

Equal Education for Everyone An Evaluation Report of National Plan of Action-ICT

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Abstract

In order to attain the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of education by 2015/16, the Government of Pakistan had designed a National Plan of Action (NPA). The rationale behind the NPA was to increase and fasten the progress towards achieving education MDG till 2016. The NPA specifically aimed at achieving maximum enrolment of children in primary classes, in-school retention of the enrolled children, so that they may complete their primary education, and improved quality of primary education. The present study aims at evaluating the NPA of Islamabad on the basis of five evaluation standards set by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) including relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

The results show that the plan has been comprehensive enough to comply with all the basic international standards of evaluation. The plan had been implemented in compliance with the socio-cultural setting of Islamabad, and had the capability to meet the issues defined. An important recommendation based on the report is the inclusion of special needs and incentives for the minorities of Pakistan, and keeping a proper check on the curriculum designing of deeni madaris, as they serve as a very basic building block for the character of children.

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals, National Plan of Action, Education, ICT, School enrollment, Children

Introduction and Background

As human beings, we have a moral obligation that we assure all the children get a basic education that gives them knowledge and skills and make them helpful adults and a productive part of the society (see Coombs, 1994). This moral obligation duly benefits the individuals as well as the society for individuals, education serves the purpose of self-grooming and development, and for the society, equal access to education for everybody means all individuals equally contribute in the smooth running and betterment of the society (see Jackson, 2000).

Renzulli (2005) discusses that every single human being has in-born talents and capabilities. If this is not nurtured through education, the talent goes waste, and becomes unproductive for the society. If the society fails to polish the talent of individuals, it loses the pace of progress and welfare. Moreover, this social waste due to poor education or limited access to education contributes to long term socio

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economic costs for the society including lower income, poverty, less economic growth, costly health care, increased crime rate, and social insecurity, etc.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted on December 10th, 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly, lays a special emphasis on the provision of free elementary education which should be compulsory for all children. The article 26 of UDHR states that everyone without any discrimination has the right to get education. The article also suggests that at least elementary and fundamental education shall be made free of cost, and compulsory for all people. It also emphasizes the importance of technical and professional education, and states that the professional and technical education and higher education shall be made available to everyone without any discrimination on the basis of merit (see McCowan, 2010; Banks, 2009; Stellmacher & Sommer, 2008).

Human Rights practitioners also suggest that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also needs to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (see Johansson et.al., 2010).

Presently, in the international community, the education development is emphasized mainly by two comprehensive international charters, widely recognized and accepted all around the globe. These include Education for All (EFA) initiative and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The present research mainly focuses on the Millennium Development Goals, as the National Plan of Action had been designed by the government of Pakistan to reach a pace for attaining the MDG of education by 2015/6.

The MGDs are 8 developmental goals internationally accepted by all the 192 UN member states including Pakistan. Among the 8 MDGs, the 2nd and the 3rd goal directly address education including improvements in literacy levels, enhanced primary and secondary education, and elimination of gender discriminations in education by 2015, while the rest of the goals are about other social and economic challenges as faced by the global north (see Poverty, 2015).

Literature Review on the indicators of Education

Popular literature suggests the main indicator of MDGs on education include but are not limited to:

1) Net primary enrolment rates

Net primary enrolment rates are one of the important indicators of equal education as discussed by Unterhalter (2013). The average number of students enrolled in the primary schools gives a direct view of the progress towards getting universal primary education.

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2) Completion Rates up to Grade V

The average number of students completed or surviving up to grade fifth is also one of the basic indicators of the quality of primary education as highlighted by Unterhalter & North, 2011).

3) Increase or Decrease in Literacy Rates

Catts & Lau (2008) discuss that the increase or decrease in the literacy rate per year also indicates the provision of equal education, and the quality of education, available to the people.

4) Gender Equality in Primary Education

Gender equality in the primary education is also one of the important indicators of equal education. World Health Organization (2005) discusses that lesser the difference between average female children enrolled in primary schools and the male children enrolled in the primary schools, more will be the progress towards achieving the goal of equal access to education for everyone.

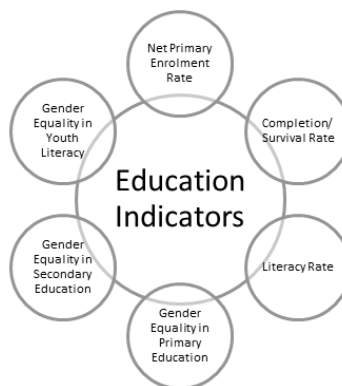
5) Gender Equality in Secondary Education

In addition to the primary education, the situation of gender equality in secondary education is also one of the most important indicators of equal education. Subrahmanian (2005) discusses that the minimum difference between the average number of male students enrolled in the secondary education and the average number of female studies enrolled in the secondary education indicates the maximum achievement of equal education for everyone.

6) Gender Equality in Literacy Level among Youth

Jones & Chant (2009) discuss that the gender equality in the literacy level among the young people aged 15 to 24 years is also a very important indicator of equal access to education.

Figure 1



Contextually, shortly before completion of the term of the National Plan of Action (i.e. 2015/16) statistics on the indicators of Pakistan's education showed that probably only the gender equality indices could be able to meet the MDG target by

2015. Meeting the other targets would require even more committed and intense efforts. The primary net enrolment rate in 2001-02 in Pakistan was 57%, which has increased to 63% in a decade, i.e. increase with an increment of 0.5% per annum . Therefore, in order to attain the MDG targets by 2015, the Government of Pakistan had designed a National Plan of Action (NPA) in 2013 to fasten the implementation which will ensure optimum progress in achieving the education goals within the stipulated timeframe.

Situational Analysis of Primary Education in ICT

The situational analysis of primary education in ICT shows that the age group of primary level students (5-9 years) comprises the population of 143,692 children, among which 75,416 are male and 68,546 are female. Gross primary enrolment rate of the overall population of ICT is 87%, making it 85% for males and 90% for female children, while the net enrolment rate is 70%; 68% for young boys and 72% for female children.

Statistics suggest that among all the provinces and areas of Pakistan, Islamabad is the area which has the enrolment rates higher for girls than those for boys. Moreover, the dropout rate is also very low, i.e. 10 percent students drop out from school without completion primary education. Moreover, around 70 percent of primary school children attend government schools, and the government expenditure on primary education is around rupees 1,067 million for Islamabad, which is being spent on 92,110 children, making it around rupees 11,583 per student per annum.

Identified Issues and challenges in ICT education

The National Plan of Action had identified two key issues while identifying the challenges and loopholes in education system specifically in ICT. These include:

- 1) Lack of access to education
- 2) Poor quality of education

For both of the issues, the NPA had identified a set of in-school and out-school factors, with some solutions on how to overcome these issues. Given below is a matrix representing the issues and challenges along with their respective strategies and influencing factors:

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Figure 2

In and out school factors of Access to Education

Access	
<i>In School Factors</i>	<i>Strategies/Interventions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of structure and facilities for Pre-primary education • Lack of proper infrastructure and physical facilities. • Unavailability of budget for repair and maintenance of buildings • Lack of transport facilities. • Absence of proper Admission Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE needs to be institutionalized in all Primary schools • Proper infrastructure and missing facilities need to be provided. • Annual budget for repair and maintenance for each school needs to be allocated. • Transport facilities need to be provided. • Admission Policy is required to be revised with clear indication of cluster level feeding institution/sector.
<i>Out-of-school Factors</i>	<i>Strategies/Interventions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrants especially from KPK • Children from surrounding areas of Rawalpindi • Poverty • Parent Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special non-formal schools need to be opened in the areas of Katchi Abadi. • Admission to the children of residents of Islamabad and Federal Government employees be restricted. • Incentives/scholarships need to be awarded to the needy students. • Community awareness campaign needs to be launched for admission of out of school children.

Figure 3

In and Out School Factors of Quality of Education

Quality	
<i>In School Factors</i>	<i>Strategies/Interventions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationalization of Teachers (student teachers ratio needs to be rationalized) • Lack of Math & Science qualified teachers • Delay in provision of text books • Assessment system is not aligned with new curriculum. • Inconsistency in medium of instruction at different levels (primary/ middle/ high) • Teachers lacking aptitude and competencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment of teachers as per numbers of students enrolled and subject offered • Subject based qualified teachers be appointed. • Timely printing and provision of free text books. • Continuous assessment system needs to be adopted. • Medium of instruction needs to be decided and adopted for all public and private institutions. • Competency based In-service Training to be provided to all teachers on periodic basis.
<i>Out-of-school Factors</i>	<i>Strategies/Interventions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community participation in schools • Lack of monitoring and supervision • Development of Curriculum and Textbooks • Interference of politician and unions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role and function of PTAs need to be strengthened with provision of annual budget. • The structure and functioning of AEOs needs to be further strengthened. • Timely provision of textbooks • Educational administration needs to be strengthened with power delegation and support to deal such interference.

Figure 3

In school factors of Governance in Education

Governance	
<i>In School Factors</i>	<i>Strategies/Interventions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of School Mapping in view of catchment area and population density • Transfer/posting of teachers • Placement of teacher on need based/Class enrolment • Culture of temporary duty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of new educational institutions purely on need basis • Transfer/Posting policies and implementation mechanism • Need rationalization of posting of teachers

National Plan of Action 2013-16

The rationale behind the NPA was to increase and fasten the progress towards achieving education MDG till 2016. The NPA specifically aimed at achieving:

- 1) Maximum enrolment of children in primary classes;
- 2) In-school retention of the enrolled children, so that they may complete their primary education; and
- 3) Improved quality of primary education.

The NPA comprised eight separate plans focusing different provinces and areas. Each of the plan was comprehensive enough to review the existing situation in its area, identify the gap in primary enrolments, quantify the number of illiterate children, analyze the reasons for low enrolment and increased dropout rates, and give suggestions for the optimum speed of meeting the specified MDG indicators. The present evaluation report focuses only on the NPA of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).

Keeping in mind the above challenges, factors and the suggested strategies, the ICT NPA (2013-16) focused on:

- 1) Bringing the maximum number of primary level out of school children so that they might get enrolled in formal, semi-formal and non-formal schools. This can be done through expansion of schools and increased awareness through lobbying and campaigning etc.;
- 2) Increasing the in-school retention of primary level students by providing them proper teaching and learning environment, syllabus and other incentives.;
- 3) Improving the quality of education by emphasizing teacher’s education and training, and using participative methodology of education, etc.; and
- 4) Providing other incentive like food for education, stipends, uniforms etc. so as to retain the students in school from the marginalized and disadvantaged areas, particularly girls.

Identified Strategies

Under the plan, four specific strategies were identified and budgeted:

1) Increased enrolment in underutilized schools:

Under this strategy, the focus was on enrolling the out of school children in the existing under-utilized primary schools. As per the policy, children of age above seven-years could not be enrolled in formal primary classes, the overage children should be enrolled in informal primary education schools or deeni madaris.

2) Increased enrolment in formal school by providing additional space:

Under this strategy, the focus was on the construction of an additional academic space or a classroom and provision of one or more new teachers in the existing formal public-sector schools where some extra space was available. This was to accommodate more new students.

3) Construction of new schools:

NPA- ICT did not plan the construction of any new public sector primary schools.

4) Provision of Incentives:

Under this strategy, in-school retention of students was made sure by providing incentives like food for education, stipend, uniforms, text books, etc. to the students who could not afford. This strategy helped in decreasing the dropout rates before completing primary education among the poor and disadvantaged population, particularly girls.

Key Assumptions of NPA-ICT

Following were the basic assumptions of NPA- Islamabad Capital Territory:

- 1) Projections for the base year 2012-13 were made, and target for the plan period 2013-16 was set using the actual population estimates of 2012, and primary school enrolment rates for 2011-12.
- 2) The plan was based upon the annual physical targets and their respective costs for a period of three years, i.e. 2013-16. For each of the four strategies, the estimated proportion of to be enrolled out of school children was specified.
- 3) Schools were basically of four types:
 - i. Formal public-sector schools
 - ii. Informal primary and feeder schools

- iii. Private sector schools
- iv. Deeni Madaris
 - 5) The enrollment costs of private sector schools were not estimated as they were not paid by the government.
 - 6) For each of the four strategies, the recurrent costs were estimated as rupees 20,000 per student in the formal public-sector schools, and rupees 5,000 per student in informal schools and deeni madaris.
 - 7) The estimates considered annual inflation rates on 10%.
 - 8) The estimated teacher to student ratio was 1:30, while the administrator to teacher ratio was 1:40
 - 9) 15 percent of the recurrent costs had been added to the total budget for the purpose of quality enhancement activities including curriculum reform, teacher training, provision of facilities, etc.
 - 10) Another 15 percent of the recurrent costs have been included in the total budget for the purpose of innovation, e.g. mapping community involvement strategies, using media and other channels for spreading the awareness regarding importance of education, etc.
 - 11) Rupees 3,000 per student per annum had been specified for the purpose on in-school retention of students from disadvantaged groups, especially girls.
 - 12) 10 percent of the recurrent costs had been specified for the unforeseen expenditures regarding education.

In a nut shell, the 2013-16 NPA for ICT had a total budget of rupees 2,210 billion, and the projections indicate that the population of children of primary age group, i.e. 5-9 years in Islamabad was expected to be gradually increased up to 156,977 by 2015-16, among which 82,273 were supposed to be boys and 74,704 to be girl children.

Methodology

In the present evaluation report, NPA- ICT 2013-16 has been evaluated as per the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation standards for quality evaluation. These standards include:

1) Relevance

The questions about relevance of a project include but are not limited to; are we doing a right thing? What is the importance of the relevance or the significance of the project or programme regarding the national and local requirements and their priorities? Etc.

2) Effectiveness

The questions about the effectiveness include but are not limited to; are the objectives of the project or programme being achieved? How significant is the impact or the

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effectiveness of the project or programme as compared to the objectives that had been originally planned? Here, we compare the results with the initial plans.

3) Efficiency

The questions about efficiency include but are not limited to; are the objectives of the project or programme being achieved keeping in mind the economic limitations? How efficient are the resources being spent? Here, we compare the resources spent on the project or programme with the results being achieved.

4) Impact

The questions about impact include but are not limited to: if the development project or programme is contributing to reaching its overall aim or objective? What is the effect or the impact of the project or programme in comparison to the overall situation of the beneficiaries or the target group? Etc.

5) Sustainability

The questions about sustainability include but are not limited to; are the positive impacts or benefits of the project or programme sustainable? How is the permanence and sustainability of the project or programme being assessed? Etc.
Other than the above mentioned five basic criteria, “Participation” and “Responsibility” can also be added sometimes, depending on the need.

6) Evaluation Findings

The National Plan of Action 2013-16 of the Islamabad Capital Territory has been evaluated below basing on the above discussed OECD/ DAC evaluation standards:

1. Relevance

NPA- ICT was quite relevant to the needs and issues faced by educational system in Pakistan, specifically in Islamabad. The basic issues, as discovered by the NPA were lack of access to education and the poor quality of education. All the four strategies developed under the plan were comprehensive enough to solve the defined educational issues. The plan also complied well with Pakistan’s development policy and the MDGs, both of which had an emphasis on increasing the enrollment rates and providing good quality education.

The plan was also very beneficial and important for the target group, i.e. the population of primary age group children. Providing incentives, stipends, fees and other facilities to the students who could not afford to study was a very good and beneficial step to increase enrollment rates, retention of students, and decrease

dropout rates. Moreover, the plan also facilitated the children who had crossed the specified age limit of primary school enrollment.

The plan was also holistic enough to cater the needs of the marginalized and disadvantaged subgroups among the target group, for instance disabled students, and students belonging to minority groups. The plan also layed a special focus on women. NPA- ICT also complied with the internationally agreed principles and goals, e.g. gender equality, respecting the cultures and values, etc.

2. Effectiveness

NPA- ICT was also effective enough to fulfill the objectives of the intervention, i.e. optimum enrollment in primary classes, retention of students in schools, and improved quality of education. The strategies devised under the plan were also comprehensive enough to meet the overall aim of the intervention, i.e. to increase and fasten the progress in achieving the MDG of education till 2016. Moreover, the devised plan also intended to cover the target group.

Figure 4

Total Population (2011-12) & Projected Estimates (2013-16)

	2011-12	Benchmark 2012-13 (Projected)	Projected Population Estimates		
			2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total	143,962	147,628	151,028	154,094	156,977
Male	75,416	77,332	79,119	80,741	82,273
Female	68,546	70,296	71,909	73,353	74,704

Figure 5

Net Enrolment Rates (2011-12) & Enrolment Targets (2013-16)

	2011-12	Benchmark 2012-13 (Projected)	Projected Net Enrolment Rates Estimates		
			2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total	70%	72%	80%	90%	98%
Male	68%	70%	78%	88%	97%
Female	72%	74%	82%	92%	98%

Figure 6

Out-of-school Children (2011-12) & Projected Estimates (2013-16)

	2011-12	Benchmark 2012-13 (Projected)	Projected Estimates of OOSC		
			2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total	43,237	41,385	30,256	15,462	3,865
Male	24,217	23,286	17,494	9,779	2,560
Female	19,020	18,100	12,762	5,683	1,306

As shown in the tables above, the projections estimated that the population of children belonging to the age of primary school were expected rise up to 156,977 by 2016. Moreover, the net enrolment in primary schools was also expected to increase from 70% up to 98% by 2016, provided that the strategies devised under the plan were effectively implemented in Islamabad. Not only the enrolment rates were expected to increase, but the dropout rates had also been projected to decrease, thus the out of school children were supposed to decrease from 43,237 to 3,865 till 2016.

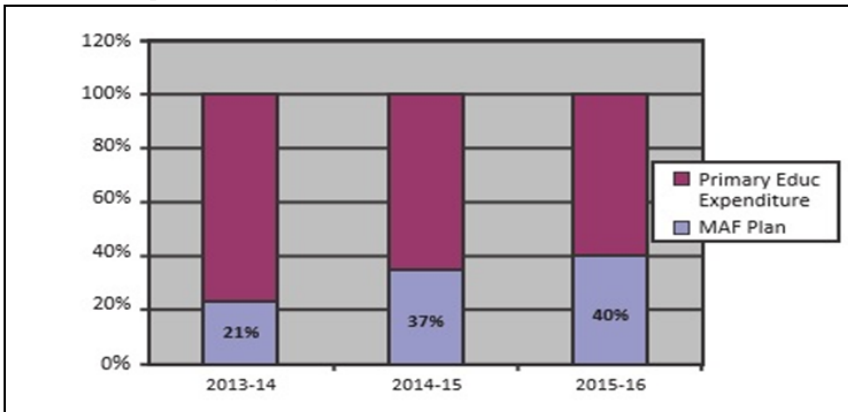
4) Efficiency

Although it would be too early to determine the efficiency of the plan, however it seems to be an efficient and strategically well-suited and well-resourced plan. The overall amount and resources required for the plan implementation would range between 20-40 percent of the total expenditure of primary education projected for 2013-16.

Figure 7
Cost Efficiency across Plan Strategies



Figure 8
Financial Importance of MAF in Primary Education



In short, NPA- ICT 2013-16 was quite cost effective as well, in which the resources had been well planned and efficiently allocated. Thus, the NPA, proved to be a very efficient and effective strategy to improve the condition of education in Pakistan, particularly in Islamabad.

5) Impact

The overall impact of the plan is very difficult to describe at this point of time, but as shown in the projections, the plan will have a positive impact on the society as a whole. Not only will the target group, i.e. the primary level children, be benefitted, rather the overall environment will flourish in Islamabad.

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Education determines the progress pace of any society. Thus, the improved quality of education, plus increased number of children getting education, will make the education system very efficient in Islamabad, and the whole population of ICT will get the benefits of the plan.

Some of the expected beneficiary communities of the plan are:

- i. Primary age group students
- ii. Teachers of government and private schools
- iii. Private school owners
- iv. Parents and families of the beneficiaries
- v. Overall community

In short, the activities and strategies as devised under NPA- ICT 2013-16 are likely to give a positive impact on the target community in short term, while it will positively influence the whole society in long term.

6) Sustainability

The activities and strategies proposed in NPA- ICT 2013-16 are most likely to give a positive impact on the society. The impact will most probably be sustainable as everything can be vanished from the minds, but the quality education. Education is all the way sustainable thing, as it is a matter of changing mindsets of people.

Moreover, the intervention will also in the long term address the issues of economic breakdown, unemployment, and will change the harmful socio-cultural practices, due to increased exposure, knowledge, and technological advancement. In this way, NPA, as planned and projected, will be a sustainable and long-term intervention.

7) Participation

Other than the above implied five basic evaluation standards as proposed by OECD/DAC, Responsibility and Participation are also important and valuable standards in terms of evaluating a project or plan.

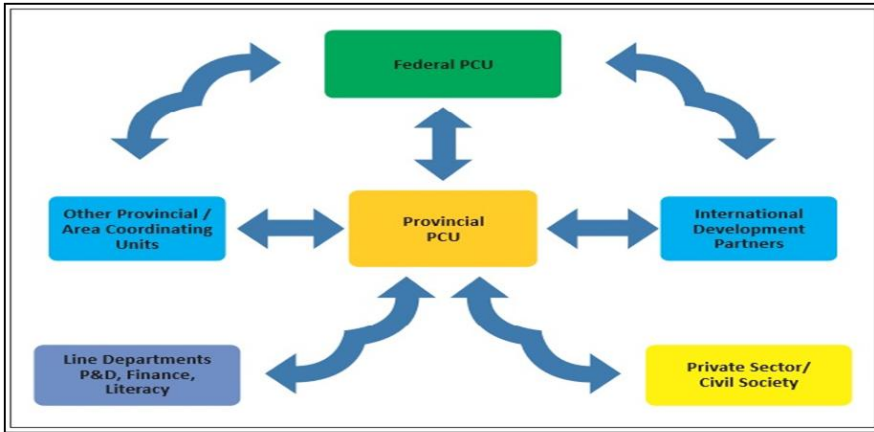
In NPA, the stakeholder liaison was ensured at two levels:

- i. Overall Micro Level Inter-Governmental Coordination
- ii. Intra-provincial Coordination and Implementation Network

The first ensured close linkages between the key micro level players for instance the Provincial Coordinating Unit (PCU), The PCUs in other areas/ provinces, the Federal Government, civil society/ private sector, and the international partners.

Figure 9

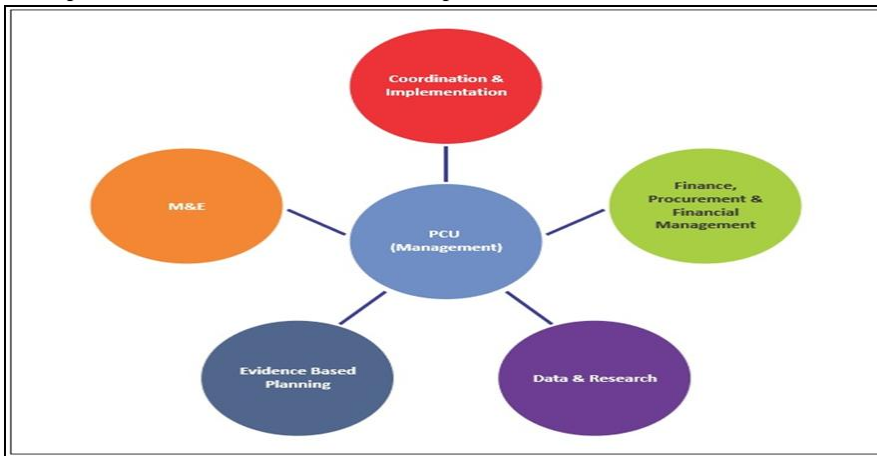
Overall Macro Level Inter-Governmental Coordination



In the Intra-Provincial Coordination and Implementation Network, the various cells of PCU and the PCU itself would provide services at the macro level, i.e. to the Federal Government, other PCUs, international partners etc. It also undertook the planning, research and coordination etc. at the provincial as well as district level.

Figure 10

Intra-provincial Coordination and Implementation Network



Conclusion

In a nut shell, it can be articulated that NPA 2013-16 for the region of Islamabad Capital Territory has been a very efficient and effective plan, well suited for the educational needs and challenges faced by the population of Islamabad. It complied

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well with the five basic standards of a good policy, i.e. relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Not only that, but it also complied with the additional standard of participation, as it involved all the micro and macro level stakeholders in the planning as well as implementation phase. Thus, the plan and its well implementation proved to be a success in achieving the MDG of education by 2015/16.

Lessons Learnt

The National Plan of Action was a very comprehensive document prepared to accelerate the education related MDGs so that Pakistan might achieve universal quality primary level education by 2015/16. The strategies under the plan had been designed up to the international standards of development, very realistic and objective indicators of progress have been set, and the document as a whole had been very professionally designed. It proved to be success in its both short term and long-term impacts through its well designing and effective implementation.

Recommendations

As a humble suggestion, it is put forth that if the plan had included a special consideration for the children belonging to religious minority, as it is also a part of the UDHR article 27.

Another suggestion to be humbly put in front of the planners is to put a special emphasis on the curriculum of deeni madaris, as the quality of education they provide is often unchecked, thus creating many problems in the country.

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