

Recommendations For Actions on 25 A!

A Citizens' Dialogue on Right to Education 25 A for Sustainable Development was held on 27 December 2018 at the Margalla Hotel in Islamabad. It was organized by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA). Over 85 participants attended the session with the **Parliamentary Secretary Ministry Planning, Development & Reforms (PD&R) Ms. Kanwal Shauzab as the Chief Guest.** The following recommendations were made; they need a follow up at multiple levels.

Access/Out of School Children (OOSC)

1. Penal/legal sanctions and inducements should both be used to persuade parents to send their children to school. (Professor Nayyar)
2. Provided a classroom caters to 25 students, 200,000 new schools will have to be built to put all 22.5 million OOSC in school. It would cost Rs. 5 trillion which is the size of the annual budget. (Professor Nayyar)
3. Refugee children should be included in Article 25A. Pakistan has a huge refugee population – one of the most marginalized groups in the country. More support should be extended towards educating these children. One of the biggest issues is that there is no clear picture of how many refugee children are enrolled in the education system in the country, so data inclusion in this respect is essential. (Takako Ogimoto, UNHCR)
4. Child labour must be stopped. There must be penal sanctions for those who employ children between 5-16. (Professor Nayyar)
5. In rural areas, many parents are still not aware of the constitutional right of 25A. Awareness is essential so they can demand the right for their children from the government. (Nargis Sultana)
6. Promote adult literacy programmes, especially in rural areas and urban katchi abaadis. (Tahira Abdullah)
7. Like other nationwide campaigns, the Duty and Right to Education For All (25A, RTE, EFA & SDGs) needs to be transformed into a National Movement, with every citizen involved and mobilized and activated. Promote the spirit of volunteerism among children and youth at all levels. (Tahira Abdullah)

Curricular Reforms, Education Quality and Inclusion

1. Curricular reforms are needed if quality education is to be provided. Professional development of teachers should be linked to the curriculum and textbook development, which should be linked to the examination system. The linkages between the components are necessary for quality education. (Nargis Sultana)
2. Make 'culture of tolerance' a policy priority to comply with Supreme Court's orders issued on 19 June 2014, and develop curricula and textbooks to promote culture of religious diversity and tolerance, and equip education system to foster social cohesion in the country. (Suneel Malik)
3. Ensure that teachers, administration and other education personnel avoid the use of offensive names for an individual or a community, and positive steps are taken to counter acts of discrimination, violence and negative stereotyping to which minority students are exposed in their schooling and education, in order to create school learning environment receptive to all students, and remove impediments resulting from discrimination or injustice in realizing the right to education. (Suneel Malik)
4. National Education Policies (NEPs) need to conceptualize a progressive agenda with clear directions on what will be taught in government primary, middle and secondary schools, what will comprise the curricula, and thence who will write the textbooks. (Tahira Abdullah)
5. Devise shortened and more relevant curricula for young children in primary and middle schools. (Tahira Abdullah)
6. Ensure inclusion of excluded, neglected and marginalized citizens in textbooks. Remove all gender stereotypes from the current textbooks in all subjects for all classes, including pictorial illustrations, and give respect to religious minorities, transgender people and persons with disabilities. Remove all examples of hatred, enmity, superiority, stereotyping, and insulting and humiliating references in current textbooks. (Tahira Abdullah)
7. Bring an end to rote learning, and inculcate the spirit of inquiry, questioning, and healthy and respectful debate. (Tahira Abdullah)
8. Inculcate a mindset glorifying peace not war. Only in the Pakistan Studies curriculum, include a chapter on our armed forces' history; ensure pluralism in war heroes' names. (Tahira Abdullah)

9. Provide alternative arrangement for teaching religious education instead of Ethics as a substitute for Islamic education to minority students according to their belief system for accommodating their religious needs within schools, in compliance with Article 20 (religious freedom) and Article 22 (freedom from coercion in education) of the constitution of Pakistan. (Suneel Malik)
10. There is a teacher shortage which is often filled by political appointments, and teachers with substandard qualifications are hired in some provinces. There is a need to replace teachers. Curriculum reforms will not be of much use if the individuals hired to teach are unable to do so. Capacity building of teachers is needed. (Ms. Kanwal Shauzab-Parliamentary Secretary PD&R)
11. Patriarchal mindset needs to be changed so that parents send their girls to school. Poverty alleviation is a must for education, health and gender equality, especially in rural areas. (Kanwal Shauzab)
12. Curriculums should be process-oriented as opposed to subject-oriented so that cultural diversity is accommodated. (Audience contribution)

TVET

1. Vocational training should be provided in all schools. Training should be imparted to children in workshops - they should be compensated for the years of education missed. (Professor Nayyar)
2. There is a need to teach skills and merge them with learning standards in the curriculum. (Shahid Naeem)

Parliamentary/Legislative Steps

1. Punjab Domestic Workers Bill 2018 has been passed but age misalignments with respect to definition of the child domestic worker need to be addressed (age 15 under the Bill under 25 A it is 16 years). (Baela Jamil)
2. Rules of business have only been made official in Sindh for 25 A; they must be notified in the rest of the provinces. (Nargis Sultana)
3. Enact and enforce legislation prohibiting discriminatory policies and practices that work against the realization of the right to education. The legislation should introduce complaint mechanisms to offer citizens a safeguard against discrimination or abuse in educational settings. (Suneel Malik)

4. The government should conduct baseline/feasibility studies to address issues relating to education so that priority areas are not left out in the next education policy, and must bridge the gap among policymakers, implementers and beneficiaries by discussing National Education Policy Framework 2018 in the parliament and standing committees, and it should be revised to include areas including; religious and cultural diversity, social harmony to remove marginality and exclusion, and make the education system and schooling environment sensitive to minorities, free of discrimination and violence.

Citizens' Audience Recommendations

1. There cannot be penal sanctions on parents unless poverty is addressed.
2. Young adolescents/adults deserve a second chance in literacy so some alternative thinking may be needed. Rural-urban models should be studied so that relevant education is provided.
3. The concept that parents do not want to send their children to school is wrong. The schools are in terrible shape. There is still widespread teacher absenteeism/shortage. There are ghost schools in Karachi, whereas children are sitting on the floor in Chitral. The problems must be understood and specific solutions provided – where basic facilities are needed, provide basic facilities. Where teachers are needed, provide teachers.
4. Curriculums should be process-oriented as opposed to subject-oriented so that cultural diversity is accommodated.
5. The role of the media is important in terms of holding local officials accountable.