indicators. A clear uplift can be seen in table 1. As a result of DFID's interventions, number of benefitted children has crossed millions which is a positive sign for the aid agency as well as for the Pakistani education system.

Table 1

*Results of UK aid in Education to Pakistan (2011-2016)*

Indicator	Baseline (2010)	Progress (March 2016)
Number of children in primary education benefitting from DFID support (per annum).	0.2 million children	7.5 million children (Female: 3.7 million) (March 2016)
Number of children helped by DFID to complete primary education (cumulative).	100,000 children	5.7 million children (Female: 2.7million) (March 2016)
Number of children in secondary education benefitting from DFID support (per annum).	30,000 children	4.2 million children (Female 2.1 million) (March 2016)
Total number of additional children enrolled in primary and secondary schools in Pakistan.	0 additional children	2.4 million children (Female: 1.2 million) (March 2015)

It is evident from above-cited literature that UK Aid is the most contributing aid agency in education sector of Pakistan. Couple it with the challenging situation of education in Pakistan, the low enrollment and retention rate issues and Therefore, this study was directed towards probing into the functioning and effectiveness of UK Aid and the gap between agency's understandings and recipient institutions' understandings about core problems, required action plan, intervention, and intended outcomes. Further inquiry has been probed into the role of UK Aid, target audience, stakeholders, evaluation in terms of perceived influence on educational outcomes, and continuation of the programs and/or projects.

More specifically, present study had the following main question/objective.

### **Objective/ Main question of the research**

What role does the United Kingdom's aid agency, DFID play in supporting education in Pakistan, and how this aid is perceived to influence educational outcomes? It further strived to answer the following questions.

### **Subsidiary questions**

1. Who are the recipients of UK aid in education in Pakistan and how are they selected? What specific interventions are introduced by UK aid?
2. How is UK aid perceived by the recipients to influence education?

## **Methodology**

The research design used was an evaluative case study. A qualitative case study methodology was developed to get a deep understanding of the role of UK Aid in supporting education system of Pakistan. The qualitative case study method aligns with interpretivism the philosophical paradigm of the researcher. Nind and Todd (2011) and Willis (2007) also supported that interpretivists predominantly use qualitative methods such as a case study. According to Yin (2009) case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. UK Aid under DFID was taken as a case in this research. This was inspired by the views of Chadderton and Torrance (2011), they saw the whole phenomenon as a case and details of the phenomenon are then studied in detail. Likewise, this research took UK Aid as a case and explored in detail its selected projects and programs.

## **Sampling design**

Purposive sampling technique was used as it aligned with the research paradigm and design. Three projects that were in implementing stage were selected (1) Transforming Education in Pakistan (2) Ilm Ideas Phase II (3) Punjab Education Sector Program II. The researchers also intended to explore the perceived influence of these funded programs on the educational outcomes; therefore, two UK aid programs that were recently completed were also selected: (1) Innovative Fund for Education (2) Education Sector Voice and Accountability Project.

## **Instrumentation**

Two instruments were selected for this research. (1) Semi-structured interviews (2) Document analysis.

## **Semi-structured Interviews**

Babbie (2005) termed semi-structured interviews as inherently flexible, making it a major advantage. Similarly, Flick (2002) preferred using semi-structured interviews in qualitative case studies. The researcher can inquire more in detail through semi-structured interview; hence it positively added to the purpose of the research (Berg, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The interview questions were based mainly on the model of Chen (2005) who has designed an evaluative model for program evaluation case study. The components of that model are: (1) need assessment (2) intervening variables (3) target audience (4) intended outcomes (5) unintended outcomes (5) measuring outcomes.

### ***Validity of interviews***

Experts were approached with the objectives and framework of the study. For validation of interview questions, the experts must be consulted with all the relevant information of aim, scope and objectives of the study (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Their suggestions were considerably added to ensure the content validity of the instrument. For instance, the questions were made specific and narrowed down further to seek in detail answers. Lead questions were also included in two subsidiary questions.

### **Document Analysis**

For triangulation, along with the in-depth interviews, documentary evidences such as aid details, project reports, and published evaluative reports/annual reviews, logical frameworks, project completion reports (where applicable) and business cases were examined. Document analysis techniques were used to evaluate the documentary evidence. Document analysis is an organized technique of reviewing the documents (Bowen, 2009). After analyzing the documents, the outcomes were analytically compared with the educational outcomes and indicators of Pakistan for a betterment understanding of the impact of UK Aid. For that purpose following documents were further reviewed: Pakistan Education Statistics reports of 2017, 2016,...2011, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reports of 2017, 2016,...2011, Federal and provincial budgets and breakdown from 2018 till 2011, Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) for the years 2018 to 2011, district education rankings and reports of School Education Department (SED) and its affiliated departments such as Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU), Directorate of Staff Development (DSD)/Quaid-e-Azam Academy of Educational Development (QAED), Punjab Examination Commission (PEC), Punjab Examination Foundation (PEF), National Educational Assessment System (NEAS) and Punjab Information and Technology Board (PITB).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants of research were approached by taking prior time appointments for interviews. The interview was recorded with prior permission of participants otherwise notes were taken. Anonymity of participants was also taken into consideration. The research relied, in good faith, on monetary values/budgets/expenditures/costs that were available in official published reports only. This research was a critical inquiry that by no means intended to falsify the claims of donor aid agencies neither it has, at any stage, got into conflict of interests.

### **Interview Analysis**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted according to the interview protocol. Recording and transcribing interviews was done, while transcribing, the translation of Urdu language into English was given due consideration. Once the transcriptions were finalized Thematic Analysis was performed to analyze interviews. Themes were identified against each answer separately for each participant. The researcher read each line multiple times before identifying the themes. Memoing was done throughout the themes-identification process. The memos were cross-checked to be certain on the identified themes.

Underneath is the detailed analysis of interview answers.

The interviews were taken from all stakeholders involved in the selected programs and their sub-projects: The researcher gave codes to these departments as PEF (A), PEC (B), QAED/DSD (C), PMIU (D), and participants belonging to these departments were given numbers as 1 and 2. Therefore, participant 1 from PEF department was coded as A1, and participant 2 as A2. These codes were given to cite their wordings in the analysis.

The researcher asked the question from participants that how do you invite aid agencies to initiate a program/project? For clarity of results, their answers were grouped separately for each department. A1 informed the researcher by saying, “We are working as an aide to government in providing primary education to masses. We take a certain number of schools from government sector and bear the expenses of schools, including salaries of staff and teachers. In our effort, the aid agency (DFID) gives us finances. They come through government channel”. While A2 added, “We do not invite any agency as such we are an autonomous body and are helping the Government. You may relate this help with MDGs and now SDGs since we have to achieve targets set in them”.

Second question was, “Is there any particular process to evaluate whether this program should be started or not? Is the process helpful or not? A1 answered, “To us, DFID has no program or project. It might have been at their end that how and why they are investing their funds. But for PEF they are only giving finances on our plan”. “I cannot say about the intervention evaluation. All I can comment is they come, give sessions, and leave” (B1), while B2 expressed, “I cannot comment on their projects; they do trainings of our staff. I was coordinator of training sessions held recently. They train on how to make [test] items and how to check papers.” Whereas, C2 said, “we see whether we need this aid or not. If we have adequate resources, then we do not seek their aid on the same activity.” D1 said that this department cannot evaluate as it is not in their domain.

Next question was what is your perception of UK Aid and the role it plays? A2 responded: “though this amounts to less than 10% of our budget only, still I would say it helps.” Almost contrary comments were received from Department B. “The role they play is just nominal as in training they did not tell us anything new. All procedures they told us were already in function and practiced by us” (B1).

A question related to the role of recipient institution was asked. Is there any role of recipient institution in aid project? If yes, what role is played by recipient institution? Participants from department A said that there is an exclusive role of recipient institution because we have all the plan, infrastructure, and strategies to achieve targets. B1 informed, “the recipient institution provides information and venue. They come with resource persons and technical staff. This technical staff is their official Technical Assistance Office Management (TAMO) team working under Adam Smith International.”

C1 added, “The role is definitely of recipients too. The structure is ours, they come to us for meetings. Together we decide the framework. They give us aid and assistance through technical assistance department.” In the words of D1, “every recipient institution has a pertinent role to play. All details are managed by us which helps UK Aid and all recipient institutions of Punjab. Our major task is with the Chief Minister (CM) Punjab. CM road map for school reforms is the main program for which every public school and SED is working. This UK aid is also linked with that.”

Next question was about the usefulness of aid. Do you consider what change this aid could bring, positive or negative? B1 articulated, “the change, if any, will be positive but I don’t think attributing this change to UK Aid will be sound as we are already working and following the protocols they tell us in training.” While B2 said, “I do not think giving training can actually handle practical situations, we have to deal practically while facing real-time situations.” Participants of department A viewed this aid as a supporting activity. C1 strengthened the premise that DFID is playing a positive role and D1 also highlighted the brighter role of the aid.

After knowing the basic operation and the procedure of how this aid functions, the next question was, how is the project/aid evaluated? Is there your any role in evaluation of the project/aid? “We give them details in number and they can always verify with the schools as well. Aid they give us must be evaluated for their own reasons. We have nothing to do with their amount evaluation” (A1& A2). Department B shared similar experiences of aid evaluation. “The aid is their phenomena PEC does not interfere in that” (B1 & B2).

Department C revealed a detailed answer to this question. “There are certain documents like Result Assessment Framework (RAF), Value for Money (VFM), and Stocktake which DFID regularly files. We provide the information and that can be useful for them. Otherwise, they evaluate their aid themselves” (C1). Participant from department D said that they had the least role in this evaluation.

Next question was, do you act upon the recommendations made in the evaluation report? A1 explained; “If they share with us and that is relevant to us, we will definitely look up to it.” While A2 expressed, “the evaluation must be of their aid and not of our structure and functioning. However, they might recommend some points based on their experience of working with us.” Participants from department B were of the view that aid evaluation is not in their domain; however, they do evaluate their own activities which are funded by DFID. C1 expressed, “there is no formal recommendation from them, however, what they suggest us while their visit to us, we try to follow that; given our resources and structure.” Whereas, C2 and department D found that the evaluation of aid was an independent phenomenon.

The next question was on how the programs or projects continue. Are there any concrete steps you take to continue the same program once the aid agency completes it? B1 stated, “we are working on item development and we have the largest item bank in the country. Though we have limited resources, yet we continue to incorporate the latest trends in our working. The aid only comes to facilitate us in our pre-designed activities. We continue working the same with or without aid.” Quite similar was the response of participant 2. Participant C1 said, “Yes, we plan and revisit our plan and schedule after every term. If DFID supports us through funds or by providing us with the resource persons for training that is an added benefit. We are a governmental institution and we keep on working within our domain with or without aid.” Participant D1 informed “I cannot say that any project related to our department is specifically launched by UK Aid. We have designed a road map for our school education. Different international aid agencies propose assistance in that.”

Second last question for the interviews was asked, are there any obstacles in continuing the project once UK Aid moves out? How are they overcome? A1 said, “Well, there could be some obstacles. As I said the aid is helpful to us and the overall system in certain ways. But if they move out from funding that might slow our speed towards achieving the targets, but will certainly not stop us.” Whereas A2 provided a detailed analysis, “I would say that they should invest more and shall not move out. Why would they move out if they know that fund is utilized in best possible cause?” B1 was of the view that “no there would not be an obstacle. I do not find their exercise useful. It is mere repetition. What could happen is that we will work on our own that is business as usual...” Participants from department C and D were positive about the utility and function of this aid.

The last question asked to conclude the interview was, how does a specific project/aid help in the outcomes of education in Pakistan? A2 shares, "...by taking some of the public schools and managing them to run privately is what we do. This affects the educational outcomes because it will lead to increase literacy, prosperity, and further educational opportunities and vocations." B1 said, "PEC is a big institution with a lot of responsibilities. Any technical assistance or training certainly adds in achieving our set criteria and goals. The role of DFID is limited to only providing us with training and technical assistance. Though it is helpful, I cannot see that the educational outcomes are affected by this aid alone." C1 briefed the researcher that UK aid has played a significant role in our department and through our department I mean the SED. School teachers are more competent now based on their practical training and continuous development program. D1 expressed, "it helps in a way to uplift our long-lasting problems such as turnout of students and teachers, dropouts, absenteeism, lack of professionalism, and use of ICT in education."

In this way, the analysis of the semi-structured interviews was done. Next part of data analysis included document analysis of the programs.

### **Document Analysis**

Document analysis was done to assess the use and effectiveness of the aid. The objectives and interventions were analyzed by the researcher. In this paper, the interventions of all five selected programs have been presented.

### **Education sector voice and accountability fund (V&A Fund)**

Table 2

*Details of projects/interventions under V&A Fund*

Sr #	Organization	Project/ Intervention
1	Democratic Commission for Human Development's (DCHD)	Worked with minority communities in Sindh to generate evidence for low literacy levels.
2	Women's Welfare Organization Poonch	
3	Governance Institutes Network International	Worked with children with physical and learning disabilities in AJK and Punjab
4	Association of Global Humanists and Ethics	Targeted out-of-school girls in district Diamir, Gilgit Baltistan.
5	Centre for Governance and Public Accountability	District budget analysis
6	Institute of Social and Policy Sciences	Constituency Education Rankings
7	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	Development of high-quality primary research on dropouts.
8	Institute of Social and Policy Sciences– (Special Grant)	Novel research on education procurement

9	Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child	32 citizen advocacy groups in meetings with government officials
10	Consumer Rights Commission of Pakistan	Higher-level School Councils
11	Centre for Governance and Public Accountability	Provincial and District Budget analysis
12	Aga Khan University's Institute for Education Development	Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation
13	Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability/Free and Fair Election Network	Identify V&A interventions in Pakistan
14	Pakistan Coalition for Education by SAQE	Building the capacity of state institutions to promote accountability.
15	Farmers Development Organizations	Building capacity of local people to lobby politicians and making their 'power of vote'
16	Express Publications	Content development on teacher recruitment and education budgeting.
17	College of Youth Activism and Development	community exhibitions showcasing social action projects
18	Mishal	Journalists' directory
19	Centre for Peace and Development	Participation in an education watch group
20	Nur Centre for Research and Policy	Inclusion of school health in the agenda of the Child Rights Movement
21	Institute of Social and Policy Sciences	Ranking of political constituencies using an education scorecard
22	Semiotics	Education Planning Working Groups
23	CGN	Children's clubs
24	LEAD Pakistan	Local research and advocacy campaign

### **Innovative Fund for Education**

Table 3

*Grantees and their interventions for innovative fund for education*

Sr #	Organization/Grantee	Project/ Intervention
1	The communicators	1. Broad Class – Listen to Learn 2. Teacher training
2	Tele Taleem	Ilm on Wheels
3	National Rural Support Program	Second shift schools for girls in boys' schools
4	Idara e Taleem o Agahi	School capacity assessment tool and rating
5	Bunad Literacy Council	Targeted 7000 out of school children
6	Children's Global Network	Skill for employability program
7	Management and Development Foundation	1. Improving quality of education 2. Teaching manual on participatory learning
8	DSD	Teachers' professional development

9	Plan International	Corporal punishment redressal system
10	The Citizen Foundation	Quality improvement program
11	Institute for development and economic alternatives	Research study on public private partnership
12	Society for advancement of education	Research study on non-formal education models and pocket size projectors
13	Family Education Services Foundation	Sign language resources for deaf children
14	Simorgh	Tri-lingual primers for early grades
15	Social Entrepreneurship Model	Developed a model to make grantees think and act like sustainable social businesses
16	CGN	Training to youth on education entrepreneurship
17	Human Development Fund	Digital study hall setting up TV screens in classroom to show educational content.
18	Socio-Engineering Consultants	Active classroom initiative
19	Trojan	3D conceptual learning through CAD
20	Pakistan center for philanthropy	Public private partnership for education

### **IIm Ideas Phase II**

Table 4

#### *Grantees and interventions for IIm ideas Phase II*

Sr #	Grantee/Organization	Project/Intervention
1	AZCorp	A comic series of 36 graphical comic books for children.
2	Institute of social and Policy Sciences	STRIDE—a model context specific to collect data on education.
3	Children's Global Network Pakistan	Parwaan—a project related to early childhood.
4	Multinet – infrastructure for the nation	Sabaq— providing high quality content to out of school children.
5	Text LTD	ILMI and Sitaray
6	Knowledge Platform	Digital learning centres.
7	Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi	ChaloParhoBarho (CPB) an accelerated learning program for the dropped out children of 6-12 years.
8	RADEC	Provides resources to setup mobile digital classrooms.
9	Dot & Line	A mathematic program from home.
10	Tele Taleem	Remote online teachers deliver on daily basis.
11	EDKASA	Online learning platform.
12	Information Technology University	ITU is developing digital content to make the learning more interactive.

From these incubators 34 multi-purpose ideas were generated, such as STEM, low cost schools, online and digital education platforms etc.

## Punjab Education Sector Program II

Table 6

*Breakdown of funds and interventions for PESP II*

Sr #	Components	Funds in £ million
1	Sector Budget Support	170.2
2	School infrastructure	104
	Intervention of Humqadam project, implemented by IMC Worldwide.	
3	Support to PEF to build capacity and quality	68.6
	Intervention of Education Voucher Scheme (EVS), New school programs, and Foundation Assisted School program.	
4	Access to finance - improving the availability of access to finance for low-cost private schools (LCPS).	9
5	Civil Services Organizations (CSOs)	10.8
	Identifying and enrolling out-of-school children in 11 districts.	
6	A scholarship program - Intervention of PEEF scholarships	10.9
7	Scholarship program for tertiary level students	18.2
	Intervention National Outreach program (NOP)	
8	Technical Assistance	39.7
	Intervention - TAMO	
9	Evaluation and Research	2.5

Abdullah and Akhtar (2019b) evaluated the Punjab Education Sector Program (PESP-II) and reviewed its intended outcomes with the current education quality and performance.

### TEP

AlifAilaan's District Education Rankings was a great initiative in data generation and maintenance on education. These reports are now used as evidence in reporting the data on education. Every year the DFID and HTSPE measured the progress through the two tools. MKRF managed 'Ilm Centre' to record complaints of parents and their awareness campaign was right on target via geo channel. The campaign of MKRF 'zarasochiye' also made its mark and complemented alifailaan's campaign on media. Alifailaan also convened a first national teachers' conference to adopt the charter of knowledge. Considerable number of teacher unions/associations developed that charter to do advocacy for quality education. Alifailaan and DFID also worked on political charter on education in Sindh.

Idara-e-Taleem-O-Agahi was given 1.3 million pounds to deliver Annual State of Education Report (ASER). In May 2016, ministers approved an extension in AlifAilaan campaign for two years. Previous end date of this program was October 2016 and now after extension it will continue till August 31, 2018, in order to maintain the campaigning till the general elections in 2018.

As mentioned above that for TEP the supplier of DFID was DAI. After discussions of DFID with DAI it was decided that AlifAilaan will re-focus on five following things during extension period.

- **Protect:** the campaign will sustain progress on education reform over the election period.
- **Promote:** make the 2018 election an ‘*Education Election*’.
- **Propel:** advocate for policy changes that improve availability and quality of education.
- **Push:** for better government schools.
- **Pull:** establish an alliance of civil society organisations.

MKRF and its campaign *zarasochiye* ended in 2014 and Idara-Taleem-O-Agahi grant for ASER also ends in 2015, therefore, in the extension period only key player was AlifAilaan. A detailed evaluation of Transforming Education in Pakistan (TEP) program has been done by Abdullah & Akhtar, (2019a) which critically reviews the outcomes of the program in terms of education indicators.

## Discussion

This research endeavored to explore the role of UKaid in the education sector of Pakistan and more specifically revolved around the main question and this discussion is presented in a way that it tries to explain the answers to each of the sub-questions separately.

**Research question number one.** *Who are the recipients of UK aid in education in Pakistan and how are they selected? What specific interventions are introduced by UK aid?*

Based on the understanding of the programs and projects initiated by the UK aid in the education sector of Pakistan and their evaluation, it is made clear that UK aid through DFID invites proposals for its intended specific program. The proposals are open to all service lending agencies across the globe. Whichever agency wins the proposal the modalities are determined and then the actual initiative in terms of a program or a project begins. UK aid gives the grant in the beginning and that too through the third party or service lending agency that wins the bid through procurement procedure. Afterwards, the service lending agency— the fund manager, might again sub-let part of the program

through different projects. Again, the bidding process opens and now local partners come into play. For instance, when an agency that joins hands with UK Aid/DFID starts working on the program or project, it needs certain partners, preferably local partners, who understand the work situation and context. These local partners can be many in number in the same program.

At times, within a program, certain projects are also outsourced to local-partners. These local-partners can be either CSOs or NGOs. Along with these, the recipients of UK aid are the departments of the government of Pakistan. SED and other allied departments are also recipients of UKaid. It will be appropriate to call these government departments as beneficiaries of UKaid instead of recipients. But there arises a question that how much amount of the aid is given back to the donor agency in terms of services of consultants and advisors? The researchers believe that this is a significant question in the aid evaluation and inflow phenomenon; as mostly the aid agency or partner of the agency hires consultants and team leads/heads of the programs from the aid agency itself or the donor country (Abdullah & Akhtar, 2019b). In this way, a heavy chunk of the aid amount is given to them on account of training, consultancy and advisory services. This question is worthy of investigation because it could be of interest to recipient countries to know actual aid amount invested in the education system through local means and what amount is actually taken back to the developed countries through consultancy services.

*Next part of the question is how the recipients are selected.*

The recipients are selected after a rigorous process. The international fund-partner of UK Aid is responsible for all the funds transfer to local-partners. They seek proposals from local agencies or organizations. These proposals are called request for applications (RFA) and these applications are thoroughly investigated through administrative review, technical review, and due diligence. Risk management of funds and value for money considerations are also done before allotment of the grants to local-partners. DFID ensures that the local-partner has the skill, experience, vision, and commitment to achieve the proposed objectives and outcomes of the projects.

The question was extended to understand specific interventions introduced by UK Aid. Generally, the interventions introduced by UK Aid were program specific and directly related to nature, scope and duration of the program. The projects under each program were launched by local-partners upon receiving grants and under each project, the local-partner introduce specific interventions. These interventions are reviewed by DFID and payment of grants was stopped to some local-partners on inefficiency and ineffectiveness. It means that interventions introduced by local-partners in projects are reviewed minutely.

Based on these arguments and details it can be said that interventions need to align with the objectives and intended outcomes of UK Aid. In this way, answers to the first subsidiary research question are provided, hence fulfilling the part of the research objective.

**Research question number two.** *How is UK Aid perceived by the recipients to influence education?* The recipients opined positively on the role of UK Aid in influencing educational outcomes of Pakistan. Government departments strive to achieve targets set in the international conventions and standards of education. UK Aid might produce efficient results, especially in the factions where Pakistani education system is lacking at present. It will certainly enhance the literacy rate that is still far less than planned. This aid facilitates SED by providing better facilities in schools. Out of school children is a major problem faced by school education. As per article 25-A of the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, all school-going age children should be in schools. UK Aid is enabling the departments to achieve these targets. This all might eventually lead to economic prosperity as well.

Although this research was focused on evaluating the role of UK Aid in education sector of Pakistan, yet the researchers feel that political and administrative changes in the country, province and departments are vital and play a significant role in the outcomes. Steiner-Khamsi (2012) raises questions of why is policy transfer more likely to take place after political changes or changes in administration. There needs to be a nation wise consensus, especially in the political parties who run and struggle for power politics (Curtis, 2015). The stakeholders involved in education sector shall sit together and have a common agenda of education priority. Only national consensus can solve this issue of policy change with change in the government.

Besides all these struggles and gaps, there is some bright news in the education sector of Pakistan. Participation in Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) in the year 2019 is a positive outlook for Pakistan (NEAS, 2018). After participating in TIMSS, Pakistan will also participate in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). This will create a competition environment among our students to perform well at international platforms.

Student enrolment has seen an incremental trend from 2011 to 2017. In 2011, annual student enrolment was 8.88 Million, while the highest student enrolment of 10.33 million was seen in 2015. However, it has slightly declined in the year 2017 to 9.91 million students (Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit, 2018b). The data due to Covid-19 is not included in this paper as covid-19 has struck every country across the globe. This paper specifies the evaluation before covid-19.

Student attendance percentage has gradually increased over the years. In 2011 the attendance of students was as low as 78.65%, it increased to 92.69% in 2017. The annual teacher presence percentage is also on the high side. The annual teacher presence percentage of 95.32% for 2017 reflects the improvement as in 2011 it was 84.63% only.

Regarding missing facilities and infrastructure, it can be safely said that schools in Punjab are in a satisfactory position from the figures published in official annual performance of schools of Punjab across its 36 districts. This report published by PMIU reported 95.36% schools with electricity facility, 99.6% schools with clean drinking water, 99.27% schools with toilet facility, and 97.46% schools with boundary walls (Program Monitoring and Implementation Unit, 2018b). Remaining schools are also important and these facilities must be provided to them.

As this research has specified UK Aid and its role in Punjab, here are some data that include educational facts and figures from Punjab. AlifAilaan (2017) District Education Ranking yielded results for all districts of Pakistan including the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), and Tribal areas. One district Haripur from KP was on the top of the list and majority of the districts of AJ&K were in the top 12, despite that, overall Punjab province showed better performance. The overall education score includes three indicator scores: learning score, retention score and gender-parity score. Lahore, which is provincial capital of Punjab is placed at position 32 in overall Pakistan with an overall education score of 69.2. It has a low learning score of 53.93, retention score of 62.41 and gender-parity score of 91.25. District Bhakkar is placed at position 67 in the overall ranking is the lowest-ranked district of Punjab with an education score of 58.29, learning score 53.98, retention score 46.69 and gender-parity score 74.21. This also highlights the dynamics of different districts across Punjab. It further informs about the contextual importance in the reforms and interventions needed. The learning score in district Bhakkar (53.98) is slightly more than that of district Lahore (53.93), whereas in gender-parity district Lahore (91.25) is far ahead of district Bhakkar (74.21). Faisalabad is at second position in overall ranking but leads in Punjab with an education score of 76.74 (AlifAilaan, 2017).

Based on these facts and from the perceptions of recipients, the role of UK Aid in education sector of Pakistan is considered quite positive. The recipients by and large were optimistic about UK Aid and its interventions. The educational statistics and figures are also showing a positive incremental trend in all major indicators. In this way, answer to third research question about the role of UK Aid in influencing educational outcomes was provided with evidence from latest indicators available in literature and SED. Hence, answers to all research questions combined have strived to fully achieve the objective of this study.

## Conclusions

There needs to be a continuous and combined effort to yield positive results. UK Aid has achieved the purpose of awareness and willingness to fill and improve the education flaws and gaps in education sector of Pakistan. Its comprehensive programs and multiple projects have created timely stimulus required in Pakistan. The evaluation done in this research has concluded that most of the objectives are pursued by UK Aid and only persistent strive can help achieve the specific targets. Political paradigm or policy shift remains a big challenge for these aid agencies, as it becomes difficult to operate in opposing political scenarios. Pakistan has seen a change in government in 2018 and it has come up with its own policies. Now that there is again a Government change in the National Assembly of Pakistan by Vote of No Confidence in April 2022, the state of Education affairs remain in doldrums. This is a time of test for the education system. Can it sustain this political and administrative change or will the reforms take yet another span of years to take place? This remains a philosophical question and only time can provide answers for it. Nonetheless, what emerges as a standout conclusion point of this study is the budget allocation to education needs to be expanded and through bi-lateral aid this gap needs to be filled to achieve SDG4.

## Recommendations

UK Aid to Pakistan is indeed helpful, but provision of aid should be very much contextual. The aid demands should rely to a great extent on local context and situation instead of its heavy reliance on international conventions. Though international conventions set targets and milestones to be achieved, aid should be more explicit for contextual needs of Pakistan. Further joint-ventures and collaborations with indigenous partners are recommended for UK Aid. Community involvement should be treated as a priority.

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