

Pot-Pourri of Successful Ingredients for Non-Formal Education (NFE) Creative Alternatives for Educating All



Rafat Nabi

Authored by: Dr. Rafat Nabi

**With Insights from: Professor Uta Papen,
Lancaster University, UK**

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the cherished memory of my late father, Sayed Aley Nabi, and my late mother, Syeeda Aley Nabi. Their unwavering commitment to educating underprivileged children and their example of selfless, voluntary teaching during my formative years instilled in me a deep-seated passion for education and an enduring love for teaching. Their influence has been both profound and everlasting, shaping my values and guiding my life's work.

I also dedicate this book to my esteemed mentor and friend Mr. K Baron, whose pivotal role in my academic journey has been invaluable. From my certificate education to my Master's, Doctorate, Post-Doctorate, and various fellowships at numerous prestigious universities in the UK from 1998 to 2024, his guidance and support have been indispensable. His wisdom, encouragement, and unwavering belief in my potential have profoundly impacted my career and personal growth.

Thank you, Dad, Mom, and my greatest guru and friend. Your legacies live on through the pages of this book and in the work, I continue to do in the field of education.

Acknowledgement

Reflecting on my childhood, I am deeply indebted to the profound influence of my mother, whose unwavering commitment to educating children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds has left an indelible mark on my soul. Many of these children hailed from households where mothers and siblings toiled as cooks and cleaners. From an early age, my mother entrusted me with the responsibility of teaching three to four of these children every evening after school. This formative experience ignited my fervent passion for education and illuminated the transformative potential of non-formal education for those often marginalized.

As I matured, I began questioning the barriers preventing universal access to education and delved into ways governments and communities could better support these underserved populations. Motivated by my mother's steadfast dedication, I resolved to devote my career to expanding educational access through innovative non-formal methods. It was through these early teaching experiences that I uncovered the profound impact of non-formal education.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the University of Lancaster, UK, for graciously appointing me as a visiting fellow. Special appreciation is reserved for my esteemed professor, Uta Papen, whose unwavering support and intellectual mentorship have been pivotal throughout my academic odyssey. Your guidance has been instrumental in shining a spotlight on the oft-overlooked realm of non-formal education. This book draws upon my extensive fieldwork experiences, encompassing policy development, capacity building, delivery, research, and documentation on both national and international stages.

Heartfelt thanks are extended to the learners, community members, government officials, implementing partners, and donor agencies whose generous sharing of experiences and insights has enriched my understanding of the daunting challenges faced by millions of children in accessing education. You are the true change-makers, whose perspectives have profoundly shaped my appreciation for effective educational practices and have contributed significantly to the substance of this book.

Special recognition is reserved for Sumaira Saleem. Your extraordinary dedication and tireless efforts have been instrumental in bringing this book to fruition. As a highly skilled professional with a deep understanding of non-formal education, your passion for empowering marginalized communities has been truly inspiring. Your meticulous attention to detail, innovative ideas, and relentless commitment have elevated the quality and impact of this work immeasurably. Your contributions not only reflect exceptional expertise but also embody a profound dedication to the transformative power of education. Words cannot adequately convey my gratitude for your exceptional contributions.

It is my fervent hope that this book serves as a pivotal resource for policymakers, implementing partners, government agencies, and educational institutions, catalyzing efforts to ensure equitable access to education for all.

Abstract

Despite sustained global and national efforts, access to quality education remains a critical challenge, particularly for marginalized communities, girls, and out-of-school children in developing and crisis-affected contexts such as Pakistan. This book examines non-formal education (NFE) as a viable, flexible, and cost-effective alternative for addressing persistent educational exclusion and learning deficits. Drawing on more than four decades of field-based experience, qualitative observations, policy analysis, and community-level practices, the study adopts a bottom-up approach that foregrounds the voices of learners, teachers, and communities. It critically explores the historical evolution of NFE, prevailing misconceptions, policy-implementation gaps, and the limitations of replicating formal education models in non-formal settings. The book further documents successful ingredients, innovative literacy models, and culturally responsive practices that enhance access, participation, and learning outcomes, particularly for girls in remote and underserved areas. By synthesizing local experiences with international evidence, this work demonstrates that non-formal education is not a secondary substitute for formal schooling but a complementary and essential pathway toward inclusive education. The findings offer practical insights for policymakers, donors, researchers, and practitioners seeking sustainable solutions to the learning crisis.

Keywords: Non-Formal Education (NFE); Inclusive Education; Out-of-School Children; Girls' Education; Educational Access; Marginalized Communities; Literacy and Numeracy; Alternative Education Pathways; Pakistan

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Abbreviations

In this section, we provide a list of abbreviations used throughout the book for quick reference. These abbreviations are commonly used in educational, developmental, and international contexts. Familiarizing yourself with these terms will help you navigate the content more efficiently.

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABEP	Adult Basic Education Programme
AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIE	Centre for International Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEU	Distance Education University
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESRA	Education Sector Reform Assistance
FSU	Florida State University
GRALE	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education
HANDS	Health and Nutrition Development Society
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILM	Integrated Literacy Model
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPs	Implementing Partners

Abbreviation	Meaning
IRC	Indus Resource Centre
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LRC	Listen, Read/Repeat, Copy
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSU	Michigan State University
NCHD	National Commission for Human Development
NFBE	Non-Formal Basic Education
NFBES	Non-Formal Basic Education School
NFC	Non-Formal Education Centre
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
OLRPA	Observe, Learn, Review, Plan and Act
ODL	Open Distance Learning
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SDA	Sustainable Development Agenda
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP	School Development Plan
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SEANBC	Systematic Education and Needs-Based Consultation

Abbreviation	Meaning
SEF	Sindh Education Foundation
SEHER	Society for Empowering Human Resource
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLO	Student Learning Outcome
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-bound
SMILE	Strengthening Multiple Intelligences Learning Environment
SCSPEB	Society for Community Strengthening and Promotion of Education, Baluchistan (SCSPEB), commonly referred to as the Society
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UIE	UNESCO Institute of Education
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Preface

Professor UP
University of Lancaster, UK

Education for all, despite long-standing efforts in many countries across the world, continues to be an aspiration that is difficult to achieve. Notwithstanding considerable investment and innovation, locally, nationally and internationally, far too many children and young people remain without access to education. While lack of education is primarily seen as an issue for countries of the Global South, in the Global North too inequalities in access to schooling and quality of education that children and young people receive persist. These, together with other factors, contribute to social and economic disadvantages affecting both poorer and richer countries.

Non-formal education (NFE) has for a long time played an important role in efforts to achieve education for all. Commonly understood as any educational activities that are placed outside a country's formal education sector, NFE is easily ignored or dismissed as the poor relative of formal schooling. However, across the world there exist non-formal education programmes and initiatives that make an invaluable contribution to educating children, young people and adults. However, few of these have been documented and researched and are available for others to be inspired by and learn from. Bringing together many illustrations of 'what works' in non-formal education, Dr. Nabi's main argument is that the successes of NFE have been overlooked and underutilised. Based on her extensive work in Pakistan and other countries, Dr. Nabi illustrates the strengths and opportunities of non-formal education. Her book demonstrates how we can make the most of NFE's potential, for example in terms of its flexibility, its learner-centred approach and its ability to engage local communities. Dr. Nabi's book shows the essential role non-formal education plays in reaching children and young people in rural and remote areas, where there aren't enough schools. NFE provides education to girls and young women, too few of whom attend formal schools, and to children from ethnic and religious minorities. As NFE programmes and initiatives are less bound by state-regulated and often inflexible curricula, they have the potential to be more inclusive than many formal education systems, bringing education to children and young people regardless of their background and levels of disadvantage or disability.

In chapter 12, the central role of local communities in delivering NFE is explained. However, this is not to be misunderstood as obliging communities to take on the full burden of resourcing local

NFE classes. Investment into communities is needed. But when families contribute and when young people from the area are trained to become teachers, parents and communities can become real partners in the delivery of NFE, having a say in what is taught and how. Parents who might otherwise be reluctant to send their daughters to school are then able to see the benefits and opportunities that education can offer without having to fear that their children will become socialised into what to them might be alien and alienating ideas and beliefs.

While Dr. Nabi's book teaches us about successful approaches and innovative ideas used in NFE projects and centres, she doesn't ignore the challenges and shortcomings of NFE provision. Drawing on her in-depth knowledge of current policies and practices and her work with NGOs and international organisations, she comments in detail on misconceptions about the nature of NFE and how these negatively impact practices. She points out how easily and how often, despite good intentions, neither the content, nor the teaching approaches are leading to good quality education. Some of these shortcomings, she explains, are due to teachers and providers of non-formal education uncritically copying approaches used in the formal sector. Lack of trained teachers is also an issue. Access alone, via the provision of learning centres in remote and rural areas, does not guarantee that good education is provided, if resources are not available or not adapted to the context and needs of children and young people from different backgrounds and communities. Here Dr Nabi's insights match the findings of many other studies (e.g. Poteet 2022). For example, it is clear that participation on its own does not necessarily guarantee equality in learning outcomes. If curricula and learning materials reflect the concerns and interests of mainstream urban communities only, children from rural areas and minority backgrounds will not benefit in the same way as those whose way of life and values are reflected in the content of their lessons.

While the first half of the book offers a critical account of policies and practices, their history as well as their failings and shortcomings, in later chapters of her book Dr. Nabi provides invaluable insights into initiatives and approaches that have proven to be successful. During her many visits to non-formal education centres in Pakistan, Afghanistan and other countries, she was able to observe lessons, peruse teaching materials and scrutinise assessment tools. Her many conversations with teachers, students and families in these centres provided her with an in-depth understanding of local practices. Insights from those who are running local centres, often no more than a room in a community house or a space in a courtyard, allow the reader to understand the

perspectives and motivations of those who make non-formal education possible and who benefit from it. The examples that Dr. Nabi shares show what might appear to be small and even insignificant practices and adaptations. Yet, reading the book, we understand that they make a significant difference in terms of students' engagement with lessons, the trust the community and the parents have in the teachers or the ideas and values that children are exposed to. For example, in one of the chapters, we learn about the use of local resources, from the community's immediate environment, including their natural surroundings, to serve as teaching materials for maths and literacy learning. In another chapter we learn about innovative practices emerging out of the challenging period of the Covid-19 pandemic. These examples demonstrate what can be achieved in situations of crisis, when resources are lacking and when teachers have to make do without textbooks. Here again, Dr. Nabi's insights resonate with the findings of previous studies. For example, research associated with the field known as New Literacy Studies (Street 1993) has shown that people whose formal literacy levels are considered low regularly engage in a range of literacy practices, accessing and making use of texts of different kinds and for different purposes. To draw on these existing practices and to use them as materials is known to work when teaching children and young people to read and write (see Rogers, A. 2008).

Inviting readers to learn about the strengths and unique role of non-formal education, Dr. Nabi's book makes a strong case for NFE to be seen not as the poor sibling of formal education but as a necessary and valuable addition to school systems, deserving of widespread support from national governments, NGOs, international organisations, businesses and local communities.

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Pot-pourri of Successful Ingredients for Non-Formal Education (NFE)
Creative Alternatives for Educating All
Foreword by Abbas Husain

CEO Teacher Development Center (TDC)

I have known Dr. Rafat Nabi in various capacities—both in official and professional relationships—over the last 35 years. Perhaps the most profound and valuable quality she possesses is her relentless optimism, deeply rooted in a genuine care for people. Allow me to expand on these adjectives.

When I say "relentless," I mean a never-ending, boundless hope. Dr. Rafat Nabi sees hope even in situations and places where educationists like myself might understandably fall into pessimism. The overall picture of education in Pakistan can appear bleak. The number of out-of-school children nearly equals the number of those in school. This means that, technically, we need to double the entire educational infrastructure at the school level across the country. Given the present economic and political stagnation, we all know this isn't happening anytime soon. Hence, we need new models and new ways of thinking.

Dr. Nabi's hope, coupled with her care for people, is evident throughout her work. In her book, she highlights the intelligence of our common villagers—our rural men and women—who possess unique, idiosyncratic approaches to literacy and numeracy. Even if they have bypassed the formal school system, they manage their lives with a degree of practical wisdom. What shines through every page of her book is her genuine belief in their capabilities.

One concept that stands out in her work is what I call "Rural Rationality." Often, when we speak about gender disparity in education in rural areas, we make the mistake of relying solely on census data. We urbanites tend to list the number of boys and girls in the village, compare those numbers to school attendance, and then point out the glaring disparities. However, if we look through the lens of rural rationality, we realize that these villagers are not naive. They know that, of all the children, only one or two may have the interest or ability to pursue formal education. The others will need to manage the home, care for younger siblings, and help with farming. It is far more logical to recognize this reality than to insist that every child should be sitting at a desk, counting numbers or reciting letters.

The true strength of Dr. Nabi's book, however, lies in her sharp focus on how much can be achieved using low-cost or no-cost materials found around the house—pebbles, leaves, pieces of bark—items that bypass the conventional school supplies like paper, pencils, and erasers. She demonstrates that, with proper teacher training, these everyday materials can facilitate literacy and numeracy.

It has been said that one of the great tragedies of the modern world is not that we lack the knowledge to save ourselves, but that no one will use that knowledge. This sentiment is particularly relevant to Pakistan's education crisis. On the one hand, we bemoan the lack of resources, forgetting that international donors are often willing to provide nearly unlimited funding for

genuine causes. On the other hand, we suffer from a poverty of ideas and an inflexible adherence to outdated formats, strategies, and techniques.

Dr. Rafat Nabi has pointed to a path of abundance and practical intelligence. I sincerely hope that we have the wisdom to heed her guidance and lift our people.

ABBAS HUSAIN

August 2025

Chapter 1

Setting the Stage: An Introduction to Non-Formal Education

1.1. Introduction

Afghanistan is a country “where God only comes to weep” (Shakib, S. 2002). This sentiment also applies to Pakistan and similar nations in terms of providing access to education for girls and marginalised segments of society in underdeveloped, developing, and crisis-ridden regions. This book draws upon the experiences of South Asian countries, with a specific focus on Pakistan.

The strength of this book lies in its foundation on the perspectives of learners, out-of-school children, communities, and Non Formal Education (NFE) teachers, who are real stakeholders. A bottom-up approach has been taken, incorporating viewpoints and references from ministries, donors, implementing partners (IPs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), reviews of literature, and key documents. The language used in this book avoids overly technical jargon, favouring simplicity to engage the true stakeholders and encourage them to read and learn. Furthermore, it is hoped that the findings within this book will prove valuable for planners, ministries, donors, and research students, and that they will be applicable in similar contexts across South Asia, Africa, and around the world where circumstances resemble those in Pakistan. The real stories, and the insights derived from them, form the core of this book.

Since gaining independence in 1947, Pakistan has grappled with a critical challenge in providing access to education and ensuring effective learning. Presently, approximately 26 million children aged 5 to 16 are out of school (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2023), making Pakistan the second-largest contributor to this global issue. Even among those who do attend school, many fail to achieve even the most basic learning outcomes. In this context, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2021 and ASER 2023) serves as a platform for assessing the educational progress of Pakistani children aged 5-16. This report reveals that children in Pakistan are consistently learning too little and too slowly.

1.2. ASER 2021 and ASER 2023 Report Highlights:

Learning Crisis at the National Level

Language (Urdu/Sindhi)

Grade	Year 2019	Year 2021	Year 2023	Comments
Grade-III	18%	15%	18%	In 2019, 18% of grade 3 children could read grade 2 level simple stories in Urdu/Sindhi. This number decreased to 15% in 2021 but returned to 18% in 2023.
Grade-V	59%	55%	50%	In 2019, 59% of grade 5 children could read grade 2 level stories in these languages. This dropped to 55% in 2021 and further declined to 50% in 2023.

English Language

Grade	Year 2019	Year 2021	Year 2023	Comments
Grade-III	16%	20%	18%	In 2019, 16% of grade 3 children could read grade 2 level sentences in English. This figure increased to 20% in 2021 but fell to 18% in 2023.
Grade-V	55%	56%	54%	In 2019, 55% of grade 5 children could read grade 2 level sentences in English. This figure rose to 56% in 2021 but slightly decreased to 54% in 2023.

Arithmetic

Grade	Year 2019	Year 2021	Year 2023	Comments
Grade-III	21%	20%	13%	In 2019, 21% of grade 3 children could solve 2-digit division problems. This decreased to 20% in 2021 and further dropped to 13% in 2023.
Grade-V	59%	51%	46%	In 2019, 59% of grade 5 children were proficient in solving 2-digit division problems of grade 2 level. This proficiency declined to 51% in 2021 and further to 46% in 2023.

The ASER 2023 report highlights a persistent learning crisis at the national level, with notable fluctuations and declines in basic literacy and numeracy skills among grade 3 and grade 5 students. In the realm of language, the ability to read grade 2 level stories in Urdu/Sindhi saw a concerning decline in grade 5 students from 59% in 2019 to 50% in 2023. Similarly, English language proficiency experienced minor fluctuations, with a slight improvement in 2021 for grade 3 but ultimately falling back to 2019 levels by 2023. Arithmetic skills showed the most significant drop, particularly among grade 3 students, where proficiency in solving 2-digit division problems plummeted from 21% in 2019 to a mere 13% in 2023. This data underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to address these educational challenges and improve learning outcomes for students across the country.

Learning Crisis at the Sindh (Province of Pakistan) Level

Rationale for Focusing on Sindh Province:

The emphasis on Sindh province in presenting these statistics stems from the significant amount of funding and numerous donor-supported projects aimed at improving education in this region. Despite these efforts, the lack of substantial improvement in educational outcomes highlights critical issues that need to be addressed. By focusing on Sindh, this book aims to shed light on the challenges and opportunities within a province that receives considerable attention and resources, yet continues to face profound educational hurdles.

Language (Urdu/Sindhi)

Grade	Year 2019	Year 2021	Year 2023	Comments
Grade-III	9%	9%	8%	In 2019, 9% of grade 3 children could read grade 2 level simple stories in Urdu/Sindhi. This number remained at 9% in 2021 but fell to 8% in 2023.
Grade-V	44%	40%	39%	In 2019, 44% of grade 5 children could read grade 2 level stories in these languages. This dropped to 40% in 2021 and further declined to 39% in 2023.

English Language

Grade	Year 2019	Year 2021	Year 2023	Comments
Grade-III	7%	4%	5%	In 2019, 7% of grade 3 children could read grade 2 level sentences in English. This fell to 4% in 2021 but slightly improved to 5% in 2023.
Grade-V	27%	24%	22%	In 2019, 27% of grade 5 children could read grade 2 level sentences in English. This decreased to 24% in 2021 and further to 22% in 2023.

Maths

Grade	Year 2019	Year 2021	Year 2023	Comments
Grade-III	8%	7%	3%	In 2019, 8% of grade 3 children could do two-digit division problems. This number decreased to 7% in 2021 and further plummeted to 3% in 2023.
Grade-V	31%	28%	27%	In 2019, 31% of grade 5 children were proficient in solving 2-digit division problems of grade 2 level. This proficiency reduced to 28% in 2021 and to 27% in 2023.

The ASER 2023 report highlights a troubling learning crisis at the provincial level in Sindh. For language proficiency in Urdu/Sindhi, the percentage of grade 3 students who could read grade 2 level simple stories has stagnated around 9% in 2019 and 2021, but fell to 8% in 2023. Grade 5 students showed a steady decline from 44% in 2019 to 39% in 2023. English language proficiency is similarly concerning, with only 7% of grade 3 students able to read grade 2 level sentences in 2019, falling to 4% in 2021 and slightly recovering to 5% in 2023. For grade 5, there was a consistent decline from 27% in 2019 to 22% in 2023.

Arithmetic skills showed the most dramatic decline, with grade 3 students' proficiency in solving 2-digit division problems dropping from 8% in 2019 to a mere 3% in 2023. For grade 5 students, proficiency decreased from 31% in 2019 to 27% in 2023. These statistics underscore a significant and growing educational challenge in Sindh, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills among students.

The findings from the ASER 2023 report reveal that each year, school going children in Pakistan are learning too little and too slowly. Approximately half of grade 5 students have not yet achieved grade 2 learning levels, revealing a significant gap between what students are learning and what they should be learning. It's important to note that there isn't much difference in learning outcomes between students in private and government schools, despite the substantial fees that parents pay for private education.

This situation is particularly alarming in Sindh, where large funded projects like the Pakistan Reading Programme and the Sindh Reading Programme have shown no significant improvement in students' learning achievements. My own study on the reading skills of out-of-school children aged 9 to 10 years and children in grades 4 and 5 revealed that, in many cases, out-of-school children read paragraphs better than their peers in school. They acquired these skills through non-formal and informal methods (Rafat Nabi 2022).

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, under Article 25A, declares education as a fundamental right for all children between the ages of 5 to 16. Article 37(B) calls for eradicating illiteracy, and Pakistan's international commitments under Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG 4, underscore the importance of basic education. However, the statistics reveal that one-third of out-of-school children in South Asia reside in Pakistan, with 38.9% of girls and 30.2% of boys being out of school (Dawn News). These constitutional and international obligations are far from being fulfilled, which is a painful reality in an Islamic country where the first Holy message is "IQRA," meaning "read" with a focus on education.

With more than three decades of experience working at various levels, from policymaking to capacity building to implementation and research, I've gathered a wealth of knowledge and human stories. My work has provided me with insights into the challenges and successes of NFE, which remains underutilized and overlooked. This book aims to uncover the successful ingredients and practices of NFE, which have often gone unnoticed. My field knowledge, discussions, meetings with various stakeholders, and reviews of important documents and literature have contributed to this endeavour.

It's essential to bring to light the best practices, address gaps and myths at all levels, and recognise that a significant body of knowledge and learning remains untapped. The education treasury, comprising success stories and effective NFE centre elements, should be unearthed to help policymakers, implementers/NGOs, academics, researchers, and donors make more evidence-based decisions. Curriculum, textbooks, learning materials, teacher education, training, examinations, and assessments are not endpoints in the education spectrum but means to an end. If these components don't function effectively, the desired outcomes cannot be achieved. Professional development and a follow-up system play a crucial role in shaping human skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Unfortunately, the professional development and follow-up

system in the field of NFE are currently the weakest links. All these areas should be re-evaluated through the lens of NFE, rather than formal education, and from the perspective of learners, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all, top-down approach. The significance of local practices and indigenous knowledge in learning should not be disregarded.

In today's educational landscape, two stark issues persist. On one side, we witness a sea of illiterate and out-of-school children, primarily girls and marginalized groups, continually growing due to school dropouts. On the other side, we observe a multitude of children attending schools, yet their learning outcomes are disappointingly meagre. This situation is particularly alarming for girls and other marginalized groups within society.

Cultural practices, family beliefs, unrealistic policies, threats to girls' education, insecurity, child labour, the unavailability of nearby schools, inappropriate use of school buildings in rural areas, outdated curricula, inadequate teaching methods, and a lack of connection between educational content and the immediate environment of learners all play a significant role in keeping girls and marginalized groups away from educational opportunities. Ghost schools and abandoned school buildings add to the problem.

Despite the goodwill of governments and donors, innovative and realistic approaches are lacking in Pakistan and similar countries. The ongoing trend of children dropping out of school, the large number of out-of-school children, and the low literacy rates, coupled with the absence of educational facilities in numerous villages and communities, paint a grim picture. This dire state of educational access should be a matter of grave concern for governments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation, causing a setback to education. However, the lessons from this crisis are valuable. The pandemic has shown that simple, realistic, and effective strategies can be employed to ensure education continues. These straightforward methods are eye-openers for governments, communities, the media, and implementers. If they genuinely seek to drive change and not only fulfil constitutional and international commitments but also improve the lives of their people, they must consider alternative modes of delivering basic education, especially to hard-to-reach children and communities, particularly girls.

The current approaches to education have consistently shown signs of failure, necessitating a different, out-of-the-box mindset. An approach like 'OLRPA' (Observe, Learn, Review, Plan, and Act) could hold the key. This methodology, based on my experience, has proven valuable in planning educational activities for both formal and non-formal education.

For a decade now, the Ministry of Education and education promoters have acknowledged that formal education is not the solution in remote areas. Despite numerous efforts and donor-supported programs, achieving universal educational access remains a distant dream. Realistic and practical approaches are urgently needed. Repeating failed methods from past decades and complaining about the alarming situation will not suffice.

Something is amiss, and it's essential to uncover the wealth of knowledge and learning that remains hidden. These untapped resources, particularly in the field of NFE, must be brought to light to effect real improvement. An urgent need exists for alternative paths of education, particularly for

girls and underserved populations. NFE presents a promising solution due to its flexibility, adaptability, and cost-effectiveness. With proper planning, strategies, and support systems, NFE can be delivered anywhere, anytime.

1.3. Proposed Research Study

After several decades of experience working in Pakistan and Afghanistan, I am convinced that many effective examples have gone unnoticed due to the formal monitoring system and rigid teaching approaches in Non- Formal Centers (NFCs), along with donors' inflexible quantitative monitoring requirements for funded projects. I have witnessed both effective and ineffective centres, which strongly convinced me of the necessity to bring this knowledge and learning to the forefront.

There is an urgent need to conduct more qualitative, ethnographic-style studies and document successful ingredients, ground realities, and challenges that are sometimes hidden from the eyes of International Non- Governmental Organisations (INGOs), NGOs, ministries, and donors from policy to delivery levels. This book is my effort in this regard. My deep-rooted field and research-based experience suggest that something is amiss, and the ingredients of successful practices remain concealed. We must uncover this treasury of learning, success, best practices, and ingredients of effective NFE. These hidden sources of knowledge and learning, especially for girls, need to be exposed and utilized to bring about effective improvements. There is an urgent need for alternative paths of education, particularly for girls and underserved populations. NFE could be one solution due to its flexibility, adaptability, and cost-effectiveness. With proper planning, strategies, and support systems, it can be provided anywhere, anytime.

1.3.1. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The study will rigorously examine the landscape of NFE in Pakistan, drawing insights from experiences in South Asia and Africa. The anticipated outcomes are presumed to have broader applicability, extending to Afghanistan and various Asian nations.

1.3.2. Primary Focus Areas:

The principal thrust of this research is to discern effective strategies and a nuanced combination of elements conducive to extending educational access to marginalized children, particularly girls, residing in remote and challenging regions of Pakistan. The study will systematically explore:

- A nuanced understanding of the documented definition and practical interpretation of NFE across different tiers.
- Comprehensive historical insights into NFE, with a specific emphasis on its evolution within the Pakistani context.
- Identification and dispelling of prevalent confusions and myths within the educational domain.
- Evaluation of existing strengths and challenges from diverse stakeholders' perspectives.
- Examination of mutual expectations among key stakeholders.

- Articulation of the aspirations of traditionally voiceless groups, namely learners and teachers, to rectify the prevailing top-down approach that has historically impeded the success of educational initiatives.
- Analysis of effective teaching methodologies and assessment techniques.
- Synthesis of international experiences and research findings applicable to the unique context of Pakistan.
- Compilation of successful elements within NFE, coupled with recommendations for alternative pathways to reach the hitherto unreachable.

1.3.3. Research Questions:

This investigation aims to unearth both known and undiscovered approaches to non-formal education, serving as a beacon for future endeavours. The guiding research questions include:

- Does the current NFE system effectively grant educational access to deprived and marginalized groups, especially rural girls?
- Can NFE serve as a viable solution to extend educational facilities to hard-to-reach populations, particularly girls?
- In what ways can NFE be enhanced for increased effectiveness, responsiveness, and accessibility to deprived and marginalized groups, especially rural girls in nations like Pakistan?
- What are the critical requirements at both the governmental (central and local) and institutional levels for ensuring educational access to deprived and marginalised groups, specifically rural girls?

1.3.4. Study Outcome:

Drawing upon more than four decades of firsthand experience in challenging and diverse environments, the author will document successful ingredients for extending educational access through non-formal education. The tangible result will manifest as a comprehensive booklet or book.

The study seeks to debunk the prevalent myth that educational access is an unattainable goal for out-of-school children in remote and challenging areas. By grounding the findings in evidence and practical experiences, this research seeks to correct this erroneous belief and promote a more informed perspective.

1.3.5. Target Audiences:

The anticipated beneficiaries and audiences for this study encompass a diverse spectrum, including university students, researchers, policymakers, ministries, international and non-governmental organizations, donors, planners, training colleges, teachers, and local communities. The insights derived from this research endeavour aspire to inform policy, guide educational practices, and contribute to a more inclusive and effective NFE landscape.

1.4. About the Author:

Dr. Rafat Nabi stands as a seasoned educational development professional with an impressive tenure of over 40 years, marked by an illustrious career encompassing program management, field-based research, and multifaceted involvement in education. Specializing in education for deprived and out-of-school children and youth, Dr. Nabi's extensive experience spans diverse domains, from Early Childhood Development (ECD) to primary education, non-formal education, inclusive education, and adult education.

Throughout her distinguished career, Dr. Nabi has not only conceived and developed large-funded programs but has also been instrumental in their implementation, supervision, and meticulous documentation. She has played a key role in capacity building and professional development, crafting numerous teacher training programs for various educational levels and stakeholders, including pre-primary, primary, secondary, and non-formal educators.

As an accomplished researcher, Dr. Nabi has conducted numerous evaluations and impact studies related to schools, teacher training, student learning assessments, and the effectiveness of resource materials on learning outcomes. Her valuable insights and recommendations resulting from these studies have significantly influenced the development of future plans and strategies for the organizations she has been associated with.

Dr. Nabi holds a Bachelor in Science (BSc) and a Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) from the University of Sindh, Pakistan, complemented by a Master's in Education and a Doctorate in Education from the University of Bristol, UK. Further solidifying her academic standing, she pursued a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of East Anglia, UK.

Her postdoctoral contributions culminated in the co-authorship of the seminal work, "HIDDEN LITERACIES: Ethnographic Studies of Literacy and Numeracy Practices in Pakistan," alongside Professors Alan Rogers and Brian Street. This influential publication, which explores literacy and numeracy practices in Pakistan, is distinguished for its insightful ethnographic studies and was published in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Nabi's scholarly endeavours extend beyond her co-authored book, encompassing a prolific body of work comprising numerous articles, teaching guides, and textbooks in the domains of Formal and Non-Formal Education. Her comprehensive contributions underscore her commitment to advancing education and scholarship.

Adding to her international profile, Dr. Nabi has been associated as a visiting fellow/scholar at prestigious institutions such as Cambridge University and Leeds University, UK. Currently, she holds the position of Academic Associate at the University of Lancaster, UK, where she is initiating research in the field of non-formal education and alternative pathways to education for deprived groups in society since October 2023.

Dr. Nabi's significant leadership role was reflected in her chairpersonship of the Board of Governors at the esteemed NGO, Indus Resource Centre (IRC), until September 2023. Presently, she continues to contribute as a Director on the Board of Governors.

Her professional journey has been characterized by a wide array of assignments at national and international levels, encompassing senior management and leadership positions with reputable international organizations, civil society groups, donors, and multidisciplinary teams. Dr. Nabi has been fortunate to acquire in-depth knowledge, understanding, and skills related to various aspects of educational development, program management, formal and non-formal education, education in crisis/emergencies, and education for marginalized and deprived groups in society.

In terms of program leadership, Dr. Nabi has spearheaded numerous donor-funded programs, collaborating with organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and others. Her focus across all programs has consistently emphasized ten key areas, including leadership and management, capacity building, development of learning materials, financial and grant management, proposal writing, and the development, implementation, and management of programs targeting deprived communities in countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Dr. Nabi's experience in the education field spans a broad spectrum, ranging from grass roots to the highest government levels. Her work has transcended well-developed city environments to culturally diverse and challenging rural settings. She has been involved in educational projects at both national and classroom levels, playing a pivotal role in policy planning and implementation.

One of her notable achievements is the instrumental role she played in developing the first National guidelines for Adult and Youth literacy. Dr. Nabi's impact is further evident in her contribution to curriculum development and documenting its impact. She has observed and assessed numerous non-formal education centres, built the capacities of community-based national organizations, and collaborated with people from diverse cultures, languages, and backgrounds.

Dr. Nabi's commitment to introducing educational opportunities for females and marginalized groups, especially in rural settings, has elicited positive and rewarding responses. Her rich, real organic field experience has fortified her belief that access to quality education is attainable everywhere with strategic community consultation and creative education approaches that extend beyond school boundaries.

Expressing concern over the limited and relevant literature available in the field, Dr. Nabi strongly believes in the necessity of highlighting best practices and evidence-based unbiased documents. Her commitment to transparency is reflected in her decision to document her experiences in the field of non-formal education in Pakistan openly and honestly. Dr. Nabi aims to bring hidden treasures, gaps, and learners' aspirations to the forefront for planners, donors, and implementing partners.

In summary, Dr. Rafat Nabi's work experience spans all levels of education, offering a wealth of expertise in policy development, implementation, curriculum development, learning material

development, delivery, monitoring/supervision, research/documentation, and program leadership. Her profound impact on educational development and commitment to transparency make her a distinguished figure in the field of education, both nationally and internationally.

Chapter 2

Delving into Education: Definitions and Diverse Perspectives

2.1. Introduction

The seemingly straightforward yet profoundly complex task demands the elucidation of a singular, unequivocal definition of education. Its roots trace back to the dawn of humanity, with Adam and Eve, marking the commencement of the first child's existence in the world. Educational patterns manifest both in humans and animals, with parents assuming the role of initial instructors, and the home emerging as the inaugural school for the child. The trajectory of education has evolved from informal and non-formal methods to formal education, with all three coexisting in various societal manifestations. Before delving deeper, a foundational comprehension of the term 'Education' is imperative.

2.2. Definition of Education

The etymology of the term 'Education' can be traced to the Latin root "Educare," signifying 'to lead out' or 'bring forth.' Initially, it manifested as a form of training, involving the transfer of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. Education encapsulates the systematic exchange of structured questions and answers, providing avenues for knowledge, understanding, and the realization of inherent potentials.

In a broader sense, education denotes the transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits. Character traits, which form the basis of an individual's personality, are developed based on the value system inherited from family and acquired through experiences and exposure to social environments, including classrooms, friends, and colleagues. Education encompasses the impartation or acquisition of general knowledge and the cultivation of reasoning abilities. Numerous definitions from esteemed educationalists, philosophers, scholars, and authors contribute to the multifaceted nature of education. Below, we present a selection of these diverse perspectives.

1. "Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body." (Aristotle)
2. "Education is the process of tuning the soul towards light." (Plato)
3. "Education is not preparation for life; Education is life itself." (John Dewey)
4. "Education is the art of forming human beings." (Jean Jacques Rousseau)
5. "Education is the process through which a child unfolds what is already in the germ." (Friedrich William Froebel)
6. "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." (William Butler Yeats)
7. "Education is an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man's body, mind, and spirit." (Mahatma Gandhi)
8. "Education is a deliberate, systematic, and continuous effort to transmit, generate, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, or sensitivities." Definition (Source: <https://www.researchgate.net>)

9. "Education is defined as the aggregate of all the processes by which a person develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour of practical value in the society in which they live." (Dictionary of Education edited by C.V. Good, 1973)
10. "Education is a balanced growth of the total personality through training the spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings, and bodily senses such that faith is infused into the whole personality." (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas) (Source: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>)

Numerous other philosophers and educationalists, such as Heinrich Pestalozzi, Martin Luther King Jr., H.B Adams, Ulich, Robert, Horace Mann, T.P. Nunn, Swami Vivekananda, Nelson Mandela, and Allama Iqbal, have contributed their unique perspectives to the discourse on education. These diverse viewpoints underscore the inherent challenge of encapsulating education within a singular, universally agreed-upon definition. The dynamism of education is evident as it adapts to the aims, goals, objectives, and philosophies of a nation, aligning with the needs of the contemporary era while considering the developmental, social, and economic requisites of the times to come.

2.3. Definition of Education in the Context of This Book

The examination of various definitions of education, articulated by diverse individuals across distinct periods, underscores the nuanced nature of this concept. In alignment with the thematic essence of this book, the definitions proposed by Jackson, S. (2011) and Ishumi, Abel G. M. (1976) stand out as particularly resonant.

Jackson, S. (2011) offers a comprehensive definition, asserting that education is *"the process of imparting and acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitude through various forms of teaching and learning with a view to preparing individuals to be responsible citizens."* This definition encapsulates the multifaceted nature of education, emphasizing not only the transfer of knowledge and skills but also the cultivation of responsible citizenship.

Similarly, Ishumi, Abel G. M. (1976), posits that education is a deliberate societal process aimed at transmitting accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to the next. He emphasizes education as a *"transformative asset, elevating individuals' aspirations and enhancing their social, economic, and cultural performance."* He further states that *"education equips individuals with the essential skills and ideologies to navigate the challenges encountered in their daily lives."*

In essence, my contention aligns with the perspective that education, in any form, constitutes the transmission of knowledge, skills (ranging from social and scientific to vocational and emotional skills), and character traits (which govern one's behaviour and attitude in different situations), grounded in the moral and ethical values of the nation and in accordance with universal moral principles. The paramount message underscores that education, in its truest sense, engenders a positive and valuable transformation in the lives of individuals, their homes, and their communities. This aligns with the overarching theme of fostering positive change through education, reflecting a commitment to societal development and ethical values.

2.4. Sources of Education

It is an undeniable fact that education has been a constant presence since the inception of humanity. In prehistory, education manifested informally, transitioning to non-formal methods through oral communication, visual aids such as pictures and shapes, and imitation. The advent of ancient civilizations witnessed the invention of writing, significantly expanding the reservoir of knowledge. This pivotal development marked a shift from informal and non-formal education to the emergence of formal education. Despite this evolution, it is imperative to acknowledge the coexistence of all three forms of education even today.

Initially, formal education primarily catered to elite and religious groups. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century played a crucial role in making books more widely available, leading to an increase in general literacy. The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the rising importance of public education, transforming formal education into a global imperative. This evolution paved the way for making primary education universally accessible, free of charge, and compulsory up to a certain age.

The historical trajectory of education in Pakistan reveals a significant oversight in neglecting the potential of non-formal and informal education systems. The richness of indigenous methodologies, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and community-driven features inherent in these alternative systems were not integrated into the formal education structure. The government's failure to extend support to existing NFE models resulted in a surge in illiteracy rates, as formal education alone could not reach every individual.

Globally, there has been a renewed interest in NFE, acknowledging its role in addressing the challenges of modern society. Discussions by scholars such as Rogers, A. (2004) and Hoppers, W. (2005; 2006; 2007a; 2007 b; 2008), along with statements from the Council of Europe, emphasize the need to recognize NFE as a crucial partner in the lifelong learning process. The Council of Europe recommends that governments and relevant authorities acknowledge and make NFE accessible to all (Council of Europe, 2003).

The increasing diversity within what is termed formal education has blurred the distinctions between formal and non-formal education patterns (Rogers, A. 2004; Hoppers, W. 2005; 2006; 2007a, 2007b; and 2008). Governments, IPs/NGOs, international donors, community-based organizations, village organizations, UN agencies, and the World Bank collectively assert that the challenges of modern society necessitate the reinforcement of formal education through non-formal educational practices. Recognition of NFE as an indispensable partner in the lifelong learning process is deemed essential for all member states (Council of Europe, 2003).

Before delving into the history and current landscape of NFE in general and specifically in Pakistan, a clear understanding of the definitions of formal and non-formal education, as well as informal education, is essential. As informal education is not the central theme of this book, the author will provide only a brief definition and refrain from extensive discussion on this aspect. The distinctions between the two forms of education along with relevant and short definitions of all three types are elucidated below.

2.5. Distinctions between Formal and Non-Formal Education

To delve into the intricate differences between formal and NFE, it is crucial to explore the nuanced characteristics that define each.

2.5.1. Formal Education:

Formal education, typically supported by the state and characterized by a structured curriculum, is a hierarchical system extending from primary school to university. As articulated by Coombs P.H and Ahmed, M (1974), it includes specialized programs and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.

This system is institutionally driven, marked by a rigorous structure, and follows a predetermined curriculum. Progression occurs in a structured hierarchy, moving from primary education to higher levels, culminating in degrees and certifications that confer recognized qualifications.

2.5.2. Non-Formal Education (NFE):

The term "Non-formal Education" refers to organized educational activities occurring outside the formal educational system. NFE is known for its flexibility, learner-centred approach, contextualization, and emphasis on participatory methods. Importantly, it lacks a specific target group; it could cater to children, youth, or adults. There exists an ongoing debate surrounding the precise definition of NFE and the activities it encompasses or excludes. NFE is distinguished from both Formal Education and Informal Education.

The historical discourse on NFE traces back to around 1968 with Coombs P. H (1968) influential work, "The World Education Crisis: A Systems Approach." This debate unfolded through three main strands, which, although overlapping, are not sequential.

Ideological Approach (until about 1977): During this period, NFE was perceived as distinct from, and even contrasting with, the formal education system. Advocates applied clear ideologies, emphasizing the unique philosophy and objectives of NFE compared to the formal system. This ideological stance often led to debates and discussions on the role of NFE in societal transformation and its potential to address specific educational needs. The emphasis was on developing alternative educational methods and frameworks that diverged from traditional approaches.

Empirical Approach (1974 to the early 1980s): NFE was viewed as part of the broader education sector, akin to the formal education system. Scholars, referred to as 'empiricists,' sought to define NFE based on observations in the field, emphasizing practical elements and real-world applications.

Pragmatic Approach (post-1986): The debate became fragmented, with scholars described as 'pragmatists' adopting a flexible stance. They drew from different aspects of the debate as they found them useful. The discussion gradually waned after 1986. (Carr-Hill, R. A. et al 2001)

Carr-Hill identified three forms of NFE:

a) Para-formal: Operating alongside the formal system, this form of NFE is designed to strengthen formal education programs, providing additional support or complementary programs to enhance the formal system's effectiveness. (Carr-Hill, R. A. et al, 2001)

b) Professional and Vocational Training: This form of NFE goes beyond the offerings of the formal system, providing work-related skills that may not be adequately covered in traditional educational settings.

c) Personal Development Training: Focused on individual growth and skills not explicitly covered in the formal system, including personal and life skills development.

NFE encompasses various educational activities organized by different agencies for specific target groups, particularly adults, outside the formal education framework. This includes correspondence courses where the tutor and learner are not in the same location, offering a diverse range of skills and qualifications. Dodds, T. (1996) characterizes NFE as an integrated form of formal and informal education, bridging the gap between structured classroom learning and experiential, real-world knowledge acquisition.

Further distinctions between formal and non-formal education are outlined by Simkins, T. (1977), cited in Fordham, P. (1993), Yasunaga, M. (2014), and Romi, S., and Schmida, M. (2009). They propose three broad areas of NFE:

Supplementary Non-Formal Learning: Focused on remedial education, this aspect addresses unfulfilled provisions in formal learning, complementing and supporting formal education where gaps exist.

Complementary Non-Formal Learning: Associated with vocational and skills development, this form of NFE complements formal education by providing practical, work-related skills not adequately covered in traditional educational settings.

Alternative Non-Formal Learning: An innovative form of NFE that responds to emerging learning needs as societies evolve, exploring new approaches and methodologies to meet the dynamic demands of contemporary learning.

Table 1: Ideal Type/Models of Formal and Non-formal Education

Differences	Formal Education	Non-formal Education
Purpose	- Long-term and general - Certified	- Short-term and specific - Certificate not necessarily the main purpose
Timing	- Long cycle/preparatory/full-time	- Short cycle/recurrent/part-time
Content	- Standardized/input centered - Academic - Entry requirements determine clientele	- Individualized/output centered - Practical - Clientele determine the entry requirements
Delivery system	- Institution-based, isolated from environment - Rigidly structured, teacher-centered and resource intensive	- Environment-based and embedded in the community - Flexible, learner-centered and resource efficient
Control	External/hierarchical	-Self-governing/democratic
Source: Adapted from Simkins (1977, pp. 12–15, cited in Fordham, 1993)		

Table 1 illustrates the differences between formal and non-formal education in terms of purpose, timing, content, delivery system, and control. The distinctions presented in this detailed exploration contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of education and its diverse modalities.

2.6. Informal Education:

While the primary focus of this discourse revolves around NFE, it is imperative to delve into the concept of informal education to complete the triad and provide a comprehensive understanding.

2.6.1. Definition of Informal Education:

"Informal Education" is a term that encapsulates a predominantly unconscious process whereby individuals naturally acquire and accumulate experience, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from their day-to-day life experiences and exposure to the environment. The work of Kleis, J. Lang, L., Mietus, J. R., and Tiapulo, F. T. (1973), Etling, A. (1993), and Rafat Nabi et al. (2009) contributes to the definition, highlighting that informal education specifically deals with everyday experiences that are not meticulously planned or organized but rather occur incidentally.

2.6.2. Modes of Informal Learning:

- Family and Neighbours: The home environment plays a pivotal role in informal education, with family and neighbours serving as influential sources of learning. Interactions within the familial setting contribute significantly to the acquisition of knowledge, values, and practical skills.
- Work and Play: Informal learning extends seamlessly into the realms of work and play. Engaging in work-related activities and recreational pursuits provides individuals with valuable insights and skills that may not be formally structured but are instrumental in personal and skill development.
- Marketplace: The marketplace, with its dynamic and diverse interactions, serves as an informal learning space. Individuals glean knowledge from various transactions, negotiations, and observations within this bustling social and economic hub.
- Library: While libraries are traditionally associated with formal education, they also play a role in informal learning. Casual browsing, exploring diverse topics, and self-directed learning contribute to an individual's informal educational journey.
- Mass Media: The pervasive influence of mass media, including television, radio, and online platforms, contributes significantly to informal education. Exposure to diverse content, news, and cultural representations fosters continuous learning outside formal structures.

2.6.3. Significance of Informal Education:

While the main emphasis of this discourse remains on NFE, it is essential to acknowledge the pivotal role of informal education. Informal learning, deeply intertwined with daily life, serves as a natural and continuous avenue for individuals to enhance their knowledge and skills. Operating organically, it responds to the spontaneity of experiences rather than adhering to structured plans.

This recognition underscores the holistic nature of education, encompassing both formal and informal avenues of learning.

2.7. Integration with Formal and Non-Formal Education:

In recognizing the triad of learning methodologies, it is crucial to acknowledge that individuals engage in learning through formal education, non-formal education, and informal learning concurrently. The formal education system provides structured and certified knowledge, NFE offers flexibility and targeted skill development, while informal learning weaves seamlessly through the fabric of everyday life, supplementing and enriching the overall learning experience.

In conclusion, while the primary focus of this book centres on NFE, a holistic understanding of the educational landscape necessitates recognizing and appreciating the pervasive influence and significance of informal education in shaping individuals' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

2.8. Non-Formal Basic Education Model of Pakistan

A comprehensive review of official documents from both Provincial and Federal ministries of Pakistan, encompassing policies, curricula, learning materials, teaching guides, and reports, reveals a well-organized and flexible educational initiative known as NFE. This program operates outside the formal educational system and is characterized by its flexibility and learner-centric approach. Predominantly supported and administered by the Ministry of Education and its affiliated departments, the Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) program caters for individuals in the age group of 6 to 16.

The NFBE program, spanning 30 months, provides qualifying learners with certificates equivalent to those obtained in formal primary schools. Subsequently, these learners have the option to continue their education in any formal school. The program is designed to address the diverse and complex learning needs of its participants, primarily comprising individuals from marginalized groups and deprived areas. These learners are often excluded from the mainstream formal education system due to various challenges such as poverty, lack of school facilities, engagement in labour work, cultural and gender-related barriers, ineffective teaching methods, an irrelevant curriculum, acceptance issues related to diversity, insecurity, and challenges in reaching remote areas, among others.

While the NFBE program appears commendable on paper, there are significant implementation challenges, which will be discussed in detail later in this book (see pages 53-75). The program is specifically tailored to cater to individuals from poor socio-economic backgrounds, religious and ethnic minorities, overage children, especially those who missed their early years of schooling or dropped out, and children with mild to moderate physical and mental disabilities.

The NFBE program aligns closely with the formal primary education program to achieve equivalency, covering essential concepts, skills, and students' learning outcomes from formal education curricula. However, the relevance of these aspects in the current era, marked by 21st-century skills and a rapidly changing scenario, remains a debatable point. The NFBE program is positioned as an alternative learning system for sustainable development, with its key principles

summarized in the policy documents of 2016 (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2016):

- The NFBE program is linked to social values derived from religious teachings and beliefs, history, traditions, and customs.
- It is associated with the political life of the community, enabling learners to participate effectively in decision-making processes.
- The program contributes to the economic progress of the country by facilitating the participation of educated and literate youth in agriculture, industry, entrepreneurship, cooperative efforts, community health improvement, and other fields.

In addition to the government-supported NFBE program, there are other forms of NFE with untapped potentials, best practices, and a wealth of knowledge waiting to be explored through research. Many of these small-scale programs operate without government support, relying on self-help or community-based financing. Examples include Indigenous education centres, Madrasas, religious centres, home tuition centres, under-the-tree free literacy centres, mobile literacy centres, literacy centres for porters, centres for factory workers, mosque schools, media literacy programs, online courses, community health improvement initiatives, distance education, community education, work-related literacy and skills centres, and homeschooling.

These alternative models exhibit flexibility, lacking the rigid constraints often associated with government-owned NFBE programs, such as fixed timing, prescribed textbooks, traditional primary teaching methods, and examination systems. Government-led Non-Formal Programs are categorized into levels, including early childhood, primary education, and middle education.

NFE is supported by Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This book primarily focuses on the NFBE program under the Ministry's umbrella, providing a thorough analysis of its components, from policy to curriculum, capacity building, implementation, and classroom teaching-learning observation processes. The desires and perspectives of the primary stakeholders are also considered and will be presented under the title of "Desires of Learners and Teachers" (pages 130-139).

2.9. Primary, Post Primary, and Adult Literacy Programme

The Basic Primary, Post Primary, and Adult Literacy Programme is a comprehensive initiative comprising two distinct arms tailored to address the diverse educational needs of specific age groups. The Primary and Post Primary arm is dedicated to adolescents, particularly targeting dropouts and out-of-school children aged 6 to 16 years. Simultaneously, the second arm focuses on fulfilling literacy, numeracy, and vocational requirements for adults in the age range of 17 to 36. However, there appears to be some ambiguity regarding the age criteria, with various documents citing ranges of 6 to 16 years and 9 to 16 years.

a. Primary and Post Primary Course Packages

This structured program consists of five meticulously designed packages, each crafted in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). These packages

encompass various grades within the primary and post-primary levels. The salient features are succinctly presented in the following table:

Package	Level/Grades	Duration	Assessment	Primary and Post Primary
A	ECD + Grade 1	8 Months	Internal	Complete primary level Education in 30 months.
B	Grade II and III	8 Months	Internal	
C	Grade IV and V	14 Months	External	
D	Grade VI and VII	10 Months	Internal assessment	Complete Post Primary level Education in 18 Months.
E	Grade VIII	8 Months	Directorate	

Table 1: Accelerated Primary and Post-Primary Education Packages

Note: Complete Primary and Post Primary education in 48 months (four years rather than eight years) through an accelerated approach.

This innovative structure facilitates a child who has never attended school to cover primary-level education within 30 months. For an adolescent completing primary education and aspiring to pursue post-primary education, the program enables completion in 18 months instead of the conventional three years. The program actively encourages learners to further their education, aiming to equip eligible adolescents and adults with employment skills for seamless integration into society as productive individuals.

b. Basic Literacy Model for Ages 17 to 36

Acknowledging the demand for education among those aged 17 and above, the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) has conceived and organised a specialized literacy program for adults. This program provides an opportunity for learners who cannot continue beyond Package A to enrol in a development course where feasible. The model designed for adults is outlined as follows:

Package	Equivalent Grades	Duration	Assessment	Basic Literacy and Numeracy
A	ECD + Grade 1	8 Months	Internal (By IPs)	Completion of Package A and development of four to five skills.
	Skill Development	4 Months		
Total		12 months		

Table 2: Literacy and Skill Development Model for Adults (17 to 36 ages)

Integral to the success of these programs is the crucial role played by IPs/ NGOs. These partners receive support from the government in terms of technical expertise, monitoring mechanisms, and financial resources. While Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview, this book primarily focuses on the intricate network of IPs responsible for program implementation rather than delving into the direct execution details by the government.

The programs mentioned, such as the Basic Primary, Post Primary, and Adult Literacy Programme, indeed fall under the umbrella of the government's NFE initiative. However, alongside these government-led efforts, this book also explores a spectrum of alternative NFE models implemented by NGOs and other partners. This comprehensive approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of NFE in Pakistan, encompassing both governmental and non-governmental endeavours. Through an examination of policies, curricula, implementation strategies, and stakeholder perspectives across various NFE programs, the book endeavours to present a holistic view of the educational landscape in the country.

Chapter 3

Beyond Classroom Walls: Tracing the Historical Tapestry of Non-Formal Education

3.1. Introduction

This Chapter embarks on a comprehensive journey through the history and evolution of NFE globally, providing a foundational understanding of its significance and development over time. This historical context sets the stage for a focused exploration of NFE in Pakistan, highlighting the pivotal role it plays in addressing educational challenges in the country.

The chapter begins by tracing the origins and global progression of NFE, detailing how various nations have adopted and adapted non-formal approaches to meet their unique educational needs. This historical perspective underscores the adaptability and resilience of NFE in diverse contexts, illustrating its capacity to complement and enhance formal education systems.

Building on this global overview, the chapter shifts its focus to Pakistan, utilizing data and insights from the CSO's Spotlight Report for the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education 5 (CSO GRALE 2021). This section offers an in-depth analysis of the current state of NFE in Pakistan, providing detailed metrics on the distribution of NFE providers, centres, teachers, and students across various provinces.

A province-wise distribution analysis highlights key metrics and statistics, revealing significant regional disparities and identifying areas of both success and concern. It discusses paradoxical scenarios, such as Sindh's struggle with ghost schools despite hosting the largest number of NGOs, and Punjab's success in reaching out-of-school children using only a relatively small number of NGOs. The analysis also touches on gender inclusivity trends and opportunities for teacher capacity building, offering a nuanced understanding of the NFE landscape in Pakistan.

The chapter delves into the critical examination of major NFE providers, such as the Basic Education Community School NGO, highlighting their substantial contributions and underscoring the need for strategic policy interventions to ensure efficient resource allocation and management. It emphasizes the importance of setting minimum and maximum thresholds for centers per organization in order to avoid inefficient supervision and potential resource wastage.

In the wake of the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic, the chapter explores the innovative educational strategies that emerged during this period of unprecedented disruption. It highlights various inventive approaches, such as ALIGHT NGO's radio program in Gilgit-Baltistan and the Government of Punjab's Tele School channel, which effectively bridged the digital divide and ensured continued learning. These initiatives, along with the use of online and offline digital applications by organizations like such as "Teach the World Foundation" and "Save the Children", illustrate the adaptability and resilience of NFE programs during crises. Additionally, the Sindh Education Foundation is promoting and implementing the 'Classroom Digital Program' in their schools, further contributing to these efforts.

Despite these innovations, the chapter notes a regression to traditional teaching methods post-pandemic, stressing the need to integrate successful innovative practices into regular educational frameworks. The transformative outcomes achieved during the pandemic offer valuable lessons for future educational strategies.

In conclusion, Chapter 3 addresses the ongoing challenges in Pakistan's educational landscape, including low literacy rates, significant gender disparities, and the failure to meet international educational targets. By advocating for a holistic approach to educational reform—encompassing policy review, curriculum development, and the adoption of 21st-century teaching methodologies—the chapter calls for a paradigm shift to achieve educational equity and excellence. The insights and recommendations provided aim to guide stakeholders in creating a more inclusive and effective education system in Pakistan.

3.2. Tracing the Historical Evolution of Non-Formal Education

The roots of NFE can be traced back to the very dawn of human civilization, where successive generations sought to impart their accumulated skills and knowledge through symbolic means, pictures, and various forms of communication. While NFE is a contemporary concept, its written history remains elusive, with historians and educationalists grappling to pinpoint its origins. Literature and historical accounts hint at NFE patterns in ancient sites across the globe, where symbolic writings adorned the surfaces of mountains and stones—an educational precursor predating the formalisation of structured educational systems.

3.2.1. The Historical Context

Educational endeavors have existed long before the formal establishment of education systems. Historically, organized groups used various methods to educate and transmit cultural heritage to future generations. This process aimed to ensure the seamless transfer of knowledge, values, customs, and skills, thereby preserving the unique identity and integrity of evolving societies.

According to a UNESCO Annual report on Basic Education in Pakistan (1999), non-formal education programs had already been initiated in earlier years. The NFBE program was first launched in Pakistan in the 1950s under the title 'Adult Basic Education Program'.

Historians have meticulously documented these early forms of education, categorizing them under the broader umbrella of non-formal education (NFE). As societies advanced, NFE evolved from rudimentary methods to more sophisticated activities during the 16th and 17th centuries. Examples include tribal puberty rites, religious ceremonies, specialized religious instruction, and occupational apprenticeships.

3.2.2. The Role of Religion and Tradition

The emphasis on Islamic religious learning through NFE can be traced back to the 1st century AD. Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) stands as a pivotal figure, serving as the first teacher in an organized Islamic religious setting where followers gathered to study the teachings of the Qur'an. Semi-organized educational activities began to take shape in the 8th century, eventually giving rise to institutions like Madrasas and Maktabs (schools). The practice of disseminating

religion and transferring skills and knowledge through NFE methodologies was inherent across societies and religions. However, these practices unfolded organically, aligning with the specific needs and priorities of each society, without formal recognition or the imposition of terminologies like 'informal' or 'formal' education.

In the exploration of indigenous educational systems, Jomo Kenyatta's seminal work "Facing Mount Kenya" (1965) unveils the rich tapestry of knowledge within the East African Gikuyu society. The study delves into the period preceding the arrival of Western colonizers and missionaries, who brought with them their own ideas and modern schools, thereby overshadowing the potent local practices. This oversight, driven by a top-down approach, overlooks the intrinsic value and efficacy of early versions of NFE, as noted by Coombs, P.H., Prosser, R.C., and Ahmed, M. (1973). Despite being imperceptible to Western educators, these subtle forms of education held profound significance within their cultural contexts, providing a nuanced understanding of the historical evolution of NFE.

3.2.3. Formal Recognition and Development

The term 'non-formal education' was officially coined in 1911 when Coombs, P.H. (1968) dedicated a chapter to it in his work. This marked a crucial point in the delineation of a distinct educational concept that would become increasingly pertinent in the 20th century. During this era, the practices associated with NFE were often intertwined with conventional educational institutions but distinguished by specific methodologies catering to various demographic classes. Coombs defined NFE as 'any organized educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives' (Coombs, P. H. 1968).

3.2.4 Global Expansion and Recognition

A noteworthy development in the history of NFE occurred in 1912 when Mexico took a pioneering step by establishing a popular non-formal education university. This initiative, led by educators/teachers and intellectuals, aimed to provide education and prepare students outside the conventional formal education system, reflecting an early recognition of the need for alternative educational pathways.

The 1960s witnessed a substantial surge in NFE, driven by factors such as population growth and increasing social and economic demands. This period laid the groundwork for significant expansion in NFE initiatives. The term 'Non-Formal Education' gained prominence in the 1950s, particularly in less developed nations, as highlighted by Moldovan, O., and Bocos-Bintintan in 2015.

3.2.5. International Endorsement and Integration

The period spanning from the 1950s to the 1980s witnessed robust support from international organizations, with the UNESCO taking a lead role in endorsing and sponsoring NFE initiatives. As the 1990s unfolded, NFE underwent a transformative phase, evolving to provide viable alternatives for learning and skills acquisition. This marked a notable shift in the purpose and

delivery of non-formal education, aligning it more closely with contemporary educational needs, as observed by Leanda de Lisle (2013).

The late 1960s and early 1970s emerged as a critical juncture when NFE became a focal point in the global discourse on school reform. International agencies, donors, and Ministries, particularly in developing countries, engaged in substantive dialogues on the role of NFE as an alternative pathway for access to education and lifelong learning. Debates surrounding the duration and operational aspects of NFE persisted throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, culminating in a re-launch in 1986 and gaining renewed momentum in the 1990s.

NFE, transcending cultural boundaries in both "Western" and "Developing" societies, has gained momentum with substantial support from donors. It serves as a parallel and complementary system to traditional formal education, emphasizing purposeful learning outside the formal educational environment. Its flexibility and cost-effectiveness have made it a potent tool for enhancing literacy rates, particularly when integrated with contemporary 21st-century skills, approaches, and requirements. Ahsan (2003) highlighted the proliferation of numerous NFE programs across various universities in both developed and developing countries, each structured to address diverse individuals and learning goals.

The terminology "Non-Formal Education" gained significant prominence and entered the discourse in the 1950s, particularly in less developed and low-income countries (Rogers, A. 2004). This emergence was catalyzed by the recognition that the formal education system was inadequate in addressing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Education for All (EFA) initiatives, and various national and international commitments. The pervasive issue of illiteracy further underscored the urgency for alternative educational approaches. NFE arose as a beacon of hope, presenting a viable means for remedial interventions, contingent upon creative, well-integrated, and well-connected partnerships with key stakeholders.

The repositioning of NFE from being perceived as external to formal education to now existing on a continuum of 'learning' is a notable paradigm shift (UNESCO, 2006). Placed between formal and informal learning, the boundaries between these sectors are viewed as blurred rather than distinct (EYP, 2014; Colley H., Hodkinson P., & Malcom J., 2003; Carter C., 1996). Recent studies emphasize that non-formal interventions draw on both formal and informal learning processes, challenging the characterization of non-formal learning as a discrete category (Robinson-Pant, A. 2016). However, a prevailing awareness persists that NFE, while integrated into the broader spectrum of education, still possesses a distinct identity and often faces perceived notions of having a 'lower standing than formal schooling.'

- **Early era:** NFE has a long history spanning many centuries, tracing back to the beginning of written records. During the Biblical period, the epistles of Plato were employed for the instruction of early Christian congregations (Erdos, R. F. 1967; Holmberg, B. 1986).
- **18th century:** In the Boston Gazette (U.S.A) of March 20, 1728, Caleb Philips, a teacher of New Method shorthand, advertised non-formal education, offering lessons sent weekly to learners. This marked an early instance of what could be termed as non-formal education (Holmberg, B. 1986).

- **1833:** NFE began in Sweden. 1850: In England, Isaac Pitman started shorthand on postcards.
- **1856:** In Germany, Frenchman Charles Toussaint & German Gustav Langenscheidt started teaching language in Berlin.
- **1870:** Hans Hermod opened a non-formal school in Malmo.
- **1880:** Isaac Pitman College was established.
- **1894:** Joseph W. Knipe published "The schoolmaster."
- **1873-1897:** In the U.S.A., Anna Eliot Tichnor founded and ran the Boston Society.
- **Early 19th century:** Open universities and institutes opened in Sweden, West Germany, U.S.A, and the U.K, offering correspondence courses. The University of London was the first to award a degree in NFE.
- **1910:** W.A. Grundy programmed a course of health training in Australia.
- **1920:** The Soviet Union used non-formal education to expand its education manpower.
- **1925:** Radio was introduced in school education.
- **1929:** NFE became a significant component of the Soviet education system as a solution to the shortage of teachers and institutions.
- **1930:** Several thousand listening groups were formed in Britain.
- **1937:** Radio was introduced for adult education in New Zealand.
- **1960s:** Linkage of the third component, face-to-face tuition with broadcasting and correspondence, marked the beginning of off-campus studies, initiated after the First World War.

These examples illustrate the prevalence of NFE programs across numerous countries, often overlooked despite their localized and government-supported nature. The discourse surrounding non-formal education gained momentum around 1968, particularly within the context of the challenges faced in delivering formal education in developing nations (Coombs, P.H, 1968). During this period the term 'Non-Formal Education' was first formally introduced in a 1967 UNESCO IIEP report authored by King, J. (1967). Institutions like the Centre for International Education (CIE) at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Michigan State University (MSU), University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), and Florida State University (FSU) have embraced NFE as an area of inquiry in education.

In the discourse surrounding NFE, the UNESCO Faure Report (Faure, E., et al., 1972) introduced terms like 'conventional' and 'non-conventional' education, reflecting an evolving understanding of educational paradigms. UNESCO's engagement with NFE extended from 1979 to 1983, with a focus on achieving synergy between formal and non-formal education, particularly at the primary school level. Regional studies conducted by UNESCO in Africa (the Sudan and Kenya) and Asia (India) furthered the exploration of NFE's role and efficacy. Subsequently, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), formerly known as the UNESCO Institute of Education (UIE), undertook significant initiatives in NFE from 1988 to 1990, particularly emphasizing primary-level education and the integration of formal and non-formal educational approaches.

It is now evident that eliminating illiteracy and offering alternative educational opportunities cannot be achieved solely through formal education. Non-Formal Education (NFE) has emerged

as a vital component of educational initiatives worldwide, actively supported by national and international NGOs, donors, and government organisations.

The imperative now is to revisit policies, curricula, training approaches, and partnership methods, learning from best practices around the world. As these dormant reservoirs of learning await recognition, the need to integrate NFE into mainstream educational programs and university degree offerings becomes evident. The rich history of NFE, as outlined here after extensive research, calls for continued exploration and comprehensive incorporation into the educational landscape.

3.3. Evolution and Impact: The Dynamic History of Non-Formal Education in Pakistan

3.3.1. Introduction:

The historical narrative of NFE in South Asian countries, particularly in Pakistan, reveals its existence in various forms preceding formal education. This chapter delves into the formal recognition of NFE in the subcontinent during the 1920s, with Pakistan, as a newly independent nation in 1947, inheriting an educational system established by a foreign government nearly a century earlier.

The inherited system, grounded in economic, cultural, social, and political principles incongruent with the newly formed nation's ideologies, posed a significant challenge. This perspective is supported by ample evidence, as indicated in various research sources, including Research Gate.

The first crucial step in addressing these challenges occurred with the inaugural education conference held from November 27 to December 1, 1947. The primary objective of this conference was to facilitate discussions within the education sector, allowing for the formulation of a comprehensive education policy in Pakistan. This initiative was prompted by the stark reality that, at the time, 85% of the population was illiterate. Of particular concern was the province of Baluchistan, where literacy rates were notably low, with rural women experiencing virtually zero access to education (Source: Sustainable Development Policy Institute, SDPI).

Since the formation of Pakistan, the nation has grappled with multifaceted challenges in the domains of education, health, and security. It is imperative to consider Pakistan's status as a developing country, marked by resource constraints and a high population growth rate of 2.6% per annum. A critical issue arises as the increase in enrollment rates fails to keep pace with the burgeoning population, resulting in millions of school-age children being deprived of access to formal education due to a shortage of schools.

3.3.2. Non-Formal Education as a Solution:

The inadequacies of formal education alone in addressing the nation's educational challenges prompted the recognition and integration of NFE systems. Globally, NFE has proven effective in combating mass illiteracy and fostering social awareness. Many developed and developing countries have acknowledged these advantages, incorporating NFE into their national systems.

However, in the context of Pakistan, there exists a dire need for a concerted effort to launch a national movement for literacy. The country significantly lags behind the 100% literacy target set

by the Dakar Declaration in 2000. Lessons gleaned from neighbouring countries, such as Bangladesh, which has made remarkable progress in eradicating illiteracy, can serve as valuable benchmarks.

3.3.3. Comparative Analysis:

A comparative examination of South Asian countries highlights that, at the start of the new millennium, Maldives and Sri Lanka achieved literacy rates exceeding 90%, surpassing the regional average of 54%. Furthermore, nations across Asia, Africa, and Latin America have successfully implemented NFE programs to address educational and social needs. Both developed nations like Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, France, the UK, and the USA, as well as developing countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan, have leveraged the advantages of non-formal education to meet pressing societal challenges (Haq, M. (2002).

The imperative for the integration of NFE in Pakistan is rooted in the limitations of the formal education system. This system not only struggles to meet the escalating demand for education due to its inflexible nature but also imposes higher costs, rendering it inaccessible for a significant portion of the population. The multifaceted challenges hindering progress in primary education, encompass internal factors within schools and external factors outside the educational realm.

ASER Report 2003 identifies a range of internal factors contributing to the slow progress of primary education in Pakistan. These include inadequate physical facilities, a scarcity of teaching and learning materials, a shortage of trained and qualified teachers, insufficient teacher training, an unsuitable learning environment, elevated pupil-to-teacher ratios, an overemphasis on subject matter at the expense of personality development, rigid educational policies and practices, and an urban-centric curriculum.

External factors, as identified, encompass challenges such as the low socio-economic background of students, child malnutrition, and socio-cultural impediments related to female education. The interplay of these internal and external factors underscores the complex landscape in which the formal education system operates.

The UNESCO report on Basic Education in Pakistan in 1999 underscores the initiation of NFE programs over several preceding years. The NFBE had its genesis in the 1950s when it was initially launched as the "Adult Basic Education Program." While numerous NFE initiatives were commenced during this period, there has been a noticeable absence of concerted efforts to establish a national-level NFE program, though recent trends suggest a potential shift in this trajectory.

3.3.4. Analytical Timeline of Non-Formal Education Programs in Pakistan:

- 1950: Commencement of the first non-formal basic education program titled "Adult Basic Education."
- 1953: Introduction of the Village Aid Programme.
- 1964-1969: Implementation of Literacy Programmes under Basic Democracies.
- 1977-1978: Launch of a few experimental programs, although limited or no data is available for analysis.
- 1986: Initiation of the Iqra Pilot Programme in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

- 1987-1989: Introduction of the Nai Roshni Schools program by the Federal Ministry of Education, targeting children aged 10 to 14 who had never attended school or left prematurely.
- 1992-1994: Commencement of the Quranic Literacy project with the aim of educating women with basic knowledge of the Holy Quran (Arabic Text).
- 1996: Introduction NFBES. The conceptual framework of these schools involved the active participation of parents, communities, and non-governmental organizations in promoting education through non-formal means.
- 2002-2007: Implementation of the Education Sector Reform Assistance program (ESRA), a USAID-funded national program.

The landscape of non-formal education in Pakistan has evolved since then, with hundreds of NFE programs currently operational, receiving support from donors, government initiatives, volunteers, and community support. These programs operate based on identified needs, reflecting the diverse efforts to address educational disparities in the country.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge the challenges they face, as highlighted by UNESCO in 2015. Presently, these initiatives continue to grapple with issues such as inadequate linkage with regional languages and cultures, as well as suboptimal collaboration with formal primary education centers. Nevertheless, drawing from my professional experience, I've observed that community-owned and need-based programs have shown remarkable success. These initiatives, especially in challenging, insecure, and difficult-to-reach areas, have effectively utilized indigenous methods. By actively involving the local community and tailoring the programs to their specific needs, these initiatives have been able to overcome many obstacles and make meaningful strides in promoting education. Therefore, while there are challenges to address, there is also considerable potential for innovation and success in these endeavors.

Traditional NF programs, largely implemented by NGOs with donor funding, faced inherent challenges. Weak organizational structures, low-quality education, political patronage, and suboptimal teaching quality have been documented by Warwick, D. P. & Reimers, F. (1995). UNESCO (2004) rightly emphasizes that these programs did not significantly contribute to the overall literacy rate in the country and had a limited duration. These centers were primarily established in remote areas with minimal access to formal education. The government, through NGOs, provided funds to communities, and donors supported these initiatives by providing funds to national and international NGOs for the implementation of NFE programs in challenging and hard-to-reach areas.

3.3.5. Empowering Through Innovation: Allama Iqbal Open University's Trailblazing Role in Non-Formal Education, Distance Learning, and Capacity Building

Allama Iqbal Open University's Pioneering Role in Non-Formal Education and Distance Learning: A remarkable illustration of the potential of NFE and distance learning is embodied in the inception of Allama Iqbal Open University in 1974. This institution, known for being the second open university globally and the first in Asia and Africa, offers education from primary level upwards. Embracing the mode of distance learning, it has played a pivotal role in breaking down barriers to education, particularly for women constrained by cultural and financial limitations. The innovative

approach of flexible enrollment schedules and minimal requirements has empowered thousands of Pakistanis to access education. Beyond its historical significance, this program not only persists but also continues to evolve, branching into professional, scientific, and technical education. Noteworthy efforts are underway to extend educational opportunities to remote areas and infuse modern information into its curriculum and pedagogy.

3.3.6. Discrepancies in Government Commitments and Implementation of NFE:

Despite the government's commitment to international agreements such as SDG 4.6, EFA, and the constitutional mandate outlined in Article 37-B, which places the responsibility on the state to eradicate illiteracy and provide free and compulsory education up to the secondary level within the shortest possible time, there remains a noticeable gap between intent and execution. While efforts have been made, the government falls short of fully realizing its constitutional commitment. Many NFE programs persist on the ground, sustained by the support of international entities like UNESCO, UNICEF, JICA, and domestic partners.

JICA, or the Japan International Cooperation Agency, is a key international entity involved in supporting educational initiatives, including the development of textbooks and teaching guides. Following the 18 constitutional amendments in 2010, devolving education responsibilities to the provinces marked a positive shift. The government has taken commendable steps, including the development and approval of NFE policies and curriculum, with collaborative efforts from JICA. However, a critical examination of these documents highlights the need for a comprehensive review through the lens of NFE. Integrating them with the daily lives and professional training curricula of relevant departments is crucial to moving beyond mere symbolic documentation towards effective implementation.

3.3.7. Assessing NFE Progress: CSO's Spotlight Report for GRALE 5 Pakistan (2021):

The Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Spotlight Report for the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education 5 (CSO GRALE 2021) offers an insightful assessment of the current state of NFE in Pakistan. While vividly portraying the challenges, the report also underscores a sense of satisfaction, indicating that progress, though gradual, is indeed underway. The dynamic interplay between international commitments, governmental initiatives, and the resilience of NFE programs collectively shapes the current trajectory of education in Pakistan, providing a detailed glimpse into its evolving landscape.

The report presents a comprehensive snapshot of NFE initiatives across various provinces in Pakistan, shedding light on key metrics and provider statistics. Below is an in-depth analysis of the provided data:

Province-wise Distribution of NFE Providers, Centers, Teachers, and Students

Province	NFE Providers	Total Centers	Total Teachers	Total Students
Baluchistan	7 NGOs	1108	1158	24899 (11024 G)
Sindh	33 NGOs	2833	2510	51723 (3175 G)
KPK	7 NGOs	3409	2509	50456 (30987 G)
Punjab	6 NGOs	3719	3717	77587 (48605 G)
ICT, Islamabad	6 NGOs	308	305	9403 (4776 G)
Gilgit/Baltistan	3 NGOs	1551	1550	5153 (4013)
AJK	3 NGOs	236	241	4047 (2158 G)
Total	65	13164	11990	223,268 (104,738 G)

Reference: CSO GRALE (2021)

Insights and Observations: Unveiling Realities

1. Despite hosting the largest number of NGOs, Sindh faces a paradoxical scenario with relatively fewer covered numbers. Notably, it grapples with the presence of 'ghost schools' and the inefficacy of majorly funded programs, as evidenced by the ASER report (2021 and 2023). The province contends with poor learning outcomes and a significant dropout rate, contributing to the existence of 7,000 ghost schools, a stark revelation exposed by Dawn News (source: <https://www.dawn.com>).
2. Punjab, being the most populous province, boasts only six active NGOs. However, these organizations remarkably provide broader access to out-of-school children compared to their counterparts in other provinces.
3. The noticeable preponderance of female students over males in these centres suggests that the NFE system is more appealing and secure for girls, portraying an encouraging trend for gender inclusivity.
4. The considerable number of teachers in the NFE sector offers an opportunity for capacity building. Their skills and knowledge could be honed with a focus on NFE methods and approaches, ensuring the delivery of effective education.
5. Basic Education Community School NGO emerges as the largest NFE provider, operating across Pakistan through 8,586 centres out of the total 13,164, underscoring its substantial contribution to NFE efforts (approximately 65%).
6. Disconcertingly, a closer examination reveals a concentration of NFE providers operating through a limited number of centres. In Baluchistan, one provider operates through only four centres, while in Sindh, 19 providers deliver NFE through four or fewer centres. Similar trends are observed in Punjab and ICT, where a single provider or three providers, respectively, manage NFE through four or fewer centres. This demands attention from both the government and funders, urging the formulation of policies mandating a minimum and maximum threshold of centres per

organization. While having fewer centres may seem advantageous from an NGO perspective, it poses risks of inefficient supervision, management, and potential resource wastage, both in financial and human aspects.

This analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the current state of NFE initiatives in Pakistan, offering insights that can inform strategic decisions and policy formulations for the advancement of education across the country.

3.3.8. Fostering Future Learning Success: Innovations Emerged in Challenging Times (Covid 2019)

In the crucible of the 2019 COVID pandemic, countries worldwide faced unprecedented challenges, with nations like Pakistan compelled to grapple with the closure of learning centres and a surge in student dropouts. However, this adversity served as a catalyst for implementers to reimagine the learning process. Their inventive methods not only sustained education during a crisis but also forged a repository of best practices with far-reaching implications. It is imperative that the wealth of knowledge generated by these efforts be assimilated by key stakeholders—government entities, policymakers, donors, and implementing partners/ NGOs. A thorough review of policies, curricula, training methodologies, teaching approaches, monitoring mechanisms, and student assessment practices is warranted to leverage the effectiveness of these strategies.

Referencing the insights from CSO's Spotlight Report 2021, several noteworthy approaches stand out:

1. ALIGHT NGO's Radio Program in Gilgit-Baltistan: A Low-Cost, High-Impact Strategy

- ALIGHT NGO in Pakistan pioneered a radio program broadcasting primary grade content in Gilgit-Baltistan, proving to be a low-cost, high-impact strategy. This initiative, benefiting 200,000 primary-aged children, demonstrated the effectiveness of distance learning through the use of radio. Collaborative efforts between the Gilgit-Baltistan government, ALIGHT, and National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) not only disseminated the program but also trained teachers to provide on-the-ground support and monitor progress. The program's multi-faceted approach, including Facebook pages, local FM radio, and an ALIGHT Pakistan YouTube channel, underscores its adaptability and potential scalability.

2. Online and Offline Digital Applications: Teach the World Foundation and Collaborators

- Organizations such as Teach the World Foundation, Save the Children, Sindh Education Foundation, Acted, SEHER, and others adopted innovative approaches, employing both online and offline digital applications to ensure continued learning.

3. Government of Punjab's Tele School Channel: Bridging the Digital Divide

- The Government of Punjab took a commendable step by launching distance classes through the Tele School channel, delivering curriculum content. Bunyad NGO collaborated by connecting NFE centres and learners in remote areas without internet access, utilising text messages and WhatsApp groups. Bunyad's existing literacy-through-phones program, with a well-established database, facilitated efficient material distribution.

4. Transformative Outcomes and Foundations for Future Plans

The outcomes of these initiatives have been remarkable, laying the groundwork for future educational strategies:

- Digitalization and the development of video and audio-based content.
- Effective utilization of TV and Radio as educational mediums.
- Increased accessibility to education for previously unreachable children.
- Enhanced stakeholder involvement, fostering capacity-building in content development.
- Expanded modes of delivery, including mobile phones, Android devices (such as phones, tablets, notebooks, and e-readers), WhatsApp groups, and face-to-face models.
- Innovative teaching and learning methods, sparking heightened interest among educators/teachers and students.
- Increased learner responsibility for their education, shifting away from traditional lecture methods.
- Heightened parental involvement, exemplified by initiatives like "My Child, My Responsibility."
- Adoption of effective assessment patterns, including teacher quizzes, homework and worksheet evaluations, and feedback loops involving learners, parents, and communities.
- Overhaul of the entire teaching and learning landscape, revising schemes of work and teaching plans to incorporate new distance teaching methods.

However, a notable challenge emerges: despite the successful implementation of these innovative teaching methods, they have not been fully integrated as a regular feature of education. As the situation returned to normalcy, the traditional, one-sided teaching methods resurfaced, potentially contributing to dropout rates and failing to attract out-of-school children. Addressing this dichotomy is essential to cement the gains achieved during challenging times into lasting improvements in the education sector.

3.4. Conclusion: Addressing the Lingering Challenges in Pakistan's Education Landscape

As Pakistan navigates its journey toward educational advancement, the prevailing literacy challenges underscore the imperative for a comprehensive reevaluation of existing policies, curriculum frameworks, and pedagogical approaches. At the dawn of independence, a staggering 85% of the population grappled with illiteracy, and while progress has been made, the current literacy rate of 62.3% reflects a persistent gap in achieving optimal educational outcomes. This stark reality is compounded by the unsettling revelation from the UNESCO (2023) and UNICEF reports, as well as data from the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), which identifies Pakistan as home to an alarming 22.8 million out-of-school children, representing a staggering 44% of the total population aged 5-16 not attending school — the world's second-highest number.

Regrettably, Pakistan's endeavours to meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Educational For All (EFA) targets have fallen short. This stark reality is evident during global celebrations of literacy, where Pakistan grapples with unsatisfactory figures. Discrepancies in

reported literacy rates, ranging from 59.3% to 62.8%, as highlighted in the Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-2023, further complicate the assessment of progress.

Disturbingly, statistics reveal that one-third of out-of-school children in South Asia reside in Pakistan, with girls constituting a higher percentage at 38.9%, compared to 30.2% of boys. Alarming gender disparities persist, as only 14% of girls from low-income households can read a story in a local language, while boys fare slightly better at 22%. Despite a nominal increase in literacy rates from 2012 (64.5%) to 2015 (66.8%), the trajectory has stagnated since 2010, hovering around 60%. The looming reality suggests that, at the current pace, policy constraints, limited budgets, and outdated methodologies will impede progress toward the envisioned 100% literacy goal.

A critical examination of the education landscape reveals a need for substantial reforms. Stakeholders, including experts, implementers, and community representatives, must collaboratively engage in a comprehensive review. Drawing inspiration from neighbouring countries' successes and leveraging lessons learned during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, a paradigm shift is imperative. By adopting the NFE lens and aligning policies, curricula, training modules, learning materials, and teaching methodologies with 21st-century needs and skills, Pakistan can usher in transformative change. Embracing this holistic approach is pivotal; it signals a departure from the existing trajectory and offers a beacon of hope for a future where educational equity and excellence prevail. The change, as witnessed in neighbouring nations facing similar challenges, is achievable, marking a path toward a brighter educational landscape for Pakistan.

Chapter 4 The Power and Promise of Non-Formal Education

4.1. Introduction:

In the pursuit of this comprehensive study, I have embarked on an extensive review of field reflective diaries, meticulously documented between 2003 and September 2023. These diaries represent an invaluable repository of knowledge, charting an unwavering course of enlightenment and guidance for me. When crafting academic literature, they serve as an indispensable source of insights, deeply rooted in evidence-based wisdom. These diaries were compiled during my tenure as the Director/Head of the adult and youth component within a substantial USAID-funded undertaking known as ESRA (Education Sector Reforms Assistance). Furthermore, I provided oversight to both the formal and non-formal facets of various international organizations operating within the realms of Pakistan and Afghanistan. My involvement in these ventures persisted through consulting contracts, culminating until the year 2023.

This chapter endeavors to provide a reflective account of the field notes amassed throughout these years, specifically highlighting the Existing and Potential Latent Strengths of the Current NFE System. Within this exploration, particular emphasis will be placed on uncovering the strengths that have contributed to the effectiveness and success of the NFE system. This analysis aims to shed light on the positive aspects that can be leveraged for further improvement and enhancement of NFE initiatives.

4.2. Existing Strengths:

The habit of maintaining diaries, inculcated in me since my school days, holds its origins in my mother's guidance and has since evolved into a powerful tool for learning as a researcher. In the context of this narrative, my practice of taking notes during site visits has proven invaluable. These notes capture the essence of each center, providing insights into the teaching and learning processes, responses to my inquiries, real-life anecdotes, challenges, and key areas primed for enhancement. While a significant portion of the centers adhered to traditional, sub-par, one-way teaching methods, characterized by the transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner, reminiscent of what Rogers (Rogers, A. 2004) termed the "Banking concept," my discerning observations consistently unearthed one or two strengths. These strengths, often hidden from casual observers, were frequently corroborated by the many individuals I interviewed about the centers.' strengths and challenges. Following rigorous analysis, these documented strengths and challenges represent a body of genuine knowledge, ripe for learning, documentation, and dissemination.

The enactment of the 18th Amendment in April 2010 to Pakistan's constitution conferred the responsibility for education to provincial authorities. As a result, each province operates under a

distinct framework, pursuing distinct goals, objectives, and achievements. Nevertheless, several key strengths emerge as common threads:

- Within the traditional NFE model, well-documented policies, curricula, textbooks, training modules, and other resource materials serve as strengths in providing structured approaches to teaching and learning outside the formal schooling system. These resources acknowledge the established structures within the NFE model, supporting effective educational delivery despite potential challenges such as lack of understanding and utilization by trainers and teachers.
- A systematic mechanism at the Ministry of Education level facilitates the registration of NFC learners, ensuring enrollment after the completion of various levels of primary education in formal schools while maintaining an updated database.
- Allocation of a budget, albeit limited, is dedicated to NFE programs within the Ministry's budget in Pakistan. Despite its limitations, this allocation signifies a recognition of the importance of NFE within the broader educational landscape. Additionally, NFE programs often receive support from donors and are implemented in coordination with NGOs, reflecting a collaborative effort to address educational needs.
- The integration of the NFE model into the Ministry of Education's annual expansion plans.
- Providing opportunities for NF learners to transition from NFE centers to formal schools wherever possible, contingent on successful completion of an assessment test. (This transition ensures that learners who have successfully completed their education in NFE settings are supported in their progression to formal schooling, enhancing their educational opportunities).
- Ministries of Literacy and Education offer assessment, monitoring, and supervision plans and procedures within Pakistan. However, the quantitative nature of these measures necessitates a thorough review, considering potential challenges in implementation and effectiveness, especially in the context of NFE programs.
- Effective outreach to marginalized and remote communities with limited resources and amid challenging circumstances underscores the commitment to extending educational opportunities to underserved populations, despite potential challenges in reaching all remote communities and marginalized children and young people.
- A commitment to maintaining an acceptable student-teacher ratio, typically within the range of 1:25 to 1:35, underscores the importance of effective teaching and learning within NFE settings. Despite challenges in fully realizing this commitment in practice, particularly in resource-constrained environments, the acknowledgment of the importance of a

balanced student-teacher ratio represents a fundamental aspect of educational planning and provision.

- A drive to minimize dropout rates and prevent the squandering of financial and material resources, all while prioritizing flexibility, typically originates from the individuals and organizations involved in setting up and running NFE centers. Similarly, efforts to provide a good learning environment may involve various stakeholders, including educators/teachers, administrators, and community members, working together to create conducive learning environments for NFE learners. These efforts represent a collective commitment to addressing challenges and maximizing the potential benefits of NFE programs.
- Sustained efforts to provide an enhanced, quality learning environment.
- In centers where the community is actively involved and assumes ownership, community members participate in supervising and reporting to the official M&E team through various ICT platforms, such as WhatsApp groups, online observations, and recorded Zoom meetings of teaching sessions. These methods have the dual benefit of unintentionally training community members and ensuring more regular support and guidance for teachers. While these features are present in a limited number of centers, they can be readily implemented elsewhere. Consolidating all aspects of community involvement into one bullet point could provide a clearer overview of this important strength.
- Ensuring the sustainability and continuity of education for students by affiliating with "hub" schools wherever feasible or upgrading the center to an equivalent level if resources permit. Hub schools serve as central educational institutions providing support and resources to satellite centers.
- Playing a pivotal role as a bridge between communities, NGOs, and the government, where feasible, signifies a potential strength rather than a universally realized one across all NFE centers. This role varies depending on the context and the level of community engagement.
- Advocating for the promotion of education in the community, with a specific focus on girls, highlights efforts undertaken in some NFE centers to address gender disparities in education, though implementation may vary across different centers.
- NFCs enjoy a high level of acceptance among communities, whether in secure or insecure areas, reflecting a potential strength in fostering community trust and support for NFE initiatives where conditions permit.
- The invaluable contribution of communities is evident in their wholehearted provision of space or rooms for establishing centers. These multi-functional rooms serve as centers in the morning or afternoon and transform into sleeping quarters at night, showcasing a

potential strength in community involvement and resourcefulness in facilitating NFE activities.

- NFCs located within homes serve as potent natural sources of advocacy and awareness regarding children's rights and protection. The presence of these centers often piques the interest of relatives who subsequently consider opening similar centers in their villages, illustrating a potential strength in generating grassroots support and expanding educational opportunities within communities.
- NFCs function as focal points for community interaction, facilitating discussions and the resolution of social and communal issues, showcasing a potential strength in promoting social cohesion and addressing community needs beyond education.
- Many communities exhibit a keen sense of ownership of the center, engaging actively in educational and developmental activities within the locality, highlighting a potential strength in fostering community ownership and sustainability of NFE initiatives.
- Parents display an elevated interest and a positive attitude towards their children's education, particularly girls, suggesting a potential strength in parental engagement and support for girls' education in some NFE centers.
- Parents exert increased pressure to secure educational opportunities for their children, driven by limited options and available resources, indicating a potential strength in parental advocacy and demand for education in communities served by NFE centers.
- Community participation in education has surged, a testament to the success of NFCs, though the extent of this participation may vary across different centers and communities.
- Effective coordination between the government, NGOs, and the community has paved the way for harmonious and well-aligned educational efforts, demonstrating a potential strength in collaborative partnerships in some NFE initiatives.
- Government commitments and assurances for the continued education of NFC graduates, where feasible, reflect a commitment to fostering educational progress, though implementation may vary in different contexts.
- NFCs have facilitated access to primary education in remote regions, highlighting a potential strength in expanding educational opportunities to underserved populations.
- Community involvement and ownership in the educational process have been instrumental in promoting the success and sustainability of NFE initiatives, though this may vary across different communities and centers.

- Access to girls for education, conveniently located near their homes, has been a notable achievement in some NFE centers, though challenges in gender parity persist in certain contexts.
- NFCs have emerged as more acceptable modes of education for diverse societal groups, demonstrating potential strength in catering to the varied needs of communities.
- Serving as a lifeline to unreachable populations, including mobile communities and internally displaced individuals affected by conflict or disasters, NFCs have proven their worth in providing educational opportunities to marginalized groups.
- An unintended consequence of the NFE initiative is the capacity-building of rural communities, showcasing potential strength in fostering community empowerment and development through education.

These strengths underscore the current NFE system's potential and achievements, providing testament to the trans-formative influence of unconventional, community-based education. While the strengths mentioned above are noteworthy, there are additional hidden potentials that warrant exploration and utilization to further expand the reach of NFCs through alternative approaches.

4.3. Strengths Observed During NFE Centre Classroom Observations

I have only recently come to fully appreciate the wealth of knowledge contained within my field diaries. I've long recognized these diaries as a valuable source of real-world insights. However, while writing this book, I've gained insights from these reflective diaries that surpass my previous expectations. They are akin to high-yield fixed deposits in a bank, and now, I'm harnessing this knowledge at the right time and with a full understanding of their potential.

Regrettably, many teachers remain unaware of these hidden strengths and unique features. What is truly surprising is that these features were not intentionally planned by teachers; rather, they emerged naturally. These attributes are not isolated to a single center; they are the collective essence of numerous centers across Pakistan, Afghanistan, and several East African countries, including Ethiopia. They appear to be "unplanned but inherently planned" components of the hidden culture of each village that naturally flourished within the centers. These collective traits constitute the successful foundation of any NFE program. This knowledge can serve as the basis for developing professional development programs for NFE teachers.

Acceptance of Diversity: In many centres, I have observed genuine acceptance among learners, transcending differences in colour, age, ethnicity, and disabilities (physical, hearing, visual, or speech), as well as gender and caste. These learners all hail from the same village, and their interactions are rooted in acceptance and mutual respect, whether within the center or outside of it. The following example illustrates the profound acceptance of diversity:

In a remote NFE center, situated within the rugged and isolated terrain of Architrave District in Pakistan, accessing the location is no small feat. The area is challenging to reach, characterized by high mountains and isolation. On one occasion, I witnessed a heartwarming scene that exemplified the resilience and compassion of the learners. Two boys and a girl, ranging in age from 10 to 14, were assisting a 12 to 13-year-old girl who relied on a wheelchair. They were navigating her wheelchair along a muddy, unpaved, bumpy, and uneven mountain road. This demanding task required significant physical effort, drawing upon their strength and determination. What struck me most was the absence of any visible signs of burden on their faces. Instead, they were engaged in cheerful conversation, clearly enjoying the journey.

Shortly thereafter, I encountered this group within the NFE center and initiated a conversation with the young girl who, due to polio, faced physical disabilities. I inquired about the children who accompanied her every day and who had designated them for this task. She responded, *"I faced rejection from the nearby formal school located in a neighbouring village, as they lacked the necessary facilities to accommodate disabled individuals. Consequently, I spent my days at home, pursuing self-directed learning. Fortunately, our village hosts an NFE center, although I am physically unable to attend in person. These children, who happen to be my neighbours, distant relatives, and friends, took the initiative to motivate my parents to enroll me in this NFE, allowing me to pursue my educational dreams. My parents initially hesitated, expressing concerns about the challenges of daily transportation. Our neighbours engaged in discussions with their children, who wholeheartedly embraced the responsibility. We now relish the daily journey to the center. I excel in my studies, and in the evenings, we congregate at my home, where I assume the role of their teacher, supporting them with their studies. My mother and elder sisters often join us, making it an enjoyable group effort. We collectively decided to extend this support to other children who, for various reasons, are unable to attend the center. Our teachers and the entire community are united and supportive."* She continued, *'Upon completing my primary and middle-level education, I aspire to establish a school in our village. The center's teacher and all the children have never made me feel different. On the contrary, they have been incredibly supportive and cooperative. My disability is now an integral part of my identity, and I am filled with ambitious dreams for the future. I express my gratitude to my parents, our neighbours, my teachers, and my fellow classmates, regardless of their age.'*

This heartwarming story encapsulates numerous facets and strengths of the NFE approach. The center and its community stand as shining examples for others to emulate. I am confident that many similar stories exist, particularly in rural areas. Key features derived from this example include a strong desire for education, transcending gender and disability-related barriers, the ability to find innovative solutions collectively, a commitment to fulfilling social responsibilities, mutual support based on individual strengths, and an unwavering acceptance of diversity, regardless of ethnicity, colour, creed, or gender. This narrative also serves as a model for effective learning, extending beyond formal schooling and promoting appropriate social behaviour patterns.

Other strengths noticed in many other centers include:

- Embracing learners of different age groups, from children to youth and adults. This strength acknowledges the inclusion of learners spanning different age groups, allowing them to be taught together in NFE centers, catering to the needs of those out of the traditional schooling system.
- Providing models that facilitate learning and encourage appropriate behavior.
- Creating a respectful environment where boys and girls learn together.
- Locating the centers inside homes provided by community members.
- Employing locally available teachers, who are often more acceptable and relatable to the community.
- Sharing responsibilities with the community, fostering a sense of ownership.
- Demonstrating a deep understanding of cultural sensitivities. This strength indicates the sensitivity and awareness displayed by NFE centers towards cultural differences, ensuring inclusivity and respect for diverse backgrounds.
- Ensuring easy access to education for disabled children.
- Offering opportunities for over-age children to catch up on their learning. NFE centers provide avenues for older children to bridge educational gaps and catch up on missed learning opportunities, often within groups that may include younger learners.
- Providing access to street children and those involved in child labor and begging, giving them a chance to learn.
- Operating in unsecured and risky areas where formal schools may not be feasible.
- Implementing an NFE approach that brings education to the homes of children, making it more accessible and inclusive for all.

These observations provide only a glimpse into the multifaceted strengths of NFE programs, reflecting their holistic and far-reaching impact on marginalized communities and learners. The profound potential of NFE is evident.

4.4. Potential Strengths

NFE has the potential to manifest various innovative education models and delivery methods, enhancing its reach and effectiveness. NFE can be initiated as part of Ministry-led initiatives with support from donors and NGOs, supplementing the existing traditional model. The diverse forms of education models NFE can offer include:

Accelerated Education for Over-age Children: NFE can provide opportunities for children who have fallen behind or are over-age to catch up with their peers.

Work-Related Literacies Equivalent to Primary Education: NFE can deliver practical and job-oriented literacy programs that equip learners with skills equivalent to primary-grade education, making them more employable and self-reliant.

Education for Special Children: NFE programs can be tailored to cater to the unique needs of children with disabilities, ensuring they receive quality education and support.

NFC on Wheels: Innovative mobile NFE centers can be established in containers, each staffed with a dedicated teacher, and transported to remote villages, making education more accessible.

Upgraded Mosque (Madrassa) Programmes: Drawing inspiration from successful projects like the Aga Khan Madrasa initiative in East Africa, NFE can enhance education delivery in religious institutions.

Mobile Female Teacher Training Centers: To empower non-formal education teachers, mobile training centers staffed by female educators can be established, allowing them to reach remote areas and enhance their pedagogical skills.

Satellite Centres: NFE can establish satellite centres in areas where traditional educational infrastructure is limited, extending its reach to under-served communities. Satellite centres are additional educational facilities located in areas where traditional educational institutions are scarce or inaccessible. These centres complement existing educational efforts and provide learning opportunities to communities that may otherwise be overlooked.

Monitoring and Assessment through the Use of Information Technology: Utilizing cutting-edge information technology, NFE can improve monitoring and assessment processes, ensuring quality and accountability in education.

Forming Different Groups: Initiating groups such as Teachers' Learning Groups, Quality Assurance Groups, Education Communities of Practices, Community Learners Centres, and Informal Teacher Training Groups can facilitate knowledge-sharing among education activists, enhancing the quality of education. An example is the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan's School Improvement Programme for Architrave and Northern areas.

Flexibility and Adaptability: One of the most prominent yet often overlooked attributes of NFE is its inherent flexibility, versatility, and adaptability. Learners, educators, and NGO representatives recognize this untapped potential. This hidden strength remains poised for exploration and utilization, aligning itself with the unique needs of marginalized, isolated, neglected, and unreachable segments of society. NFE has the capacity to offer outcomes equivalent to primary education while providing additional benefits in learning skills, social development, moral growth, and economic productivity, all achieved within a shorter time frame.

Unconventional Approach: It is imperative to acknowledge that NFE, by its very nature, embodies an unconventional approach. Regrettably, this characteristic often goes underutilized by NFE providers. During one of my visits to a rural area in Pakistan, a 14 or 15-year-old learner at a NFE center posed a challenging question in frustration: "I fail to comprehend why we must wait for five or six years to complete a primary-level course when we can achieve the same in three years through NFE. You adults seem stuck in outdated paradigms and indifferent to our time and the time of our children. I already possess knowledge beyond what the teacher imparts, yet the teacher remains oblivious to what we know. It's time to explore innovative alternatives to save our time, resources, and efforts. The copy-paste model is ineffectual in this era."

Coordinated Efforts: To reach the un-reached effectively, NFE can benefit from concerted, coordinated efforts involving teachers, learners, and community representatives. This collaboration extends beyond the confines of traditional NFE patterns, encompassing diverse alternative approaches. Collective efforts span curriculum revision, policy/procedure development, resource allocation, advocacy planning, training programs, and monitoring procedures, all tailored to unique implementation strategies.

Strong Partnerships: Fostering substantial partnerships, not mere token alliances, across all stakeholders, from donors to learners, holds the potential to address the pressing needs of NFE. Establishing a platform for regular meetings under the aegis of the Education Ministry, conducted at least quarterly or semi-annually, allows the amalgamation of intellectual knowledge, skills, and expertise from diverse sources. This endeavor seeks to identify effective, efficient solutions to the myriad challenges faced by communities, educators/teachers, learners, NGOs, donors, and governments. Moreover, it offers a fertile ground for generating innovative, practical models suited to reaching the unreachable. Embracing this approach is paramount to breaking free from the cycle of "Poverty of thought" and advancing the cause of basic education with cost-effective, contextually relevant solutions.

Need-Based Alternative Paths for NFE: The NFE system has the potential to adopt diverse models of need-based education through alternative paths beyond the traditional framework in Pakistan. By embracing new methods and techniques, NFE can break away from the conventional, limited impact literacy programs that have made little headway in addressing nationwide illiteracy. These alternative need-based models are already in existence, both within the country and in other nations. Unfortunately, they remain largely unnoticed or unexplored by NFE providers. However, if the government demonstrates genuine commitment and political will, both research and experience strongly indicate that NFE has the magical potential to adapt different need-based models of basic education. This may include tailoring literacy programs to specific needs, such as the tailoring model for literacy, midwives' literacy model, police literacy model, agriculture literacy model, among others. Collaborating with relevant professionals can help refine and elevate these models to the level of primary education, thus providing tailored, effective, and accessible learning pathways.

Inclusiveness (NFE's Potential for Reach): NFE possesses the unique potential to extend its reach with minimal resources to individuals who have historically been excluded from mainstream education on the basis of factors such as race, religion, gender, disability, geographical distance, or dwelling in hard-to-reach areas. Astonishingly, numerous NF education programs exist in virtually every category of country, encompassing developing, developed, and the poorest nations, including Pakistan. Even the most informed educational authorities seldom make endeavors to investigate and learn from these initiatives. A wealth of knowledge remains untapped, awaiting educational planners to incorporate these programs into their NFE initiatives as alternative pathways to basic education.

Community Ownership and Involvement (A Catalyst for Success): Drawing from research and four decades of personal experience working with villages and community organizations, it is evident that involving and entrusting the community from the project's inception through planning, implementation, and supervision significantly increases the likelihood of success and sustainability. In contrast, the history of projects reveals that once a project concludes, its impact diminishes rapidly, soon fading into oblivion. However, when the community takes ownership, many continue to harness their own developed human, financial, and existing resources, even transforming these projects into sustainable programs. The potency of the community in resolving day-to-day issues should not be underestimated, especially given that non-governmental organizations often operate from a distance, rendering them less equipped to address such concerns.

Whole-Family Engagement (A Learning Ecosystem): During visits to NFCs, captivating scenes unfold. Most NFCs are housed in simple brick or mud structures, generously provided by community members. By day, these structures serve as centers, for learning and after hours, they transform into spaces for family gatherings, meals, and rest. At times, they may consist of open areas sheltered by tin roofs. Within these spaces, joint families coexist alongside their herds of cattle. As teachers conduct lessons, family members of all ages become engaged, observing, listening, and even managing household chores and economic activities like sewing or preparing food for animals. Occasionally, they sit outside the classroom and attentively observe. This unique environment fosters a holistic approach to learning where entire families, whether consciously or subconsciously, become involved in the educational process. For instance, a 25-year-old mother shared her perspective when asked why she sat outside the classroom beneath the shade of a tree: "I am past the age for being in the classroom, but I can sit outside and learn while tending to my household chores. We are enhancing basic literacy skills from this center without enrolling ourselves. Additionally, we're able to assist children who are not allowed in the center due to their age, as we lack a schooling facility in our village."

Addressing Limited Financial Resources (A Cost-Effective Solution): Ministries frequently lament their inadequate resources, hindering their ability to provide formal schooling to the vast rural majority. This lament holds truth in the current context, where opening a school in every village presents a monumental challenge due to limited resources. Nevertheless, alternative

pathways such as NFCs, Community-Based Education, homeschooling, mobile centres, and other effective examples can offer an economical and successful solution. These initiatives demonstrate cost-effectiveness and the capacity to operate efficiently with minimal resources in diverse locations and time frames. The ingredients required for their success are simple: a dedicated teacher, essential learning materials, and community cooperation and support. NFE's potential to discover innovative solutions is substantial, contingent on adopting an open, creative, and innovative approach. However, overcoming bureaucratic hurdles, inflexibility, and human frailties that have unbalanced schools and NFE centres in relation to the actual needs they are intended to address remains an enduring challenge.

Role of Media: In the realm of Non-Formal Education, the media emerges as a potential strength yet to be fully harnessed. Historical instances, such as Pakistan Television's past contributions to increasing literacy when it was one of the few channels available, underscore the medium's effectiveness. Even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, various initiatives, including educational TV programs and disseminating recorded lessons via WhatsApp, exemplify the potential synergy between media and NFE. This partnership could be further leveraged under the Ministry of Education's guidance, with NFE experts collaborating to develop educational programs tailored to diverse learners. Integrating Open Universities into media literacy packages for NFE could enhance accessibility and effectiveness.

In conclusion, recognizing the untapped potential within NFE, particularly in leveraging media partnerships, highlights a promising avenue for transforming education. As we continue to innovate and embrace diverse pathways to learning, the collaboration between NFE and the media stands as a beacon of hope, promising a brighter future for all learners, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Chapter 5

Navigating and Transforming Challenges in Non-Formal Education

5.1. Introduction:

In the journey toward achieving universal education and eradicating illiteracy, NFE plays a pivotal role, especially in regions where traditional schooling systems may be inadequate or inaccessible. The chapter of this book delves into the multifaceted challenges encountered within the realm of NFE, ranging from the complexities of donor-funded programs to the intricacies of teaching and learning methodologies in NFCs.

As we navigate through the challenges faced by NFE initiatives, it becomes evident that the impact of donor-funded programs often falls short of addressing grassroots-level issues. This chapter elucidates how limited impact, dependency on external aid, and suboptimal use of resources hinder the transformative potential of donor-funded initiatives. Suggestions are offered to address these challenges, emphasizing the importance of community involvement, self-reliance, transparency, and collaboration between donors and local communities.

Moreover, community involvement and participation are explored as essential components for the success and sustainability of NFE programs. This chapter highlights the significance of genuine community engagement throughout the project lifecycle and advocates for fostering collaboration between communities and NGOs. By actively engaging community members, decision-makers, and youth, NFE initiatives can better address the needs of beneficiaries and achieve improved outcomes.

Ethical dilemmas inherent in NFE are also scrutinized, drawing attention to the plight of marginalized children denied access to education due to bureaucratic barriers. This chapter underscores the ethical imperative of ensuring equitable access to education for all children, regardless of age or socio-economic status. Suggestions are put forth to simplify government procedures and foster collaboration between the community and government to address educational disparities effectively.

Furthermore, the challenges encountered in teaching and learning methodologies within NFCs are meticulously examined. This shed light on the deficiencies in teaching methodologies, learning environments, and the utilization of educational resources within NFCs. Recommendations are provided to enhance teacher training, promote interactive learning experiences, and encourage active participation of learners, thereby revitalizing the educational landscape within NFCs.

Lastly, a call for transformative change resonates throughout this chapter, urging a departure from traditional methodologies and a steadfast embrace of effective, learner-centric approaches. This chapter emphasizes the collective commitment required from policymakers, educators, donors, and community stakeholders to pave the way for a future where illiteracy is not merely reduced but eradicated. By embracing innovative and contextually relevant educational practices, we can

empower individuals to uplift their lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities, ultimately fostering a literate and empowered society.

5.2. Policy and Curriculum Level

Since 1947, the Ministry of Education has been instrumental in formulating numerous policies, spanning key years such as 1947, 1970, 1972-80, 1979, 1992, and 1998-2010. Following 18 amendments, each policy iteration has been meticulously crafted. After the 18 amendments, all provincial Ministries of Education and their literacy departments collaborated with academics, IPs/NGOs, representatives from training colleges, and practitioners. Through extensive consultative sessions, they strengthened structures and functions in NFE areas, encompassing policy development, standards of quality (for teachers, curriculum, and assessment), curriculum and material creation for adolescents and adults in NFE programs, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) with Non-Formal Education Management Information System (NFE-MIS). As a result of these collaborative efforts, numerous key documents have been developed.

While sincere yet traditional efforts were invested in policy, curriculum, and scheme of work development, challenges arose at the policy and curriculum levels during discussions (formal and informal) with key personnel from implementing NGOs, field supervisors, teacher trainers, teachers, and relevant staff.

5.2.1. Communication, Policy Understanding, and Document Access in Non-Formal Education

Challenge:

Policy implementation in NFE is intricately tied to effective communication and policy understanding. Despite the emphasis on robust implementation agencies in the 1979 Policy Document, Pakistan still grapples with deficiencies in these crucial areas. Poor communication at the grassroots level, as highlighted by the government and UNESCO in 2003, persists as a persistent barrier to successful policy implementation. This deficiency leads to diminished stakeholder support and results in a lack of ownership and understanding among communities, IPs/NGOs, and government departments in the area of NFE, further exacerbating the issue.

Simultaneously, ensuring NFE centres' comprehension and ownership of policies is paramount. Challenges emerge due to untranslated key policies and a lack of clear mechanisms, leading to a gap in understanding at the classroom teaching level. UNICEF emphasizes that full policy comprehension is hindered by the absence of translation into the national/provincial language. Additionally, there is a recognized gap in the availability and awareness of key documents during visits to NFE centres, including vital materials such as the Curriculum, Policy, Scheme of Work, and related documents. Teachers integral to the implementation of these materials often lack access or awareness of these resources.

Suggestion to Address the Challenge:

For effective implementation, a collaborative effort from all partners, including donors, funders, and ministries, is imperative. This involves ensuring that each NFE centre possesses the necessary

documents and actively placing these documents in the hands of teachers. Additionally, translating key policy areas into local languages, such as Sindhi and Urdu, can enhance accessibility and understanding, making them an integral part of the training process. Addressing both policy comprehension and document accessibility collectively forms a comprehensive strategy for translating policies into practice within NFE centres.

5.2.2. Neglect of Foundational Ministry Curriculum and Guidelines in Development

Challenge:

Despite the availability of key documents like the Ministry of Education's first approved National Guideline of Adult and Youth Literacy, the first approved Curriculum for Adult and Youth Literacy in 2007, and the Integrated Literacy Model (ILM 2006) with the support of the USAID/ESRA Project, current curriculum development seems to neglect these foundational resources. These documents, developed through collaboration with provincial ministries, aid and UN agencies, and practitioners, remain largely unutilized. The curriculum could benefit significantly from a more relevant and learner-centric approach by building upon existing documents.

Suggestion to Address the Challenge:

To address this challenge, ministries, donors, and NGOs should focus on reviewing and modifying existing documents with active input from end-users to ensure alignment with learner needs and the educational landscape. Rather than reinventing the wheel, the curriculum development process should leverage these foundational resources, incorporating their insights and recommendations. This approach will facilitate the creation of more relevant and learner-centric curriculum materials that are better suited to meet the needs of the target audience. By actively engaging with existing guidelines and models, curriculum developers can ensure that their efforts are informed by best practices and evidence-based strategies, ultimately leading to more effective educational outcomes.

5.2.3. Deficiency in Non-Formal Education Expertise During Document Development

Challenge:

Examining the list of participants involved in creating curriculum documents and other key materials reveals a notable absence of individuals with in-depth knowledge and experience in NFE. While the participants are esteemed professionals and experts in formal education, their expertise in NFE is lacking. This deficiency is reflected in the curriculum's failure to encapsulate the unique approaches, philosophies, and methodologies of NFE, as well as appropriate assessment techniques tailored for NFE learners. In theory, there appears to be no distinction between formal and non-formal education policies and curricula.

Suggestion to Address the Challenge:

To address this challenge, it is imperative for donors, international agencies, and ministries to address this gap seriously. During the document development process, relevant experts, grassroots practitioners, and community representatives should be included to enrich the curriculum with

diverse perspectives and ensure its alignment with the specific needs of NFE learners. By incorporating the expertise of individuals with firsthand experience in NFE, curriculum documents can better reflect the realities of NFE settings and effectively cater to the needs of learners. This collaborative approach will ensure that NFE curriculum development is informed by a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities present in NFE contexts.

5.2.4. Coordination with Other Ministries and Relevant Departments

Challenge:

In the formulation of curriculum and policy documents, a narrow perspective of NFE is adopted, with a dominance of formal approaches. This inclination may be attributed to ministries aiming to claim exclusive jurisdiction over NFE. However, this overlooks the potential benefits of coordination and collaboration with other ministries and agencies, such as those dealing with health, agriculture, social welfare, rural development, labour/manpower, and child protection. These external entities are actively involved in implementing needs-based literacy programs, possibly even more extensively than the Ministry of Education's NFE department. The lack of coordination leads to fragmented efforts and hampers the development of comprehensive and relevant curriculum policies and resources at both strategic and implementation levels.

Furthermore, the relevance of the content in textbooks to learners' immediate environment is not adequately addressed. There is a need for needs-based content development, especially considering that need-based literacy programs cater to both youth and adults. Currently, the content of textbooks for the primary level does not always align with the learners' immediate environment, posing a challenge to effective teaching and learning in NFE. Stakeholders, including implementing partners/ NGOs, teachers, and community members, have expressed concerns about the content of textbooks, highlighting the importance of addressing this challenge in the revision of key documents.

Suggestion to Address the Challenge:

To address this challenge, it is imperative to foster coordination and collaboration between the Ministry of Education's NFE department and other relevant ministries and departments. This can be achieved through the establishment of inter-ministerial task forces or committees dedicated to NFE, which would facilitate the exchange of expertise and resources. These task forces can work together to develop comprehensive curriculum policies and resources that take into account the diverse needs and perspectives of learners.

Additionally, there should be a concerted effort to develop needs-based content for teaching in NFE programs. This involves conducting thorough needs assessments to identify the specific educational needs of learners and tailoring curriculum content accordingly. Stakeholder engagement is crucial in this process to ensure that the content developed is relevant, culturally appropriate, and meets the needs of the target audience. By addressing these challenges and fostering collaboration across ministries and departments, NFE initiatives can become more effective and inclusive, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for all learners.

5.2.5. Bridging the Divide: Discrepancies in Documented, Perceived, and Implemented Curriculum

Challenges:

An unsettling reality surfaces in the educational landscape—many teachers, trainers, and NGO supervisors seldom engage with the curriculum and policy documents. For them, the textbook becomes the de facto curriculum. The government-developed curriculum for NFE is a well-documented curriculum created by the relevant ministry of education, curriculum wing, with the support of academics and professionals. It is a well-written document that explains the objectives, students' minimum learning standards of each level, teaching methodologies, types of assessment, and evaluation of learners' progress (both formative and summative). However, the majority of NFE teachers have not seen or understood this curriculum document, which was developed for their use but did not reach them.

Perceived curriculum refers to the basic knowledge that teachers possess about the curriculum, mainly through trainers. These trainers themselves have often not fully engaged with the documented curriculum; their training is based on textbooks and methodologies identical to those in formal education. As a result, trainers' explanations are usually not fully understood by NFE teachers, leading to a perceived curriculum that does not capture the strengths and key features of the official curriculum.

Implemented curriculum is what teachers put into practice in the classroom, based on their basic understanding derived from textbooks. Many NFE teachers do not know the full potential of the textbooks and how to effectively use them in teaching. During visits to classrooms in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other East African countries, a recurring inquiry was whether teachers had consulted the curriculum document. Confident affirmations often turned out to be misleading, as teachers would produce textbooks instead of the curriculum document when asked. This reveals a troubling trend: basic queries about teaching methods, assessment strategies, activities, and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) within the textbooks frequently met with silence. A staggering 98% of teachers admitted to not using written lesson plans, relying instead on a monthly scheme of work that involved reading lessons, transcribing questions and answers on the board, and conducting scripted Q&A sessions with learners.

This situation raises serious concerns about monitoring, supervision, curriculum understanding, assessment methodologies, and the essence of teaching. Sub-par teaching practices have been identified as a contributing factor to dropout rates. The current allocation of financial and human resources needs to be reconsidered, as perpetuating decades-old practices through conferences, seminars, and reports has proven futile. The outcomes of current efforts have been limited, revealing a substantial gap in education quality across all levels, including within ministries.

Suggestions to Address the Challenges:

To address these challenges, it is essential to harmonize the trio of documented curriculum, perceived curriculum, and implemented curriculum. This requires targeted training, ongoing guidance, and meticulous assessment during classroom observations. Teachers need to be

adequately trained and supported to understand and utilize the documented curriculum effectively. Regular, practical training sessions should be conducted to bridge the gap between the documented and perceived curriculum. Additionally, continuous guidance and feedback should be provided to teachers to ensure that the implemented curriculum aligns with the documented curriculum's objectives and methodologies.

5.2.6. Optimization of Educational Materials: Resources, Textbooks, Teaching Guides, and Schemes of Work

Challenges:

After a comprehensive evaluation of existing resources for youth and adults from various implementing organizations in Pakistan, numerous challenges have emerged, significantly hindering their efficacy. The identification of resource developers proves challenging, exacerbated by the absence of a centralized resource room at the Ministry level for the systematic organization and reference of materials. These materials exhibit varying quality, with some highly relevant and others requiring substantial revision.

The proliferation of materials by numerous entities, including NGOs (Bunad/Bunad Literacy and Community Council (BLCC), Health and Nutrition Development Society (HANDS), Society/Society for Community Strengthening and Promotion of Education (SCSPEB), Balochistan), JICA, UNICEF, and various government departments, has resulted in a fragmented landscape. While diverse contributions have merit, there's a pressing need for these entities to be aware of available resources and seek permission to avoid redundancy. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in the materials used for NFE.

Upon reviewing resources developed by various entities, it becomes evident that significant shortcomings persist, including logical, grammatical, spelling, and conceptual errors. Cultural sensitivities are often overlooked, and assessments lack alignment with Specific Learning Objectives, often leaning towards an urban orientation. Notably absent are NFE teaching approaches, and there is minimal distinction between formal education teaching guides and NFE teaching guidance. Specific Learning Objectives related to topics are narrowly defined, posing challenges for teachers in comprehending and delivering concepts in the classroom. There's a dire need for an improved version of resources that integrates and links various components to enhance the learning experience for students.

Suggestions to Address the Challenges:

To address these challenges, establishing a centralized resource centre, akin to the one initiated in 2007 with the USAID/ESRA program, provides a hub for referencing and sharing resources. This centre should be linked with the Ministry's website for easy access and dissemination. Moreover, the Ministry could issue a notification advising implementing partners to upload their NFE-related resources on their websites, further facilitating dissemination.

The Ministry should formulate a policy mandating that all developers, whether NGOs, departments, or agencies, submit a unified set of resources to the Ministry's resource centre.

Additionally, key implementing NGOs should maintain a resource set, irrespective of their current involvement in NFE programs, for the benefit of stakeholders.

Key purposes of the proposed policy include:

Building Capacity: Ensuring that IPs/NGOs enhance their capacity and knowledge through the review of existing materials.

Knowledge Foundation: Using the content of materials as a foundation base for building on existing knowledge rather than starting from scratch.

Transparency and Collaboration: Allowing the Ministry to keep track of who is developing what, creating a transparent platform for organizations to learn from each other.

Centralized Reference Hub: Centralizing all resources, creating a reference hub for stakeholders and linking these resources with the Ministry's website.

Dissemination Enhancement: Encouraging implementing partners to upload resources on their websites, facilitating broader dissemination.

Quality Improvement: Reviewing key resources identifies shortcomings, allowing for improvements in logical, grammatical, spelling, and conceptual aspects.

Cultural Sensitivity: Emphasizing the consideration of cultural sensitivities in resource development.

Alignment with SLOs: Ensuring that assessments align with Specific and Student Learning Objectives improves the quality and relevance of the resources.

Integration of NFE Teaching Approaches: Addressing the absence of NFE teaching approaches improves the overall effectiveness of resources.

Enhanced Learning Experience: Focusing on Specific and Student Learning Objectives related to topics ensures a broader and more effective learning experience for students.

5.2.7. Non-Formal Education Policy Framework

Challenge:

The current absence of a NFE Policy Framework is a critical issue. This lack of a comprehensive policy framework results in NFE being perceived as having a lower organizational status compared to formal education. Consequently, NFE often receives inadequate financial allocation and resources, hindering its development and effectiveness. Without a well-defined policy framework, efforts to integrate NFE into the broader educational landscape and ensure it receives the necessary attention and support remain fragmented and less effective.

Suggestion to Address the Challenge:

To address this gap, there is an urgent need to develop a comprehensive NFE Policy Framework. This framework should be based on information and knowledge obtained from the Monitoring and

Evaluation (M&E) departments of implementing partners/ NGOs, donors, and literacy departments. A collaborative approach is essential to ensure the Policy Framework incorporates insights from various stakeholders, leading to a more inclusive and effective educational landscape. Developing such a comprehensive Policy Framework is crucial for positioning NFE on equal footing with formal education. It will help dispel the perception of lower organizational status and garner adequate financial allocation and resources. The aim is to bridge the existing gap, ensuring that NFE receives the attention and support it needs for holistic development and success.

5.3. Implementation Level

Regardless of the quality of policies, curricula, and procedures, the success of NFE programs hinges on effective execution and robust support mechanisms. Through thorough analyses of data gathered from diverse sources such as field notes, classroom observations, and stakeholder discussions, key challenges at the implementation level emerge. This section articulates these challenges and presents viable mitigation options wherever is required.

Professional Development

5.3.1. Enhancing Ministry Department of Education Capacity for Non-Formal Education (NFE)

Challenge

Discussions on various platforms, including national and international conferences, as well as thorough site visits, have illuminated a significant gap within the Ministry of Education's NFE department. While the department diligently executes traditional tasks, there is a notable deficiency in comprehending the intricate concepts and strategic approaches crucial for the effective implementation of NFE programs. This deficiency extends across key domains such as program implementation, supervision, database management, and the dissemination of vital documentation.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenge:

To address the challenge of enhancing the Ministry Department of Education's capacity for NFE, several strategies can be implemented:

Training Programs: Develop comprehensive training programs specifically tailored to address the deficiencies identified within the NFE department. These programs should cover topics such as program implementation strategies, effective supervision techniques, database management, and documentation dissemination methods. Training sessions can be conducted by experienced professionals in the field of NFE or through collaboration with external organizations specializing in educational capacity building.

Continuous Professional Development: Implement a system of continuous professional development for staff within the NFE department. This may include regular workshops, seminars, and refresher courses aimed at keeping staff updated on the latest trends, methodologies, and best practices in NFE. Encourage participation in relevant conferences and encourage staff to pursue further education or certifications in NFE-related fields.

Mentoring and Coaching: Establish mentorship programs where experienced NFE practitioners within the Ministry can provide guidance and support to junior staff members. This mentorship model can help bridge knowledge gaps and facilitate the transfer of expertise within the department.

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing: Foster a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing within the NFE department and across other relevant departments or agencies. Encourage staff to share their experiences, lessons learned, and innovative practices through regular meetings, discussion forums, and knowledge-sharing platforms.

Resource Allocation: Ensure adequate resource allocation for professional development initiatives within the NFE department. This may include budgetary provisions for training programs, staff development activities, and participation in external capacity-building opportunities.

By implementing these strategies, the Ministry Department of Education can enhance its capacity for NFE and effectively address the identified deficiencies within the department.

5.3.2. Addressing the Deficiency in Coordination and Partnership with Distance Education Universities (DEUs)

Challenge:

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, addressing the deficiencies in coordination and establishing strategic partnerships with Distance Education Universities (DEUs) is imperative. The current educational milieu witnesses a transformative shift from a traditional instruction-centric model to a learner-centric integrated network model, emphasizing access to diverse learning resources and fostering student initiative.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenge:

Resource Optimization: Recognize the feasibility of the proposed Open and Distance Learning (ODL) approach, emphasizing the imperative of adept management skills and the strategic application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-based methodologies for widespread reach. Efficient resource optimization involves leveraging technology to its full potential, ensuring that the benefits of ODL are maximized with minimal financial burden compared to formal education.

Learnings from Experience: Acknowledge the rich experience of institutions like Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in managing distance-based programs. Extract key learnings through a thorough analysis of AIOU's successes and challenges, providing a roadmap for other institutions venturing into ODL to enhance educational accessibility. Learn from AIOU's initiatives, such as offering training courses specifically designed for potential teachers in rural areas, to address the shortage of qualified educators in remote regions and empower local communities through education.

Strategic Partnerships: Foster strategic partnerships between the Ministry of Education and Distance Education Universities (DEUs) to enhance collaboration and coordination in delivering non-formal education initiatives. Collaborate with DEUs to develop customized educational

programs tailored to the needs of underserved communities and remote regions. These partnerships can facilitate the exchange of expertise, resources, and best practices, ultimately improving the quality and accessibility of non-formal education programs.

Capacity Building: Invest in capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening the capabilities of DEU faculty and staff in delivering non-formal education programs. Provide training and professional development opportunities focused on innovative teaching methodologies, learner-centred approaches, and effective use of technology in distance education. By building the capacity of DEU personnel, it will enhance their ability to effectively engage with learners in diverse contexts and ensure the success of non-formal education initiatives.

Community Engagement: Promote community engagement and participation in NFE programs delivered through DEUs. Establish mechanisms for community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that educational initiatives are responsive to local needs and priorities. Encourage collaboration between DEUs, local authorities, civil society organizations, and community leaders to foster a holistic approach to non-formal education delivery that addresses the unique challenges and opportunities within each community.

5.3.3. Strengthening the Capacity of NGOs/IPs for NFE Programme Implementation

Challenges:

NGOs and implementing partners play a crucial role in NFE program implementation, leveraging their field experience and expertise to address educational needs in remote areas. However, several challenges hinder their effectiveness:

Weak Need-Based Coordination: Coordination gaps between NGOs, donors, and government departments impede NFE program execution. Lack of standardized communication channels leads to misunderstandings and misalignment of objectives, affecting program efficiency and effectiveness.

Continuous Admissions: Ongoing admissions throughout the year pose stability challenges to NFE programs. The absence of defined admission periods strains resources, disrupts educational structures, and complicates monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Untrained Teaching Personnel: Recruitment of untrained teachers without focused training in NFE areas jeopardizes education quality. Resource constraints often lead to this issue, impacting the learning experience for students and hindering educational outcomes.

Resource Delays: Challenges in receiving and timely provision of resources contribute to operational delays in NFE programs. This delay affects program implementation, disrupts academic calendars, and demotivates educators and learners.

Project Execution Compliance: Struggles in adhering to agreed-upon terms and conditions during project execution undermine NFE program effectiveness. Non-compliance can lead to inefficiencies, legal complications, and a deviation from intended objectives, eroding stakeholder trust.

Presence of Unregistered Learners: Instances of unregistered learners participating in NFE programs pose challenges to program oversight. Loopholes in enrolment processes or difficulties in tracking registrations strain resources, disrupt class dynamics, and complicate monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Suggestions to Address Challenges:

To overcome these challenges and strengthen the capacity of NGOs and implementers for NFE program implementation, the following strategies can be employed:

Enhance Coordination: Establish standardized communication channels and protocols between NGOs, donors, and government departments to improve coordination and alignment of objectives.

Implement Clear Admission Policies: Define clear admission periods and criteria to regulate student intake and maintain optimal class sizes, enhancing program stability and effectiveness.

Provide Training Opportunities: Offer comprehensive training programs for teaching personnel to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective NFE program delivery.

Streamline Resource Provision: Improve processes for resource allocation and distribution to minimize delays and ensure timely provision of materials and support to NFE centres.

Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation: Implement robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track program compliance, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability and transparency in NFE initiatives.

Enhance Registration Procedures: Implement robust enrolment procedures to prevent the participation of unregistered learners, ensuring accurate program oversight and resource allocation.

5.3.4. Strengthening Documentation Practices in Non-Formal Education (NFE)

Challenges

The documentation practices in NFE are facing significant deficiencies, impacting various aspects such as policies, curriculum development, and resource allocation. These challenges include:

Generalized Structure in Report Formats: The prevailing generalized structure in report formats lacks depth, especially concerning areas like classroom observation forms. This inadequacy limits the comprehensive capture of teaching, learning, and assessment nuances, hindering accurate assessment and improvement efforts.

Inadequacies in Formats Related to Parents and Centres: There are inadequacies in formats related to parents and centres, compromising the preservation of valuable knowledge. Without proper documentation in these areas, critical insights into parental involvement and centre operations are lost, hindering informed decision-making and resource allocation.

Suggestions to Address Challenges:

To address these challenges and strengthen documentation practices in NFE, the following strategies can be implemented:

Refinement of Report Formats: Refine report formats, especially classroom observation forms, to capture nuanced aspects of teaching, learning, and assessment comprehensively. This refinement should focus on qualitative as well as quantitative aspects to provide a holistic view of NFE initiatives.

Development of Comprehensive Documentation Procedures: Develop comprehensive documentation procedures for parents and centres to ensure the preservation of valuable knowledge. This includes designing formats that capture relevant information about parental involvement, centre operations, and community engagement.

Promotion of a Culture of Continuous Documentation: Establish a culture promoting continuous and systematic documentation in NFE settings. This involves providing training and resources to educators and staff members on effective documentation practices and emphasizing the importance of documentation in informing decision-making and program improvement.

By implementing these strategies, NFE programs can enhance their documentation practices, leading to better-informed decision-making, improved program effectiveness, and increased responsiveness to the evolving educational landscape.

5.3.5. Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation Practices in Non-Formal Education (NFE)

Challenges:

It is a prevalent observation among community members and educators that the formats and processes related to M&E, guidance, and support exhibit weaknesses. The current systems within many NGOs fall short of providing adequate support and guidance to teachers, resulting in the perpetuation of mistakes and shortcomings at the classroom level over several years. This persistent situation prompts questions regarding the fundamental purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation, as well as concerns about accountability and the effectiveness of testing and assessment procedures. There is a notable risk that NGOs, whether intentionally or unintentionally, may not be conveying accurate and essential information to both donors and government entities.

NGOs and their Monitoring departments, akin to their counterparts in various countries, face challenges related to data collection, verification, data cleanliness, and the interpretation of indicators into meaningful findings. Strengthening the Data Management system is imperative to meet the specific requirements of NFE. Identifying problems and issues and providing well-founded recommendations to donors necessitates a more robust system. Determining what aspects to assess, how to assess them, and what information should be incorporated into the provincial database are crucial considerations. It is important to note that the current Monitoring and Evaluation system, primarily designed for formal schools, is inadequately tailored to address the unique challenges of NFE, as underscored by various research studies.

Specific challenges in M/E identified include:

Quantitative Dominance in Data Collection: The data collection process is predominantly quantitative, often leading to misleading numbers.

Weak Integration of Data into Planning: There exists a weak culture of integrating data and findings into the planning process, resulting in the repetition of planning gaps.

Challenges in Data Maintenance at the Centre Level: Proper data maintenance at the centre level poses challenges. Instances include students without registration numbers, some being overage or underage, and issues with attendance records. Long absenteeism and dropout cases are not reported in a timely manner. The lack of maintained formats and attendance registers renders the submitted information misleading for NGOs, donors, and government databases.

Need for Focused Monitoring and Support Systems: NGOs should establish proper and focused monitoring and support systems. Identified issues and shortcomings should be rectified in subsequent visits.

Call for Format Revision, Particularly in Classroom Observations: There is a pressing need for the revision of formats, specifically in Classroom Observation forms. Key indicators for NFE centre observations are notably absent. A noticeable absence of systems indicating the link between monitoring visits and follow-up support further compounds the challenge.

Underutilization of Key Educational Documents by Teachers: Essential documents like Curriculum, Scheme of Work, lesson plan registers, and teaching guides are underutilized by teachers. This results in teaching becoming an isolated activity without clear knowledge of what needs to be taught and achieved. Despite instructions in textbooks, teachers often deviate.

Classroom Observation Incident: Misalignment of Teaching Practices and Instructional Guidance in Non-Formal Education:

In August 2023, during a classroom observation visit to a NFE centre in District Jamshoro, Sindh, a noteworthy incident unfolded. The teacher had inscribed a set of questions on the blackboard along with their corresponding one-word answers, accompanied by an additional section labelled "instructions for teacher" for students to replicate. To my surprise, students diligently copied everything from the board, including the instructional notes meant for the teacher. The teacher proceeded to assess the copied material. After the class, I inquired, "Why did you write instructions for the teacher on the blackboard and ask learners to copy them? Weren't these instructions intended for guidance?" In response, she innocently confessed, "I don't know; I thought it was a kind of exercise." This incident serves as just one among many examples highlighting the comprehension levels of average teachers of NFE, consequently prompting various concerns about the overall quality of education delivery.

Delayed Provision of Basic Resources: Timely provision of basic resources such as textbooks to students was neglected, leaving teachers without guidance on managing the absence of these materials. This resulted in a squandering of valuable learning time for students, impacting their education and labour investment. Similar challenges have been highlighted in previous studies.

Ensuring IPs/NGOs Accountability: Donors entering into partnerships with Implementing Partners/ NGOs should enforce binding agreements that align with the expectations and commitments laid out. Monitoring and quarterly reports play a pivotal role in ensuring that IPs deliver on the agreed-upon terms, especially in terms of teaching, learning, and assessment based on the curriculum and planning.

Discrepancies in Drop-out Ratios: The dropout ratio recorded by IPs/NGOs does not accurately depict the ground reality. Visits reveal discrepancies, where attendance registers show students absent for months, yet their names remain on the registers. Despite clear policies at the macro level, these written policies often fail to translate effectively to the centre level, suggesting that dropout figures could be underestimated.

Transparent Sharing of Findings: Teachers and trainers express a compelling need and request for sharing the findings from the database, along with insights into the learning process. This sharing is proposed to occur through face-to-face interactions or via social media platforms.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

In order to ensure a comprehensive assessment, testing and measurement should incorporate qualitative methods such as human interest stories, interviews, group discussions, and both short-term and long-term impact evaluations.

Effective planning requires evidence-based practices, facilitated by a robust mechanism that spans from NFCs providing evidence, Ips/NGOs managing data, to provincial and national Education Management Information System (EMIS) for planner access. Integration and linkages are pivotal for success.

NGOs should establish proper and focused monitoring and support systems. Identified issues and shortcomings should be rectified in subsequent visits.

There is a pressing need for the revision of formats, specifically in Classroom Observation forms. Key indicators for NFE centre observations are notably absent. A noticeable absence of systems indicating the link between monitoring visits and follow-up support further compounds the challenge.

Promote the use of essential educational documents by teachers through training sessions, workshops, and ongoing support mechanisms.

Implement efficient resource distribution systems to ensure timely provision of basic resources, such as textbooks, to support uninterrupted learning.

Enforce binding agreements with Implementing Partners to ensure alignment with donor expectations and commitments, with regular monitoring and quarterly reports.

Improve dropout reporting accuracy by ensuring attendance records are up-to-date and reflect actual student attendance and engagement.

Facilitate the sharing of findings from M/E data with teachers and trainers through face-to-face interactions or social media platforms to enhance teaching practices.

5.3.6. Enhancing Data Management in Non-Formal Education (NFE)

Challenges:

This section elevates the discourse to the strategic sphere of data management within NFE programs. Acknowledging its pivotal role in generating valuable insights, knowledge, and an accurate depiction of project intricacies, the narrative pivots to the broader implications of effective data management. Unlike the preceding focus on qualitative documentation, we underscore the significance of robust data management systems for policymaking, strategic planning, and precise project progress tracking. Here, we meticulously navigate the potential pitfalls of weak data management practices, emphasizing the need for comprehensive systems that seamlessly integrate documentations and monitoring reports. The discussion transcends qualitative aspects, shedding light on the broader spectrum of data's role in NFE initiatives. This section aims not only to identify challenges but to pave the way for transformative solutions, ensuring a holistic understanding of data management's indispensable role in shaping the future of non-formal education.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Implement comprehensive data management systems that seamlessly integrate documentation and monitoring reports to support policymaking, strategic planning, and precise project progress tracking.

Enhance the capacity of data management teams through targeted training and resources to ensure accurate and reliable data collection, verification, and analysis.

Develop standardized data management protocols to ensure consistency and reliability across all NFE programs and initiatives.

Utilize advanced data analytics tools to generate actionable insights and knowledge, enabling more informed decision-making and strategic planning.

Foster collaboration among stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and data management professionals, to create a unified approach to data management in NFE.

5.3.7. Role of Media and ICT-Based Techniques

Challenges:

Numerous examples of electronic media packages and support systems exist in Pakistan. Despite some experimentation during the COVID period, technology-based distance learning materials and services, like Taleemi TV, remain underutilized. These services include the provision of technologically rich distance self-learning materials, group learning materials, and interactive communication methods such as teleconferencing, radio paging, satellite communication, and group telephone tutorials. These tools possess the potential to benefit disadvantaged groups in

society by offering opportunities for education through the latest delivery modes. However, despite the widespread availability of smartphones, their effective utilization remains limited. Even on an experimental basis, implementing partners have only recently begun tapping into these opportunities.

An observation in September 2022 at an NFE centre in Thatta district, Sindh, revealed that many adolescents aged 13 and above possess smartphones with internet packages. Engaging with them after a class session, they expressed an innovative learning dynamic, watching and learning together in the evening. They shared knowledge on subjects like math, songs, poems, and science through videos, creating a mini learning community. While they come to the centre for certificates, they find traditional teaching boring and prefer learning independently through videos. This real-life example underscores the transformative potential of self-directed, technology-enabled learning as an alternative to traditional teaching methods. The story of these learners serves as a compelling narrative for the monitoring and evaluation team, providing valuable insights for curriculum developers, policymakers, ministries, and donors. It exemplifies a paradigm shift that requires a broader perspective beyond traditional boundaries.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Increase the utilization of technology-based distance learning materials and services, such as Talemi TV, to reach a wider audience and enhance learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Encourage the integration of smartphones and other digital devices into the learning process, leveraging their widespread availability to create more engaging and effective learning experiences.

Develop and promote interactive communication methods such as teleconferencing, radio paging, satellite communication, and group telephone tutorials to support distance learning.

Foster a culture of self-directed, technology-enabled learning by providing students with access to high-quality educational content and resources online.

Support the creation of mini learning communities where students can share knowledge and learn together, using technology as a facilitator for collaborative learning.

Engage with curriculum developers, policymakers, ministries, and donors to recognize and support the potential of technology-enabled learning as a viable alternative to traditional teaching methods.

5.3.8. Donor Engagement and Impact in Non-Formal Education (NFE)

5.3.8.1. Challenges in Donor Engagement

Challenges:

Lack of Awareness of Ground Realities and Needs: Donors often "reside in isolated towers, viewing the educational landscape through different lenses." This detachment hinders a nuanced understanding of the specific challenges faced by NFE, demanding a more grounded perspective.

Demand for Quick Results: "Driven by a desire for immediate and quantifiable results," donors often prioritize quick-fix solutions over sustained, long-term impact. This approach may not align with the nature of NFE initiatives, which require patient, enduring efforts for meaningful change.

Reluctance to Finance Projects with Uncertain Initial Success: Donors "exhibit hesitancy in investing in projects where success cannot be guaranteed within the short lifespan of the project." The unpredictable nature of NFE outcomes may not align with this cautious approach, necessitating a re-evaluation of success metrics.

Avoidance of Hard-to-Reach Areas: "Operational and administrative challenges deter donors from venturing into challenging and remote areas," where NFE initiatives are often most needed. This reluctance complicates traditional monitoring and supervision processes, hindering progress in critical regions.

Lack of Demand Awareness: Joint meetings involving donors, the Ministry of Education, and service providers are "essential to enlighten donors about the importance and necessity of supporting NFE." Increased awareness can bridge the gap between donor priorities and the pressing needs of NFE programs, fostering a more informed decision-making process.

Insufficient Human Interest Field Stories: "The absence of evidence-based human interest stories hinders the ability to share compelling narratives with donors." These stories can serve as powerful tools for motivating donors by providing a tangible connection to the impact of NFE initiatives.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Enhance donor engagement by increasing awareness of the ground realities and specific needs of NFE through regular, immersive field visits and interactions with local communities.

Encourage donors to adopt a long-term perspective on NFE initiatives, focusing on sustained impact rather than immediate results.

Foster donor confidence in NFE projects by showcasing successful case studies and emphasizing the potential for scalable impact.

Promote the importance of reaching remote and challenging areas to ensure inclusive educational development, supported by tailored logistical solutions.

Organize joint meetings and collaborative platforms for donors, government entities, and service providers to align priorities and strategies for NFE.

Collect and share compelling, evidence-based human interest stories that highlight the transformative impact of NFE programs on individuals and communities.

5.3.8.2. Challenges in Donor-Funded Programs

Challenges:

Limited Impact at Ground Level: "Donor-funded programs often fall short of addressing issues at the grassroots level." Resources may be misallocated, leading to a limited impact on the intended beneficiaries.

Dependency and Unfocused Spending: "Donor-funded initiatives may inadvertently foster dependency on external aid." Resources are sometimes allocated to unnecessary field visits, extravagant hotel stays, administrative expenditures, and actions dictated by donors, diverting attention from the core needs of NFE programs.

Ineffective Resource Utilization: Despite acknowledging "bitter truths about resource utilization," there is a reluctance to confront these issues and consider more effective approaches. "Communities emphasize the need for donors to place trust in communities, provide direct training, and allocate a smaller percentage of their budget," allowing projects to transform into sustainable programs.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Ensure effective resource allocation by involving community members in the planning and decision-making processes of donor-funded programs.

Foster self-reliance and reduce dependency by prioritizing capacity-building initiatives and direct community engagement.

Promote transparency and accountability in the utilization of resources to maximize the impact of donor-funded programs.

Encourage donors to trust local communities and provide them with the necessary training and support to manage and sustain NFE projects effectively.

5.3.9. Community Involvement and Participation

Challenges:

A significant challenge highlighted by both communities and stakeholders in informal discussions, and witnessed in the field, is the limited and often token involvement of communities in many sites where NF programs are implemented. Research, personal experiences, and observations in rural areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and various African countries consistently indicate that the active engagement of community members, influential groups, decision-makers, and youth throughout the project's life cycle leads to improved outcomes. True community participation reflects a significant commitment to self-help, facilitating collaboration between communities and NGOs to bring projects to fruition.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Promote genuine community involvement throughout the project life cycle to ensure the success and sustainability of NFE programs.

Foster a culture of collaboration between communities and NGOs to facilitate project implementation and achieve shared goals.

Encourage active engagement of community members, influential groups, decision-makers, and youth to enhance the impact and effectiveness of NFE initiatives.

Build trust and commitment within communities to create a supportive environment for NFE programmes.

5.3.10. Ethical Issues Related to NFE

Challenges:

During field observations, I often encountered deeply distressing situations that left me feeling helpless and powerless. An illustrative example is provided here to convey the emotional impact of such experiences. In September 2023, upon reaching a small village in Khairpur district, Sindh, a group of five children, barefoot and in tattered clothes, approached me. Their appearance suggested days without a proper shower, emphasizing the economic deprivation they faced. One of them tugged at my shirt, expressing their hopes and desires for learning. They asked, "Did you come to open the school for us? We want to learn." Interestingly, we were standing right in front of a closed government school, the sole educational institution in the nearby area. This meant that the doors of education were seemingly closed for these children, who, according to the constitution, have a basic right to education. To exacerbate the situation, a NFC was operating in the village. However, these children were underage for NF education, rendering them ineligible for admission. Despite a proper, empty, functional school building existing, there seemed to be no ears to hear their request, no eyes to witness their tearful pleas, and no heart to feel their pain. With no alternative options, this underage group had to wait one or two years until they became eligible for NFC admission. However, there was no guarantee that the NFC would still be functional by then, given its donor-funded nature. The community merely requested permission to utilize the building and expressed their ability to arrange for a teacher. However, government procedures proved excessively complicated and time-consuming. This example is not isolated, raising serious ethical questions for policymakers, implementers, and donors. The existence of a closed government school alongside an operational but exclusive NFC underscores issues of equality and equity. The stark disparity between celebrating Children's Day, organizing seminars, producing reports, and the bitter ground realities demands urgent attention from the government and philanthropists. The solution is seemingly straightforward: collaborative efforts between the community and government.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Address ethical issues by ensuring equitable access to education for all children, regardless of age or socio-economic status.

Simplify government procedures to enable communities to utilize existing resources, such as school buildings, to provide education for underage/ school-age children.

Foster collaboration between the community and government to address the educational needs of all children and create inclusive educational opportunities.

Implement practical, integrated, and simple approaches to develop sustainable solutions for ethical issues in NFE.

5.4. Challenges in Non-Formal Education Centre Teaching and Learning: A Comprehensive Examination

Challenges:

Teachers and their instructional methodologies form the cornerstone of an effective teaching-learning process, serving as the architects who shape the foundations of students' personalities. Despite a substantial body of knowledge existing within the realm of formal education, the situation within NFE remains relatively under-explored, with limited literature and research studies available.

After analysing data from a hundred classroom observations, two categories of NFE centres emerged. The first category demonstrated features of effective teaching, showcasing meticulous planning, the utilization of participatory methods, learner engagement, proper formal and informal assessments, and a meaningful connection with the immediate environment. However, these exemplary centres constituted a mere 13%. In the majority of observed NFE centres, a low performance was observed, resulting in a less effective learning process.

Key weaknesses identified included teachers' insufficient knowledge and understanding of curriculum features, inadequately developed lesson plans based on Specific Learning Outcomes, limited use of schemes of work and teaching materials, conceptual understanding errors in teaching, improper utilization of formal and non-formal assessment methods, and significant time mismanagement. Shockingly, 45% of teachers, on average, did not engage in teaching during the entire period, diverting their attention to administrative or non-teaching tasks.

The learning environment in these centres was notably ineffective, lacking linkages to the immediate environment. Teachers often remained unaware of the outcomes of their teaching efforts, demonstrating a lack of concepts regarding outdoor activities, sports, arts and crafts, and event days. A predominant and ineffective teaching method, "LRC" (Listen, Read/Repeat, Copy), was observed in the majority of classes. The analysis of these centre observations illuminated the root causes of low-quality education and its adverse impact on learners. It unequivocally indicated that teaching quality plays a pivotal role in the observed dropout rates within NFE centres.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Addressing these challenges necessitates in-depth and focused training for NFE teachers. Their skills should encompass teaching multi-age groups using accelerated and participatory approaches, maintaining strong linkages with the immediate environment, and being responsive to the needs of learners. The identified weaknesses underscore the imperative need for regular monitoring, support, and guidance from implementing bodies. This highlights the role of moral and ethical considerations in educational practices, emphasizing the Integration, Linkages with the daily life, and Moral values. Regular support and guidance from implementing bodies, coupled with enhanced skills and knowledge in monitoring, are crucial elements in ensuring the success of NFE teachers in providing quality education.

5.5. Challenges in Non-Formal Education Centre Learning: An Insightful Examination

Challenges:

Following the meticulous analysis of Non-Formal Education Centres (NFCs) class observation data, a prevailing pattern emerges across the majority of these centres. While exceptions exist, with a few instances showcasing learner involvement in group activities, active questioning, and responsive participation in teacher-led discussions and textbook activities, the overall landscape portrays a less-than-ideal scenario. Notably, only one centre was observed where teachers utilized teaching aids and encouraged older learners to assist their younger counterparts, representing a mixed age group ranging from 6 to 16 years old.

A general overview of the typical scenario unfolds as follows: learners are predominantly characterized by their passive engagement, sitting quietly as the teacher delivers the lesson. While some learners appear attentive, others may lose focus during the session, and the teacher's attention is often not evenly distributed among all students. The teaching methodology primarily involves copying from the board, with the teacher reading aloud and learners listening and repeating. Unfortunately, there is a notable absence of opportunities for meaningful discussion or participation in a diverse range of activities, including reading, writing, and hands-on learning experiences.

Moreover, the observed reading and writing skills of learners are a cause for concern, indicative of a generally disheartening learning environment. This pervasive pattern, where learners are confined to passive reception rather than active engagement, poses a significant challenge to the efficacy of the education imparted within these NFCs.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Addressing these challenges requires a strategic re-evaluation of teaching methodologies, placing a heightened emphasis on fostering interactive and participatory learning experiences. This shift will not only enhance the overall learning environment but also cultivate the critical thinking and communication skills essential for the holistic development of the learners. Implementing innovative teaching aids and encouraging peer-assisted learning, as observed in the exceptional case, can serve as models for improvement. A comprehensive approach to revitalize the learning process is imperative for the betterment of the educational landscape within NFCs.

5.6. Challenges in Non-Formal Education Centres: A Detailed Examination of Decorative and Operational Shortcomings

Challenges:

Upon close examination, it was evident that many NFE centres boast vibrant decorations comprising both teacher and student-made materials. However, the primary function of these decorations appears to be aesthetic rather than educational, lacking utilization as effective learning tools. While many centres exhibit a strong thematic connection with the teaching agenda, regrettably, these resources often remain underutilized.

Interestingly, learners within these centres express overall contentment. For them, the centre serves as a haven providing an opportunity to step outside their homes, engage in group interactions, share knowledge, exchange anecdotes, and share laughter. Despite this positive atmosphere, a prevalent concern among learners pertains to the perceived inadequacies in teaching and learning.

Several poignant examples underscore these sentiments: “I wish the teacher would allow me to teach my younger classmates; I believe I can contribute effectively. She is unaware of my proficiency in developing and narrating stories. I am adept at crafting teaching materials, and I excel in sports. Unfortunately, the teacher hasn't given me a chance to harness and showcase these abilities.”

In a majority of the observed centres, critical documents essential for effective operation were notably absent. These include copies of the curriculum, timetables, lesson planning records, parents' meeting registers, activity calendars, and notices regarding the use of teaching kits. The absence of these foundational documents points to potential gaps in organizational structure and communication.

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges:

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic re-evaluation of the purpose and utilization of centre decorations, transforming them into valuable educational resources. Additionally, encouraging learners to actively participate in teaching and other capacities could foster a more dynamic learning environment. Furthermore, the rectification of missing key documents is imperative for enhancing the overall organizational effectiveness of NFE centres. By addressing these issues, we can optimize the potential of NFE centres as spaces not only for social interaction but as dynamic hubs of effective teaching and learning.

5.7. A Call for Transformative Change

The challenges meticulously elucidated above compel us, if genuine improvement in the landscape of illiteracy is to be achieved, to break free from the shackles of traditional, rigid, and ineffective methodologies that have proven irrelevant to the learners' needs. To make substantial strides in eradicating illiteracy, a departure from the status quo is imperative. Instead, we must embrace effective, successful alternatives and inclusive paths, leveraging a strong political will and fostering coordinated efforts with relevant departments and donors.

It is ardently argued that NFE must undergo a conceptual shift, aligning itself with the contextual needs of learners to enhance their quality of life. The overarching aim should be to institute practices that empower learners to apply acquired skills and knowledge, thereby enabling them to uplift their lives as individuals and valuable contributors to their communities.

In forging this transformative path, the collective commitment of policymakers, teachers, educators, donors, and community stakeholders becomes paramount. A comprehensive, learner-centric approach is indispensable, one that not only imparts knowledge but empowers individuals to utilize that knowledge meaningfully. By doing so, we can pave the way for a future where illiteracy is not merely reduced but eradicated, and where the fruits of education translate into tangible improvements in the lives of learners and their communities. The journey toward a literate

and empowered society demands a resolute departure from outdated paradigms and a steadfast embrace of innovative, contextually relevant educational practices.

Chapter 6:

Addressing Confusion: Clarifying Misunderstandings in Non-Formal Education

6.1. Introduction:

This chapter aims to illuminate the prevalent confusions that have emerged during extensive field visits, stakeholder interactions, conference participations, and involvement in policy development forums with NGOs and donors. From my unique vantage point, I have observed these confusions across all groups, from Ministries to donors, IPs / NGOs, and learners. It is evident that stakeholders often operate within their distinct spheres, where perceptions may not always align with the realities on the ground. What becomes apparent is a significant disjunction between perceptions and actual realities on the ground.

6.2. Rationale for Terminology:

I deliberated over whether to use the terms "confusion," "misunderstanding," or "myth." While their meanings are closely related, after careful consideration, I settled on "confusion." In discussions with teachers, trainers, implementing partners, and learners, it became clear that clarity was lacking, leading to incorrect perceptions across hierarchical levels. Particularly concerning is the confusion among learners regarding the understanding and meaning of terminologies.

6.3. Definition of Confusion:

According to the Oxford Dictionary, confusion is defined as uncertainty about what is happening, intended, or required, or the state of being bewildered or unclear in one's mind about something. Similarly, the Cambridge Dictionary describes it as a situation in which people do not understand what is happening, what they should do, or who someone or something is. It often involves a situation with a lot of activity and noise, where people do not know what to do.

In many developing countries, including Pakistan and Afghanistan, I have observed a prevalent top-down approach in shaping policies, curricula, and related resources. This approach often involves individuals with formal education backgrounds or foreign consultants and experts. Unfortunately, these stakeholders are often detached from the practical realities of the field, operating within their own realm of expertise. The lack of evidence-based research in the field of NFE has only exacerbated these confusions. It is imperative that we promptly acknowledge and address these prevailing confusions, diligently disseminating awareness among all stakeholders engaged in NFE.

Failure to gain clarity on these confusions could severely hinder the success of NFE initiatives. These confusions extend across conceptual, implementation, and assessment levels, as highlighted by Krätli, S., and Dyer, C. (2009), who identified three key conceptual-level confusions.

6.4. Confusions

6.4.1. Confusion between Education and Schooling

In July 2012, during my tenure as a senior education advisor with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), I was involved in organizing an international conference on Nomadic Education. One particular moment during this event served as a catalyst for profound reflection. A Nomadic leader was asked to address the prevalent perception that Nomadic communities were opposed to education. In response, the leader offered a perspective that challenged this notion:

"Who said that we are against education? You people make assumptions about us and then believe them. We are against schooling because it does not align with our lifestyle. Providers like you need to explore alternative methods of delivering education. You should look at platforms like this conference and consider more practical options for providing education to marginalized groups like ours, beyond the confines of the traditional school system. Numerous examples exist within our communities; learn from them."

Nomadic Leader, July 2012, International conference report, SCA.

This statement served as an eye-opener and ignited a passionate debate and discussion about the distinction between schooling and education. The straightforward, candid, and thought-provoking nature of this statement fundamentally shifted the tone of the entire conference. It was collectively agreed that ministries and providers should explore local, alternative models for delivering education beyond the conventional school structure, especially for hard-to-reach and underserved segments of society.

The global focus on education, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the World Declaration on Education For All, had primarily emphasized universal primary school enrolment as a core objective within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. However, it became increasingly clear that formal schools were not the sole avenue for providing a complete primary education. Successful examples of alternative approaches could be found even within countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. These included practices such as home schooling, community-based schools, learning under the shade of trees, girls' annexes, mobile educational centres, madrassas (Islamic schools), and mosque schools. These examples stand as beacons of innovative, cost-effective, and practical education delivery methods, inspiring providers to explore, deliberate, and adopt or adapt alternative pathways to education that are simpler, more affordable, and more manageable.

6.4.2. Confusion between Expansion and Inclusion

The prevailing confusion within decision-making circles regarding the strategic direction for educational development is palpable. While some advocate for the expansion of formal schooling, others emphasize the importance of inclusive education initiatives.

In countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and similar contexts grappling with multifaceted challenges, including security threats, geographical barriers, and political instability, the traditional approach of merely expanding formal schooling proves insufficient. Despite the presence of numerous vacant school buildings, governmental hesitancy persists in delegating autonomy to local organizations to manage these facilities independently. Concurrently, urban-centric

educational investments often overshadow the needs of rural and remote communities, perpetuating educational disparities.

Sole reliance on conventional schooling fails to address the educational requirements of marginalized children engaged in household economic activities, child labour, and livelihood-driven pursuits for survival. Recognizing this reality, it is imperative to explore alternative pathways for reaching underserved populations in inaccessible regions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the urgency of adopting inclusive education practices, showcasing the potential of non-formal education modalities to reach marginalized children. As evidenced by emerging best practices (CSO GRALE 2021), the confusion surrounding strategic priorities necessitates a decisive shift towards inclusive education, prioritizing accessibility and equity over blind expansion, whether with or without external donor support.

6.4.3 Confusion between Formal Education and Non-Formal Education

At various levels, it is strikingly evident that a clear and practical distinction between Formal Education and NFE is lacking. Through classroom observations and conversations with teachers and providers, it becomes apparent that there is a general lack of understanding regarding the differences and instructional approaches between the two educational forms. This situation is particularly prevalent among primary school teachers who find themselves teaching in NFE centres. They tend to employ similar traditional teacher-based teaching methods in both Non-Formal and formal primary classes, despite the significant differences in the composition of learners, with NFE classes often accommodating students of various age groups. When teachers, teacher trainers, supervisors, and monitoring and evaluation personnel were asked about the key distinctions they bear in mind when teaching multi-age learners and training teachers for NFE classes, a selection of their responses highlights the confusion:

- **Responses from Teachers and Trainers:**

- *"Teaching is teaching, whether you're in a formal primary school or a NFE centre. Textbooks often contain very similar content to those used in formal primary classes."*
- *"My role is to deliver the textbook content. Monitoring and assessment are responsibilities of the supervisory staff."*
- *"We typically use a lecture-based method, reading directly from the textbooks. Students follow our lead, copying and listening. Their duty is to listen and follow instructions."*
- *"I see no significant difference in my teaching approach."*
- *"I still fail to understand why the term 'Non-Formal' is used, especially when the resources and procedures align closely with those in formal education, except for the duration."*
- *"If the curriculum can be completed in a shorter duration, why not deliver the entire primary course in three years instead of five through NFE? This would allow us to extend access to more underserved groups."*

(Extract from field notes diaries 2003, and 2004)

These candid perspectives from stakeholders underscore the pervasive confusion at all levels within the educational landscape. Teachers and trainers struggle to articulate the differences between the two forms of education, employing similar teaching methodologies and assessment practices. To fully harness the potential strengths of NFE, it is imperative to rectify this misuse of the term "Non-Formal" and establish clear differentiations in educational documents, particularly in teacher training and assessment materials. Failure to do so will prevent the comprehensive exploration and utilization of NFE's inherent advantages.

6.4.4. Confusion between Documented Curriculum and Implemented Curriculum

Throughout my extensive career in NFE in Pakistan, I had the opportunity to interview thousands of NFE centres and engage in discussions with teachers. During these interactions, I often posed the question, "*Have you seen the document referred to as the curriculum?*" The overwhelmingly common response was a resounding "*NO.*" A brief study I conducted in 2022 supported this observation, revealing that more than 98% of teachers, teacher trainers, and implementing partners had not laid eyes on the curriculum document (Rafat Nabi 2022) The hope that these individuals might be acquainted with crucial elements such as Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), assessment techniques, and other significant components stipulated in the NFE curriculum of Pakistan appears increasingly unrealistic. For many, the curriculum equates to nothing more than a textbook. Even the wealth of knowledge concealed within the chapters of these textbooks, closely linked to the specified SLOs, remains largely untapped.

While claims are made that teaching guides are furnished to aid teachers in their work within Non-Formal Education centres, during my visits, I consistently failed to encounter these guides in use or reference for teaching. Thus, a notable disparity arises between the documented curriculum, which outlines the intended educational content and goals, the envisioned curriculum, and what is actually implemented in the classroom setting. This incongruity prompts serious questions regarding the purpose of curriculum development and its subsequent printing, only to be shelved in government offices.

Additionally, although the curriculum is accessible on government websites, the language barrier poses another formidable obstacle. The material is typically presented in English, discouraging the average teacher from attempting to access it, let alone motivating them to read and utilize it effectively. This conspicuous misalignment between the documented curriculum and its implementation in the classroom is akin to the vast separation between the North and South poles.

It is paramount that conscious efforts be made across all levels of the educational landscape, particularly among implementing partners, NGOs, and government entities engaged in capacity-building initiatives. These efforts should address the profound disconnect between the intended curriculum and its practical implementation.

6.4.5. Confusion between Developing Learning Materials for Decoration and for Enhancing Learning

Another significant source of confusion that came to my attention pertains to the development and use of learning materials within NFE centres. In the majority of NFE centres, learning materials are designed by teachers and learners, and these materials are subsequently displayed on the walls

of the centre, regardless of whether the centre is housed in a proper room or a modest, makeshift setting. Stepping into one of these centres can create a visually impressive experience due to the presence of these materials, contributing to what might be described as a "print-rich environment." However, the practical use of these materials raises serious questions.

When teachers and students were asked why they created these materials and how they used them, their responses echoed a recurring theme across various centres. Their responses can be succinctly summarized as follows:

A few participants added that this decoration served the purpose of pleasing visitors.

When questioned about how these materials were employed in teaching, the predominant response was consistent across the different centres:

"We were instructed during our training and by our implementing partners to adorn our centres, and we did so with the assistance of students and parents. Typically, we engage in this activity once a year."

"We rarely use these materials, if at all." This is because teachers were not trained in their use, and during classroom observations, this point is not addressed by trainers or monitors regarding the effective use of materials in enhancing learning.

It is apparent that students, parents, teachers, and learners possess the skills necessary to create learning materials at minimal or no cost, capitalizing on the abundant resources available in their natural environment in Pakistan. However, these skills remain underutilized, as teachers have not been adequately trained in how to transform their learning spaces into print-rich environments and integrate these materials into their teaching practices. Instead, these materials are typically showcased for decorative purposes rather than being effectively incorporated into the learning process.

This notable confusion in the use of learning materials must be addressed within the training process and continuously monitored during follow-up visits by implementing agencies. Moreover, teachers, parents, and learners should be actively encouraged to continuously develop learning resources and employ them to enhance the learning experience. The incorporation of a print-rich environment not only captures learners' attention but also fosters their engagement, participation, and enjoyment, ultimately contributing to a stress-free and conducive learning atmosphere.

6.4.6. Confusion between Testing and Assessment

Despite the comprehensive coverage of testing and assessment techniques within the NFE curriculum, a striking dearth of awareness characterizes the educators' understanding of these methods. This is primarily due to the limited accessibility of the curriculum document. When asked about their approach to evaluating their teaching and their students' progress, a common response among teachers is a conspicuous unfamiliarity with the concept of assessment. Their perspective often emphasizes the discrete nature of testing, isolated from the teaching-learning process. Testing, as they see it, is a distinct and detached exercise, typically culminating in the binary classification of students as pass or fail, administered in accordance with standard examination procedures.

The learners, however, harbour reservations about this prevalent testing and examination paradigm. During informal discussions, a myriad of concerns emerged:

Assessment Blindness: *The prevailing sentiment among learners is encapsulated in their plea for teachers to recognize the full extent of their capabilities. They assert that the current testing framework falls short in appraising their holistic knowledge and skills.*

Reproductive Testing: *Students express frustration that the existing testing methodology primarily encourages rote memorization and reproduction of facts rather than comprehensive comprehension.*

Inadequate Evaluation: *Learners argue that test results offer limited insights into their diverse skills, overall learning journey, and depth of knowledge.*

The Imperative for Innovation: *Many voice their desire for an alternative assessment model that better encapsulates their multifaceted capabilities and contributions.*

Undermining Holistic Development: *The prevailing testing structure is seen as detrimental to their broader learning experience, social aptitude, and holistic knowledge.*

Token Benefit: *Learners acknowledge that, within this system, the most tangible outcome they derive is a certificate, downplaying the recognition of their true potential.*

Unrealized Potential: *It is their collective conviction that they possess an untapped reservoir of knowledge and skills which conventional tests fail to capture, contributing to a palpable atmosphere of despondency and anxiety.*

These candid expressions of learners illuminate the pressing concern of an underlying ambiguity in comprehending the intricate dynamics of testing and assessment within the realm of non-formal education. It is paramount that this quandary is not merely acknowledged but systematically addressed. For this purpose, a structured approach to capacity-building, underpinned by a redefined philosophy of assessment, must be instated. Additionally, it underscores the urgency of implementing frequent, low-pressure assessments, buttressed by meticulous record-keeping, to better nurture the learners' educational journey.

6.4.7. Confusion between 'Involving' and 'Keeping Away' Parents

In the domain of formal schooling in Pakistan, a prevailing notion among parents is that educational institutions and teachers tend to keep them at arm's length, summoning them primarily for general parent-teacher meetings or in the event of concerns about their children. The perception remains that parents are often marginalized in educational planning and their inherent strengths left untapped. Regrettably, this perception aligns with the stark reality. However, within the context of NFE, where a significant proportion of attendees are young adults or individuals bound by early marriage customs, the potential for leveraging parental involvement as a substantial asset becomes evident.

A substantial body of research and experience underscores the pivotal role played by parents and community members in fortifying the success of educational centres. The strength of such partnerships, founded on mutual trust and commitment, catalyses a multifaceted transformation. It not only contributes to the enhancement of literacy rates but also significantly improves access to education in remote, underserved, and challenging areas. A paradigmatic illustration of this

synergistic dynamic unfolds in the Northern regions of Pakistan and Kashmir, where educational initiatives have thrived on the active participation of parents and the community.

Prominent exemplars such as the Rupani Foundation's Parents Programme, the Aga Khan Foundation School Improvement Programme, community-based initiatives, and programs by HANDS, Society for Community Support for Primary Education in Balochistan (SCSPEB), and Bunyad Literacy Community Council (BLCC) highlight the significant potential of parental engagement. Fostering such involvement is not a matter of ambiguity but a necessity that should be vigorously promoted. Empowering parents to leverage their skills and strengths can create a supportive atmosphere, effectively bridging the gap between educational institutions and the communities they serve.

The seven confusions highlighted above are undeniably prevalent within the field of NFE. It is imperative that we engage in open discussions, actively address these issues, and incorporate them into our training programs. The outcomes of this endeavour are bound to be nothing short of magical. Let us embark on this journey with a fresh perspective and a positive spirit.

Chapter 7

Dispelling Myths Surrounding Non-Formal Education

7.1. Introduction

Myths are not just ancient stories or folklore passed down through generations; they are pervasive narratives that shape our understanding of the world and influence our beliefs and behaviours. Myths often blur the lines between fact and fiction, weaving together elements of history, culture, and imagination.

In this chapter, we embark on a journey to explore the myths that permeate the realm of education, particularly within the context of NFE. These myths, deeply entrenched in societal norms, cultural beliefs, and educational paradigms, have far-reaching implications for policy, practice, and the experiences of learners.

Through critical analysis and empirical evidence, we seek to challenge and dispel these myths, uncovering the truths that lie beneath the surface. From myths about the effectiveness of NFE to the belief in the superiority of formal schooling, each myth presents an opportunity for reflection and reevaluation of our assumptions about education.

As we delve into the complexities of these myths, we invite readers to question their own beliefs and assumptions, to engage in dialogue, and to envision a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape. By confronting and debunking myths, we can pave the way for innovation, transformation, and the realization of the full potential of education for all.

7.2. Myth

The term "myth" traces its origins to the Greek word "mythos," encompassing a spectrum of meanings ranging from "word" to "saying," and from "story" to "fiction." The unassailable validity of mythos can be juxtaposed with the concept of logos (source: Britannica.com). This word, with its associations of perception, comprehension, validity, and truth, is one that invites scrutiny, debate, and challenge. World history encyclopaedias enumerate various types of myths and classify them into three main categories: Aetiological, Historical, and Psychological (source: worldhistory.org)

In accordance with my own interpretation, "myths can be defined as narratives steeped in tradition, lore, and personal beliefs. Some myths may possess factual underpinnings, while others are entirely fictional. A myth is an integral component of folklore, characterized by a lack of concrete physical evidence, often intertwined with mystical elements, and featuring a captivating narrative that encourages repeated retelling to an engaged audience. The prevalent storyline in myths typically centres around the victory of good over evil, resulting in the overall betterment of humanity through the actions of the principal figure. As myths unfold, they frequently become nearly indistinguishable from actual historical events, thereby heightening interest in the narrative content and its continued retelling."

In the realm of education, particularly in NFE, I have observed that numerous myths prevail, cling to tenaciously without questioning or introspection. These myths often involve tales that elucidate the world and human experiences, misapprehensions, and beliefs rooted in unverified realities. Regrettably, some of these myths can be traced back to political and religious paradigms. They reflect our partiality towards established values, conventional educational approaches, and our reluctance to entertain alternative methods beyond formal education traditions.

When false beliefs or lore are perpetuated over generations, passed from powerful authorities to less influential individuals, incorporated into official documents, and etched into the collective consciousness, these myths solidify and become unquestioned truths.

In the context of NFE, I have identified many such myths that are broadly accepted based on societal hierarchies and cultural backgrounds. They perpetuate the notion that the wisdom of elders and superiors is infallible, leaving no room for dissent. These prevailing myths often remain untested and unchallenged. The peril lies in the fact that policies and programs built upon these myths can have detrimental or ineffectual consequences at all levels, from policy development to capacity building, program implementation, and, most importantly, at the learner level. This, in turn, can undermine the success of these programs.

Based on my extensive field experience, thorough review of existing literature, and examination of official documents, I confidently assert that the prevailing myths within the realm of NFE possess the capacity to detrimentally influence policies and programs. These myths not only impede the exploration of the strengths and potentialities inherent in alternative educational methodologies but also neglect to capitalize on the talents of countless individuals who could flourish through unconventional educational pathways. Millions of children who lack access to formal schooling or are excluded from early grades harbour natural abilities and talents that could be cultivated through alternative educational approaches. The examples of Albert Einstein, Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, and Henry Ford of Ford Motor Company serve as poignant illustrations among many, demonstrating individuals who did not pursue formal education yet thrived through NFE methods. Therefore, it is imperative that we consider alternative educational avenues to reach those beyond the scope of traditional schooling.

7.2.1. Myth 1: Out-of-School Children: Understanding Illiteracy and Basic Work-Related Literacy

A widely held perception is that illiteracy equates to the inability to carry out essential tasks. In this context, illiteracy primarily refers to individuals who have not received formal education and, consequently, lack traditional literacy skills. However, my experiences in both my home country and various developed and underdeveloped nations have shown me that numerous individuals, despite not having formal schooling, possess the ability to read, write, and comprehend their native language, and sometimes even the languages of the countries where they work. Their contributions to society are indispensable; removing them from their jobs could disrupt social and economic progress. Coombs, P. H. (1985) supports my findings and provides examples such as plumbers, vegetable sellers, and glass and bangle vendors, who not only contribute significantly to society but often outperform school graduates (Rafat Nabi et al. 2009). They acquired literacy through non-formal and informal educational channels. Skills related to work, as well as interest or need-

based literacies, can be acquired without attending formal schools. Many such examples exist in our immediate surroundings, and talent programs in the media further substantiate this point (Rafat Nabi, et al 2009). Therefore, it's essential to recognize that basic literacy and numeracy can be achieved through alternative NF approaches. In countries like Pakistan and other underdeveloped nations, the government's failure to provide access to formal schooling and the lack of interest from the private sector, which often sees education as a business opportunity, exacerbate the issue. It's imperative to break the myth that schools are the sole source of education; exploring alternative approaches is crucial, especially for basic primary-level programs

Hence, with a high degree of confidence, I contend that over 95% of such individuals are not truly illiterate but may not have completed their formal schooling. Therefore, literacy acquired through formal schooling should not be the sole yardstick for evaluating one's capabilities. It is essential to recognize that there are alternative pathways to education, which should not be underestimated or undervalued. In Pakistan, for instance, a nation that has struggled for 76 years since its independence to provide mass access to formal education, it remains evident that not everyone can be accommodated within the formal education system. The reality is that a significant portion of the population remains excluded. Therefore, it is time to dispel the myth that literacy can only be obtained through formal schooling and that illiteracy signifies an inability to perform essential tasks. The concept of illiteracy warrants further scrutiny and research. Highly qualified individuals can also be illiterate and unable to perform certain tasks in specific circumstances. Two examples from my field notes illustrate this point:

Example 1:

"In September 2022, I visited a NFE centre in a rural and disadvantaged area of Sindh Province with a foreign guest who was highly educated and possessed rich international experience in the fields of formal and non-formal education. However, she was unfamiliar with the Urdu and Sindhi languages, which were the national and provincial languages and the mediums of instruction at the centre. She was unable to effectively communicate and required a translator. One of the learners, who seemed greatly impressed by the visitor's overall demeanour, whispered to a colleague, a comment that I overheard, 'She is just like us; perhaps they don't have NFE centres in her country.'"

Example 2:

"Once, while travelling with my official colleagues in rural Sindh, the car broke down due to a technical fault. We managed to summon a mechanic who arrived promptly and resolved the issue within 10 minutes. Curiously, I asked the mechanic if he had received a formal education or training. He replied, 'I never attended formal school, but I did attend a community-supported school where I learned to read, write, and perform basic maths. I then worked in a workshop, where I honed my technical skills through hands-on experience. I am now more skilled than many engineers, as they are averse to doing this kind of work. I earn more than many degree-holders.'"

(Cited from the meticulously curated pages of my field notes diary)

These straightforward yet illustrative examples underscore my point that even highly educated individuals may encounter situations where they are unable to perform tasks typically associated

with literacy. Hence, it is imperative to reconsider the definitions of "illiteracy" and "literacy," and challenge the associated myths.

7.2.2 Myth 2: Non-Formal Education is a Replica of Formal Education

The myth that NFE is a mere replica of formal education is a notion that requires debunking. In common parlance, a replica denotes something closely resembling the original. It implies an exact or near-exact imitation of the initial form. When renowned and high-end designs and fabric patterns are made available in more affordable materials for the average or lower-income segments, they are often referred to as "replicas," indicating copies of the originals.

During my various visits, I was disheartened to hear disparaging and undervalued statements about NFE from different groups of people. On numerous occasions, when I asked learners, teachers, community members, implementing bodies or NGOs, and government officials to define NFE, their responses were regrettably consistent with the idea that NFE represented a *"less expensive version of formal education,"* a *"means of providing basic education to rural and underprivileged individuals without the trappings of formal schools,"* or a *"second-rate form of education that does not yield the same outcomes as formal schooling."*

The most poignant and truthful response came from a 13 or 14-year-old learner: *"It's education for poor people, but we're thankful for the opportunity. Once I can read, write, and obtain a certificate, I'll open my own garage because I'm already working as a car mechanic's apprentice. I just hope the NFE centre will also teach us different techniques and how to use ICT."*

(Extract from field notes diaries)

This last response from the mechanic not only serves as advice for planners and policymakers but also highlights the potential and benefits of NFE. I wholeheartedly reject this myth based on my experiences, knowledge, and research. I have witnessed the transformative power of NFE when it incorporates the right ingredients tailored to the learners' needs. This myth must be addressed and thoroughly discussed in all official forums, emphasizing the strengths of NFE and dispelling the misunderstanding that NFE and formal education are in competition with each other. Existing research has already highlighted the potential of NFE to bring about positive socio-economic changes in society (Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, 1965; ICED studies, Manzoor Ahmed and Coombs, P.H & Ahmed, M (1974); Rafat Nabi et al. 2009; Shaheen Atiq-ur-Rehman, Bunyad Pakistan, as mentioned in many of her speeches).

7.2.3 Myth 3: NFE is Only for the Poor and Resembles a Linda/ Lunda Bazar (Second-hand Market)

"Landa/Lunda Bazar" derives its name and legacy from *"Linda Market,"* established by the philanthropic British lady, Linda. Linda's goodwill venture involved collecting clothing donations, including sweaters, jackets, and shoes, which were distributed free of charge to those in need in the Subcontinent, offering essential protection during severe weather. (Definition of Lunda Bazar: <https://hiraamjad.wordpress.com>)

Today, *"Lunda"* or *"Landa Bazar,"* a term in Urdu, is commonly used in South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan, to describe second-hand or thrift markets. The term *"Landa"* originates from

the Hindi word "lund," signifying "rag" or "torn cloth." These markets offer a diverse range of pre-owned clothing, shoes, books, accessories, and household items for sale at lower prices. This concept encompasses a wide range of items, providing an affordable option for shoppers seeking value and unique finds. (Riaz Haq. 2018 December, Lunda Bazar: Wikipedia and <https://www.riazhaq.com/2018/12/pakistan-is-worlds-biggest-importer-of.html>)

This myth is an offshoot of the second myth, and it was only articulated in one centre on the outskirts of Karachi by a single student, albeit supported by others who nodded in agreement. The learner remarked, "*NFE centres are like Karachi's 'Lunda bazar,' where poor and disadvantaged individuals go to acquire inexpensive yet high-quality items. We are grateful for this opportunity and, in many ways, are better off than those in formal education.*"

When I inquired further and asked for examples of why NFE was superior to formal education, all the other learners chimed in, providing a collective endorsement of NFE. The responses are summarized below. It was particularly gratifying to note that these responses came from so-called poor, illiterate, and disadvantaged individuals, as previously documented in research literature and supported by leading academics, researchers, NGOs and policymakers. This, in itself, underscores the hidden potential of NFE, which can and should become an integral part of teaching methodologies and programs:

- *Cost-effective*
- *Safe*
- *Can be organized in any location, even under a tree*
- *Accepted by parents*
- *Flexible timing*
- *Quality of learning and learning environment*
- *Promotes socialization, enabling learners to acquire knowledge beyond mere literacy, including cooking recipes, local disease treatments, henna patterns, knitting, and more.*

7.2.4. Myth 4: Primary Teachers Can Effectively Teach NFE learners

In the realms of educational discourse, a prevailing belief, often cloaked in the guise of certainty, asserts that primary teachers possess the innate ability to effectively educate NFE learners of varying ages, ranging from 6 to 16 or 18 years old, congregated within a single educational setting. This myth, like a shadow cast by the setting sun, permeates the corridors of educational philosophy, influencing perceptions and practices alike.

Yet, amidst the tapestry of educational realities, a distinction must be drawn between myth and misunderstanding. While myth embodies narratives and beliefs deeply ingrained within the cultural fabric, misunderstanding emerges from a misinterpretation or misapplication of these beliefs. In the case of primary teachers' effectiveness in NFE, it is essential to discern between the two.

In truth, the landscape of NFE presents a myriad of challenges that primary teachers often grapple with. Many are primarily trained and experienced in instructing single grades, unaccustomed to the complexities inherent in guiding multi-age groups within NFE centres. Through my own observations and field experiences, I have witnessed firsthand the struggles faced by primary

teachers in comprehending the underlying philosophy and methodologies of NFE. Their conventional pedagogical approaches, often centred around Listening, Reading, and Copying (LRC) from textbooks or the board, may inadvertently contribute to high dropout rates and hinder the success of the NFE approach.

To unravel the threads of this myth, it is imperative to shed light on the realities that underpin it. Donors, in their benevolent endeavours, must diligently scrutinize the experiences of NGOs engaged in NFE initiatives. Currently, many such organizations lack the requisite experience in navigating the complexities of NFE. Rectifying these misunderstandings demands concerted efforts from professional development departments within governments, universities, and NGOs to invest in capacity building tailored to the unique demands of NFE.

Doubters and seekers of truth are encouraged to embark on journeys to NFE centres across Pakistan, particularly in regions such as Sindh and Baluchistan. Here, amidst the bustling corridors of learning, the veil of myth may be lifted, revealing the intricate tapestry of educational realities.

In conclusion, while the belief in the efficacy of primary teachers in NFE may persist as a myth, it is essential to recognize the nuances that distinguish myth from misunderstanding. By acknowledging the challenges faced by primary teachers and the necessity for tailored training and support, we take a step closer towards dispelling misunderstandings and embracing the truths that shape the landscape of education.

My journey through the landscape of education has been quite muddled, and these myths only further cloud the waters. It is imperative to comprehend that primary teachers require a proper understanding of and training in the philosophy of NFE to teach effectively. Training institutions must also enhance their capacity in this area.

In the course of both formal and informal discussions with learners at the Formal Schools and NFCs, a question emerged: *"Are you content with the quality of education you receive at your centre?"* The responses were varied, with some answering in the affirmative, while others responded with hesitation. However, as the conversation delved deeper into the changes they desired to see in their teachers' teaching methods, a marked contrast began to emerge between the responses of the younger children, typically between the ages of 6 and 10, and the older youth, aged between 10 and 16.

When asked about their satisfaction with the quality of teaching at their centre, a recurring theme emerged in the learners' responses. Their answers collectively underscored a profound understanding:

"This represents our sole opportunity to access education. By completing an equivalent course here, we may unlock further educational pathways. We find it acceptable, as it, at the very least, culminates in the acquisition of a valuable certificate."

These responses highlighted the learners' shared recognition of the vital role played by the NFE centres in their educational journeys. To them, these centres symbolized a unique gateway to

education, with the certificates earned holding significant value. These certificates not only signified the culmination of their efforts but also opened doors to broader educational horizons.

Conversely, the responses from the older youth, aged between 10 to 16, were characterized by candour and fearlessness. Their answers collectively conveyed a potent message:

- *"Teachers must acknowledge that we are not children and, therefore, should not treat us as such."*
- *"Leverage our knowledge and experiences."*
- *"We, alongside the younger children, are not idle. Treat us as individuals capable of movement, conversation, sharing, and assisting our younger peers."*
- *"We often learn more from each other and engage in greater socialization when the teacher arrives late or is occupied with other tasks."*
- *"In the teacher's absence, we consider it the best opportunity to learn from one another."*
- *"The teacher primarily serves as a means for us to obtain a certificate upon completing each cycle or phase."*

(Excerpts from field notes diaries, recorded during visits to schools across Pakistan and Afghanistan, capture candid conversations with teachers).

7.2.5. Myth 5: The "One Size Fits All" Fallacy

In the realm of NFE, renowned pioneers such as Professor Alan Rogers, Professor Brian Street, Professor Coombs, and Professor Freire Paulo, along with many others, passionately contend that the concept of "one size fits all" is fundamentally flawed. They adamantly assert that the approaches employed in formal education cannot be seamlessly transplanted into the diverse landscape of NFE. This myth, one that has persistently held its ground, demands dissection.

Our 'one-size-all'-fits education system with unrealistic targets, based on the false idea that every student in a given class is performing at the same level academically, behaviourally, and socially and that they all need the same thing (<https://usforthem2020.substack.com>) The existing paradigms governing curriculum, instructional materials, and textbooks blatantly disregard NFE when crafting and formulating educational resources. In a country like Pakistan, where 62.27% of the population resides in rural areas (World Bank Report 2024), the content of textbooks and resource materials remains intrinsically urban-centric, bearing little relevance to the rural environment. Formal education, with its standardized and uniform approach, erroneously presumes that the learning needs and general circumstances of all individuals and regions are essentially identical. However, such a "one size fits all" approach inherently lacks sensitivity towards the unique social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, and ecological intricacies that define rural communities. Furthermore, the 'one size fits all' approach not only ignores the diverse needs and backgrounds of NFE learners but also neglects the concept of personalized learning. Personalized learning, a growing trend in modern education, recognizes that each student is unique, with individual learning styles, paces, and requirements. NFE, with its flexibility and community involvement, is ideally positioned to embrace personalized learning approaches, tailoring education to the specific needs of learners, thus making it even more effective.

The planning of NFE often mirrors that of Formal Education, leading to a fragmented and sporadic process. This mirroring, spearheaded by the architects or sponsors of formal education, overlooks the core features of NFE, including its inherent flexibility, versatility, adaptability, and the active participation of the community. Consequently, NFE planning fails to capitalize on its strengths and may result in disjointed initiatives that do not effectively cater to the diverse needs of learners or communities.

But perhaps the most persistent and insidious aspect of this myth is the expectation that NFE should merely replicate the content and skills found in mainstream education for the supposed benefit of those less fortunate, who have been denied access to formal schooling. This misguided myth poses a significant threat to the versatility and success of NFE. It's essential to recognize that while this might be a noble goal, it should not be the sole objective. Unfortunately, data remains elusive regarding the percentage of NFE graduates who progress to middle schools in Pakistan, but anecdotal experiences strongly suggest that this transition is quite rare. Given this reality, the question emerges: why persist with the one-size-fits-all formula?

It is imperative that we shatter this myth, thereby paving the way for fresh ideas and innovative concepts to permeate the field of NFE. By doing so, we can harness the untapped potential and strengths inherent in non-formal education and steer it towards a more prosperous and impactful future.

7.2.6. Myths 6: School Literacy vs. NFC Literacy- Unveiling the Truth (Is School Literacy Superior in Terms of Quality Over NFC Literacy?)

The prevailing myth that school-based literacy is superior to literacy achieved through alternative means, such as Community-Based Education Centres, Home-Based Schools, Mobile Centres, Tent schools, and Tree Shades NFCs, has long cast a shadow over the field of education. While experience suggests that this myth lacks a solid foundation, a small-scale study conducted by Rafat Nabi (2022) sought to put this myth to the test. To ascertain the truth, Rafat Nabi randomly selected 4 to 5 students from formal schools in Grade 5 and their equivalents from Non-Formal Centres (NFCs) and administered an assessment in the style of ASER. The ASER report is the largest citizen led: household-based initiative that aims to provide reliable estimates on the schooling status of Children aged 3 -16 years residing in all rural and few urban districts of Pakistan.

It was indeed a modest study. To evaluate reading abilities, students were provided with a passage from the Grade 3 Urdu/Sindhi prescribed textbook/outside the text book and asked to read it. The analysis of responses is presented below:

Reading and Writing Assessment Analysis in % Sample

- Geographical sampling: 3 rural villages with no formal schools, 6 semi-rural towns, 6 from the suburbs of large cities, and 5 villages where formal schools and NFCs coexist.
- Total schools: 20 (10 Formal Schools and 10 Non-Formal Centres)

- Total Students: 100 (50 students from formal schools, including 25 girls, and 50 from NFCs, with 30 girls)

a. Reading assessment in % from Course Textbook

(Comparative Analysis of Reading Competency in Formal Primary Schools Grade-V and NFE Centres Grade V Equivalent Using Course Textbooks)

Assessment Criteria	Formal Primary School Grade V	NFE Centre Equivalent of Grade V
1. Can read without any mistake and with reasonable speed from course textbook	13%	17%
2. Can Read with two to three mistakes from textbook	29%	32%
3. Can read with 5 to 8 mistakes	26%	28%
4. Can read only simple words	19%	12%
5. Cannot read at all	13%	11%

b. Reading assessment in % from outside the Course Textbook

(Comparative Analysis of Reading Competency in Formal Primary Schools Grade-V and NFE Centres Grade V Equivalent Beyond Course Textbooks)

Assessment Criteria	Formal Primary School Grade V	NFE Centre Equivalent of Grade V
1. Can read a paragraph from outside the textbook with no mistake	8%	13%
2. Can Read with two to three mistakes from the outside textbook	24%	29%
3. Can read with 5 to 8 mistakes	31%	33%
4. Can read only simple words	26%	17%
5. Cannot read at all	11%	8%

c. Writing assessment (They were asked to write 5 lines of any topic of their choice)

(Comparative Analysis of Writing Competency in Formal Primary Schools Grade-V and NFE Centres Grade V Equivalent)

Assessment Criteria	Formal Primary School Grade V	NFE Centre Equivalent of Grade V
1. Written without mistake	6%	9%
2. Written with 3 to 5 mistakes	22%	27%
3. Written with 5 to 8 mistakes	38%	42%
4. Written with 8 to 10 mistakes	27%	16%
5. Cannot write at all	7%	6%

This small-scale study indicates that there is no basis for the prevailing myth. In fact, the reading and writing skills of learners in NFCs are notably superior. This is particularly evident among youths aged between 12 and 16 years. While this study is limited in scope and further research is needed to reach a scientifically conclusive judgement, its findings align with those presented in the ASER 2021 report.

These disconcerting findings underscore the inadequacy of efforts and donor-funded programs. It is a serious concern that the existing system is falling short of effectiveness. Therefore, it is imperative to dispel the myth that school-based literacy is superior to literacy achieved through alternative means. Donors and implementing partners/ NGOs must take this issue seriously and encourage alternative pathways to provide access to education.

It is a well-established fact that current efforts and the formal schooling approach are insufficient to provide basic education to those who are out of reach. Moreover, the literacy skills of formal school students are not superior to those of non-formal centre learners. This small-scale study further emphasizes the superior reading skills of NFC learners.

As a parent aptly expressed during a conversation, *'Why confine yourselves to a choice between formal schools and non-formal centres when there are numerous other alternatives to attain basic literacy and numeracy, as we did in our generation?'* He then illustrated this notion on the floor, a concept that deserves consideration by donors, policymakers, implementing partners/ NGOs, and relevant authorities.

7.2.7 Myth 7: Textbooks Are the Sole Path to Literacy Skills

There exists a prevailing myth suggesting that literacy skills can only flourish within the structured boundaries of formal education. This system, highly centralized, strictly controlled, and standardized, is prevalent in countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan. It leaves little room for innovative, creative, or flexible approaches to boost literacy skills beyond the confines of government and private school "prescribed" textbooks.

Textbooks are developed by the authorized government department, the Textbook Board, and are extensively used in government formal and NFE schools and centres. Teachers are obligated to use textbooks as the primary resource for instruction, as teacher training programs, instructional methods, assessments, and examinations overwhelmingly focus on the content within these approved textbooks.

In government schools and NFCs, primary teachers, under the guidance of their supervisors, have come to believe that literacy can only be achieved through the content of textbooks. However, it's important to recognize that exclusive reliance on textbooks may limit the effectiveness of literacy instruction and hinder students' overall progress.

My firm conviction, however, is that an exclusive focus on textbook-based literacy can hinder students' progress. This approach discourages exploration of other effective and engaging methods for developing literacy skills. Renowned educators Freire, Paulo (1970) and Rogers, A. (2003) have lent support to this viewpoint "Textbooks" should serve as guides, not as the sole means of

instruction for teachers in both formal classrooms and NFCs. Based on my extensive experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly in rural areas, I have witnessed that teachers can employ various methods to develop literacy and numeracy skills when they understand the core language skills students need. These examples below add strength and confidence to my belief that exclusive reliance on "textbooks" can create mental barriers for students, making them believe they can only read what's inside the "textbook," even when the words are the same.

Story 1: Innovation Amidst Adversity: Teaching Language Beyond Textbooks in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, administrative and political reasons often hindered schools from receiving "textbooks." Resourceful and enthusiastic teachers devised their own innovative ways to teach language. Some collected old books and transcribed paragraphs from "textbooks" onto flip charts. Others wrote paragraphs directly on the board for reading and writing exercises. During my visit to a Girls Annex, a type of home school where girls were registered in neighbouring government schools due to the security reasons, I observed a teacher's remarkable methods of teaching language in Grade 4. In just 40 minutes, she employed three distinct techniques:

1. She divided the class into four groups and appointed a group leader with strong reading and writing skills. She then distributed four cards: two contained paragraphs from the "textbook" with challenging words underlined, and the other two featured paragraphs from external sources, which refer to materials other than the prescribed textbooks, such as supplementary reading materials, articles, or online resources. The groups, led by their appointed leaders, were tasked with reading and discussing all four paragraphs. While the students were engrossed in this task, the teacher moved among the groups to provide assistance when required.
2. Following the reading task, she posed comprehension questions and delved into spelling and the meanings of challenging words. The class was vibrant, and the response levels were remarkably high.
3. She encouraged the students to select 10 to 15 words from their surroundings, with "surroundings" referring to their environment or immediate surroundings, such as their home, school, or neighbourhood. The students were instructed to compose a story or paragraph with the help of their parents or siblings, which was assigned as homework.

After the class, during a brief meeting with her, I commended her teaching methods and asked her how she decided to go beyond "textbooks." Her eye-opening response was, *"I am teaching them language not textbook content. Content can be drawn from various sources. We live in a challenging area where "textbooks" are not always available, so I collect old "textbooks" and incorporate other relevant reading materials. Words are drawn from both "textbooks" and the environment. Necessity is the mother of invention."* This profound lesson was imparted by a rural teacher in a home school, residing in an exceedingly challenging, insecure, and difficult environment. It strongly reaffirms that "textbooks" are not the exclusive source for teaching language.

Story 2: Unconventional Pathways to Literacy: Insights from a Rural Sindh Non-Formal School

During my visit to a NF school situated in the heart of rural Sindh, I had the privilege of observing a meaningful exchange between a teacher and her eager students. The teacher was inquiring about their recent homework, specifically asking what they had been reading at home and where they had found their reading materials. This simple question sparked a lively conversation among the students, unveiling their unique and creative approaches to learning.

The students' responses were both enlightening and heart-warming. Some shared how they had embraced learning opportunities by reading the labels on kitchen grocery items, turning their everyday chores into moments of education. Others talked about the words and phrases they had encountered on the walls of their homes, effectively transforming their modest dwellings into spontaneous classrooms. A few resourceful learners had ingeniously turned the glow of the television screen into a source of knowledge.

Remarkably, a couple of children proudly disclosed that they had been reading old newspapers. Additionally, some students mentioned that their devoted mothers had generously supplied old letters for their children to practice reading.

These innovative learning methods in rural NFCs serve as beacons of enlightenment, guiding the way to knowledge. The teachers in these settings are more than educators; they are true torchbearers, leading their students towards the joys of literacy.

These examples illuminate the students' ingenuity and resourcefulness, as well as the unwavering dedication of teachers in NFCs. They underscore that literacy skills can be nurtured through unconventional means, extending beyond the confines of traditional textbooks. While textbooks undoubtedly play a vital role, this narrative emphasizes the importance of recognizing and integrating creative and resourceful learning methods into the broader educational discourse.

Story 3: Empowering Discovery: Reading Beyond the Textbook in a Gilgit Valley School

In a secluded valley in Gilgit, I visited a school where I randomly selected five girls and asked them to open their language "textbooks" to any section. Their response was that they had not read that particular chapter because they had only reached Chapter 14, whereas the current chapter was 17. *When I pointed out that many words in the current chapter were repeated from previous chapters, they initially hesitated and appeared reluctant to try.* Nevertheless, I encouraged them to attempt reading, and one girl took the lead. Within a few minutes, all five girls were able to read the chapter, albeit with a few errors. Their elation and triumphant exclamation, *"We can read, we can read!"* was a remarkable testament to their accomplishment. In a matter of minutes, many other students began to follow suit, expressing their gratitude and excitement by saying, *"Thank you! We didn't know we could read beyond the "textbook." Now, we will be able to read many other things and assist our families.*

Story 4: Beyond the Textbook: Empowering Learners in an NFC in Hyderabad District

In the midst of an informal discussion with NFC's learners, a 14-year-old student approached me with a heartfelt request. She said, *"Madam, could you please convey to our teacher the importance of providing us with reading materials beyond just the textbook? We can navigate through the often monotonous chapters of the textbook with ease. It's disheartening that our teacher doesn't recognize this fact. She merely reads aloud from the textbook and expects us to follow along. She's*

unaware that we can read, and perhaps even more proficiently than her. We are capable of creating our own reading materials."

Intrigued by her skills, I inquired about her sources of learning. She shared, *"I've acquired these skills through home-based learning, with contributions from my relatives and cousins. I can read the Holy Quran, and many of the letters and words within it bear a striking resemblance to what's found in the textbook. My presence in this educational setting is primarily to obtain a certificate. However, I'm far from being alone in my capabilities. Many girls in our class possess similar skills. Regrettably, our teacher tends to underestimate us, perceiving us as if we were 5 or 6-year-olds. The reality is that we are more than capable of assisting the teacher in instructing the younger learners within our class."*

Key Learnings:

In delving into these narratives, we uncover the potent essence of what propels NFE to unparalleled success:

Resourceful Innovation: NFE champions the ingenuity of teachers/ educators who transcend limitations with creative solutions. From Afghanistan's challenging terrain to rural Sindh's resource constraints, teachers ingeniously craft their teaching materials, deftly weaving together a tapestry of resources beyond conventional textbooks.

Dynamic Engagement: At the heart of effective NFE lies dynamic engagement, where students are active participants rather than passive recipients. Through vibrant discussions, hands-on activities, and real-world applications, teachers/educators ignite a flame of curiosity and interaction that illuminates the path to profound understanding.

Community Integration: NFE thrives on community synergy, weaving the fabric of education seamlessly into the social tapestry. In rural enclaves and secluded valleys, students harness the wealth of their surroundings, tapping into familial support and local context to enrich their learning journey.

Empowerment and Ownership: Central to NFE's triumph is the empowerment of learners to steer their own educational voyage. In echoing sentiments from diverse corners, students yearn for autonomy, thirsting for opportunities to shape their learning destiny and carve their scholarly legacy.

In essence, these narratives unveil a symphony of resilience, creativity, and commitment that resonates at the core of NFE. They bear testament to the transformative power of education unfettered by convention, fuelled instead by innovation, collaboration, and an unwavering belief in the boundless potential of every learner and community.

These poignant examples underscore a critical aspect often overlooked: the pivotal role of teachers in fostering literacy skills, especially in environments where the students' reading abilities may not be clearly defined. Despite the absence of textbooks, teachers and volunteers leverage innovative methods to impart invaluable literacy skills in both urban and rural settings. From interactive

storytelling sessions to hands-on language activities, these teachers/educators bridge the gap between formal instruction and practical application. They adapt their teaching approaches to accommodate diverse learning needs and engage students in meaningful literacy experiences. This highlights the pressing need to recognize and amplify the significance of teacher-led initiatives in literacy education, particularly in areas where traditional resources are lacking. By empowering teachers with the tools and support they need, we can ensure that every student, regardless of their initial reading proficiency, has access to quality literacy instruction.

Chapter 8

Setting Expectations: Aspirations and Realities in Non-Formal Education

8.1. Introduction:

In the course of NFCs field visits to rural, remote, and hard-to-reach areas, a chorus of poignant requests resonated from various segments of the rural communities where educational access is either non-existent or severely limited. These earnest appeals, filled with hope, not only affected me deeply but also prompted persistent questions. If I, as an individual, could discern the anguish and urgency, why, I wondered, couldn't governmental bodies, donors, and implementing partners/NGOs hear these pleas and take substantive action to address the glaring lack of basic education? The remedy for their plight is straightforward, requiring minimal financial resources but demanding novel approaches. The following articulates a selection of wishes and queries from randomly chosen communities:

- "We are left out, why, why?"
- "Will education for our children and for us ever become a reality?"
- "Nobody thinks about us. Because we live far away from cities."
- "Why do people not have respectful perceptions about us?"
- "Why has the government not fulfilled its main responsibility over the last many decades?"
- "Do we exist?"
- "Why can we not access education without compromising our lifestyle?"

These poignant statements should serve as a rallying cry, compelling education providers, policymakers, donors, media, philanthropists, and government functionaries to collaborate in addressing the critical needs of the deprived population. It is imperative that the government establishes a platform, supported by all stakeholders, for coordinated efforts. The government alone cannot feasibly address every requirement.

Throughout engagements with community members, IPs/ NGOs, government officials, and donor representatives in both formal and informal settings, a palpable realization emerged that each party held straightforward expectations from the others. Notably, these expectations had not been formally articulated in any structured forum, such as conferences, workshops, or dedicated learning platforms during discussions or meetings. Many of these expectations merit serious consideration, and it is hoped that they will significantly influence the success of NFE projects or programmes. It is opportune to adopt a fresh perspective, fostering innovative and creative thinking beyond conventional boundaries, and to understand each other's viewpoints.

The subsequent section outlines key expectations that have consistently resonated across various contexts in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other nations grappling with literacy challenges. These shared expectations are not exclusive to Pakistan; other countries facing similar issues of illiteracy have expressed comparable hopes, particularly from government bodies and NGOs. This highlights a global consensus on the common aspirations for educational initiatives.

8.2. Expectations in Non-Formal Education (NFE): A Tripartite Perspective

Delving into the intricate tapestry of expectations from communities, government entities, IPs/NGOs, and donors, the landscape of NFE unfolds with a mosaic of nuanced needs and aspirations. This exploration aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the multifaceted expectations, catering to the intricate dynamics involved in ensuring quality education for all.

8.2.1. Expectations of Communities from Government, IPs/ NGOs, and Donors:

8.2.1.1. From Government:

Recognition of Rights: Explicit acknowledgement and adherence to educational rights enshrined in Article 25A of the constitution.

Assurance of Access: Unwavering assurance of education access, supported collaboratively by donor agencies, implementing partners, philanthropists, and communities. This requires exploring diverse, need-based alternatives in NFE, moving away from conventional paths.

Timely Provision of Resources: Crucial expectations for the timely allocation of resources essential for seamless educational initiative functioning.

Inclusive Policy Development: Advocacy for collaborative efforts in policy and procedure development, actively engaging communities. Emphasis on the efficacy of a bottom-up approach over a less effective top-down strategy.

Community Involvement and Training: Active involvement and training of communities to alleviate the government's burden. Belief in local communities effectively managing education centres.

Flexibility in NFE Delivery: Encouragement for flexible policies and a willingness to accept varied approaches in delivering NFE, acknowledging diverse educational needs.

NGO Coordination: Streamlined NGO activities to prevent overlap. Emphasis on collaboration with the government in selecting sites, especially in challenging terrains.

Efficient Learner Registration: Streamlined learner registration processes for NFCs, allowing seamless transitions between Formal and Non-Formal Education centres without unnecessary delays.

Empowering Local Initiatives: Facilitation of an uncomplicated process for communities to initiate centres using their resources, empowering them to take ownership of education.

Vocational and Need-Based Courses: Integration of vocational and need-based courses for youth and out-of-school children in NFE centres. Ensuring community participation in course selection to align with local needs and aspirations.

8.2.1.2. From Implementing Partners /NGOs:

Tailored Training for NFE Teachers: The necessity for the development of specialised training programmes for NFE teachers, tailored to their competencies and accommodating multi-age learner groups. The involvement of literate parents or those with specific talents in the training process is also recommended.

Comprehensive Package for NFC Establishment: Provision of a comprehensive package for establishing NFCs, encompassing essential resources such as policies, curriculum, lesson plan register, list of materials, different kinds of assessment forms and regular feedback from monitoring teams to ensure sustained quality.

Parental Involvement: Promotion of greater coordination, involvement, and participation of parents in academic and non-academic subjects, fostering a print-rich environment both at home and in the centre for holistic learning.

Community Leadership Capacity Building: Initiatives for capacity building of community leaders, enhancing their advocacy, supervision, and management skills in educational and social activities to empower them as active contributors.

Integrated Community Development: Adoption of an integrated approach to community development, leveraging NFCs as platforms for holistic progress encompassing educational and socio-economic dimensions.

Sustainable Engagement: The insistence on sustained engagement and support beyond the project completion, with an emphasis on transforming projects into enduring Community-Based Centres for long-term impact. The imperative for a collaborative approach, avoiding project termination without establishing a sustainable community-based model. Emphasis on continued collaboration for long-term success. The promotion of a community-centric approach, addressing long-term needs rather than short-term project-oriented solutions.

8.2.1.3. From Donors:

Long-Term Commitment: A resounding call for sustained, long-term commitment from donors to prevent communities from being left in limbo post-project.

Financial Assistance Programmes: Encouragement for providers to design post-project financial assistance programmes for communities, ensuring continuity and self-sustainability.

Ongoing Participation and Feedback: A plea for regular, ongoing participation in coordination committees and direct meetings with communities to glean unfiltered feedback, fostering a dynamic feedback loop.

Emphasis on Long-Term Results: Encouragement to transcend short-term, numbers-oriented goals, and a call for a focus on enduring impact and sustained improvement in educational outcomes.

Interest in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Advocacy for genuine interest in reaching challenging and remote areas, acknowledging the inherent difficulties and prioritizing exclusivity.

Support for Research and Best Practices: Provision of assistance for research and studies to document best practices, fostering shared learning and informing future directions for a continually evolving and improving educational landscape.

8.2.2 Expectations of Government from Communities, IPs/NGOs, and Donors:

8.2.2.1. From Communities:

Increased Female Participation: Encourage communities to willingly facilitate increased female participation in educational activities, fostering gender in-exclusivity and equality.

Proactive Advocacy Role: Communities are expected to assume a proactive role in advocating for education with key stakeholders, recognizing their influential position in shaping local educational landscapes.

Community Contribution: Active community involvement is encouraged, including providing space for educational centres, engaging in supervision, and taking on voluntary responsibilities.

Support for Regular Education: Communities are urged to actively support regular school attendance for children, particularly girls, lessening their household burdens and ensuring continuity of education.

Understanding Government Limitations: Recognition and understanding of the government's limitations, particularly in terms of human, financial, and other resources.

Acceptance of Government Facilities: The expectation for communities to accept government facilities and collaborate to ensure the success of their collective efforts.

Assist in Determining Ways: An appeal for communities to actively assist the government in determining possible ways to provide education to their children.

8.2.2.2. From IPs/NGOs:

Access to Quality Education: IPs/NGOs are expected to provide access to quality education, aligning with the overarching goal of enhancing educational standards.

Timely Reporting: Timely reporting is emphasized as an essential aspect of transparent communication and accountability.

Assisting Marginalized Groups: A call for implementing partners to assist the government in reaching extremely marginalized groups within society, ensuring exclusivity.

Policy Formulation Assistance: Expectations include providing assistance to the government in policy formulation, leveraging on-the-ground insights and experiences.

Participation in Coordinating Bodies: IPs/NGOs are expected to actively participate in coordinating bodies to foster collaboration and synergy.

8.2.2.3. From Donors:

Long-Term Commitment: The primary expectation is a commitment from donors for long-term support rather than short-term, project-based assistance.

Interest in Hard-to-Reach Areas: A call for donors to demonstrate a genuine interest in reaching hard and difficult areas, acknowledging the complexities involved.

Capacity Building and Community Perspective: The expectation for donors to develop capacities in NFE and view realities through the lens of communities, fostering a more community-centric approach.

Impact Studies and Shared Learning: The call for donors to conduct impact studies and share the resulting insights, contributing to a collective pool of learning and knowledge.

8.2.3. Expectations of IPs/NGOs from Government, Donors, and Communities:

8.2.3.1. From the Government:

Flexible Policies with Provider Input: An expectation for the government to develop flexible policies with input from providers, recognizing the need for adaptability.

Coordination Platforms: The initiation of a coordination platform between the government, donors, and key providers for streamlined communication and collaboration. Assistance to NGOs in working collaboratively with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and donors, fostering a cohesive educational landscape.

Periodic NFE Magazine: The proposal to initiate a six-monthly NFE magazine or encourage NGOs to take the lead in such initiatives.

Encouragement for Studies and Best Practices: Encouragement for more studies documenting best practices, fostering continual improvement and learning. Encouragement for providers to

experiment with community- centric approaches and innovative delivery methods, sharing results for collective learning.

Regular Provider Meetings: An expectation for yearly meetings with all providers to facilitate information exchange and collaborative planning.

Curriculum Review Opportunities: The exploration of opportunities, drawing from international experiences, to review the curriculum for NFE with the support of experts and practitioners.

8.2.3.2. From Communities:

Security and Safe Implementation: The expectation for communities to provide security and a safe platform for NFE implementation, safeguarding against potential harm.

Support for Future Teachers: Assistance in nurturing potential candidates, especially girls, to become future teachers, contributing to the sustainability of educational initiatives.

Supervision and Management: Active participation in the supervision and management of learning activities and schools, ensuring smooth operations. The provision of support to implementing partners, ensuring the smooth and successful implementation of their activities.

Advocacy for Education: A call for communities to raise their voices with the government and through the media, advocating for the education of their children.

Engaging Retired Individuals: Involvement of retired individuals within the community who can provide support to NFE initiatives.

8.2.3.3. From Donors:

Long-Term Assistance for Programmes: An expectation for more long-term assistance, facilitating the transition from projects to sustained programmes.

Commitment to Innovative Models: The call for more commitment, encouragement, and support for communities or IPs/NGOs to explore and implement innovative, realistic, and need-based primary education models rooted in the community, attached with documented learning.

Understanding Rural Life and Needs: The expectation for donors to gain a deeper understanding of rural life and the unique educational needs within these settings.

Space for Emerging Issues: Granting space for implementing partners/ NGOs to address emerging issues and needs, allowing for adaptability and responsiveness.

8.2.4. Expectations of Donors from Government, IPs/NGOs, and Communities:

8.2.4.1. Expectations from Government:

Flexible Educational Strategies: The Ministry of Education (MoE) is urged to develop flexible educational strategies, policies, and procedures that align with ground realities, ensuring adaptability to dynamic educational landscapes.

Coordination and Information Flow: Government entities are expected to bind all implementers, fostering close coordination with the MoE and each other. Keeping the government well-informed about key activities is imperative for transparency and collaboration.

Timely Provision of Resources: Ensuring the timely provision of resources, especially student textbooks in NFCs, is crucial to safeguard the teaching and learning processes.

Focused Diploma and Degree Courses: Encouragement is extended to training colleges and universities to initiate focused diploma and degree courses aligned with NFE philosophy, methodologies, and approaches.

Piloting New Approaches: The government is encouraged to motivate implementing partners to pilot new approaches, providing evidence-based learning that can inform policy-making.

Flexible Policies for Education Delivery: Flexibility in policies regarding the delivery of education is recommended. Any NFE approach targeting the course equivalent of primary education within the NFE time frame should be actively encouraged and supported.

Coordination Platform Creation: Establishing a coordination platform where all stakeholders can convene to share learnings, challenges, and mitigations is proposed for fostering collaboration.

Policy Alignment: Donors may expect governments to align policies with the goals of NFE initiatives, creating an enabling environment that supports the success and scalability of innovative educational approaches. Donors may also look for governments to enact or modify legislation that supports and promotes the integration of NFE into the broader education system, recognizing its unique role in reaching marginalized populations.

8.2.4.2. Expectations from IPs/ NGOs:

Adherence to Timeline and Activities: Implementing partners/ NGOs are expected to diligently follow the agreed-upon timeline and activities outlined in the grant.

Timely Communication of Challenges: In the event of delays or challenges in implementation, donors should be promptly informed with logical and practical reasons.

Transparent Communication: Maintaining transparent communication, implementing partners/NGOs are urged to keep donors informed and provide guidance regarding ground realities.

Community Engagement: Facilitating donor-community meetings is suggested, fostering a direct connection between donors and the communities served.

Piloting Innovative Ideas: Implementing partners/ NGOs are encouraged to pilot-test new and innovative ideas with the agreement of donors, ensuring a collaborative and evidence-based approach.

Qualitative Information Sharing: Providing qualitative information and sharing best practices with donors is essential for informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

Capacity Building: Donors may expect implementing partners to invest in the continuous capacity building of staff, teachers, and community leaders to enhance the overall effectiveness and sustainability of NFE programs.

Data-driven Decision-Making: Donors may encourage IPs/ NGOs to adopt a data-driven approach, using collected data to inform decision-making, improve program design, and demonstrate impact.

Adherence to Ethical Standards: Donors may emphasize the importance of implementing projects with a strong commitment to ethical standards, including the protection of vulnerable populations and the promotion of inclusivity.

8.2.4.3. Expectations from Communities:

Communities are expected to align with the expectations outlined for the government and IPs/ NGOs, which are detailed in points 8.2.2.1 Expectations of Government from Communities and 8.2.3.2 Expectations of IPs /NGOs from Communities. These expectations include encouraging increased female participation in educational activities, actively contributing to community involvement, supporting regular school attendance for children, providing security and a safe platform for NFE implementation, assisting in nurturing future teachers, participating in the supervision and management of learning activities, and advocating for education through media and government channels.

Recognizing that every stakeholders' expectations are realistic and workable, there is a call for a thorough discussion on a coordination platform to reach a collective agreement on the way forward.

In the intricate dance of expectations, the alignment between stakeholders is pivotal for a coherent and effective NFE landscape. The collaborative efforts of communities, government entities, IPs/NGOs, and donors are paramount for the success and sustainability of NFE initiatives. As these expectations are laid bare in this exploration, it becomes evident that a comprehensive and coordinated approach is essential to address the multifaceted needs and aspirations within the field of NFE.

The poignant requests echoing from remote corners of rural communities, as highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, are not isolated cries but rather a collective plea for transformative action. The wishes and queries encapsulated in the voices of these communities transcend geographic boundaries, resonating globally in regions grappling with literacy challenges.

To realize the shared vision of accessible and quality education for all, it is imperative that each stakeholder fulfils its role and responsibilities. The government, as the custodian of constitutional educational rights, must recognize these rights explicitly and work collaboratively with IPs/ NGOs, donors, and communities to ensure unwavering access to education. IPs/NGOs, in turn, must tailor their approaches to meet the nuanced needs of communities, fostering a community-centric model that goes beyond short-term projects to create enduring educational centres. Donors play a crucial role by committing to long-term support, understanding the unique challenges of hard-to-reach areas, and actively participating in ongoing feedback loops.

The call for flexible policies, transparent communication, and coordinated efforts permeates the expectations outlined for all stakeholders. The establishment of coordination platforms is proposed as a conduit for meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and collaborative planning. These platforms become the crucible for forging a collective agreement on the way forward, ensuring that the expectations of each party are not only heard but also woven into the fabric of NFE initiatives.

As the curtain falls on this chapter, it leaves an open invitation for stakeholders to engage in the vital conversation that follows. A dialogue where expectations meet reality, and collective aspirations form the blueprint for a future where education is not a distant dream but an accessible reality for every community, regardless of its remoteness or challenges. It is a call for a united commitment to break down barriers, foster innovation, and create a transformative impact in the realm of Non-Formal Education.

Chapter 9

Expanding Educational Horizons: Exploring Transformative Literacy Models

9.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I embark on a comprehensive exploration of three pivotal models that have significantly influenced the landscape of youth and adult literacy. The models under scrutiny are The Freire, Paulo Literacy Model, The "Khit-Pen" Theological Educational Model of Literacy for Youth and Adults, and Empowering Change: Unveiling the Transformative REFLECT Model by Action Aid. I purposefully selected these models as they represent distinctive approaches that have excelled in the realms of basic literacy and NFE. Additionally, I will accompany the examination of these models with three field stories, randomly selected from a myriad of narratives, providing tangible illustrations of their impact in real-world contexts.

My primary objective in this exploration is to unravel the intricacies of these models and field stories, deciphering the key features that contribute to their success. By delving into their methodologies and contextual applications, I aim to distil valuable insights that can inform the refinement of NFE policies and existing models. The ultimate goal is to leverage this understanding to formulate actionable recommendations for policy makers, grounded in the principles and successes of these models.

As I navigate through the narratives of The Freire, Paulo Literacy Model, The "Khit-Pen" Theological Educational Model, and REFLECT Model by Action Aid, I seek not only to comprehend their efficacy but also to glean lessons that can be universally applied. My broader ambition is to facilitate a nuanced understanding of the nuances within successful literacy models, thereby empowering policy makers with the insights necessary to adapt and enhance existing educational frameworks. This chapter serves as a vital step towards fostering transformative change in the landscape of youth and adult literacy through informed policy modifications.

9.2. Unlocking Wisdom: A Comprehensive Exploration of The Freire Paulo Literacy Model

Renowned Brazilian professor Freire, Paulo emerged as a revolutionary figure in the realms of literacy and non-formal education. In the 1960s, he pioneered a highly successful yet controversial methodology for literacy training, specifically tailored for the most underprivileged individuals situated at the lower echelons of societal and economic hierarchies across various nations.

Despite the cessation of Freire's work in Brazil following the failure of the Goulart government in 1964, his legacy endured and flourished globally. Freire's academic pursuits extended across distinguished international universities, where he authored numerous articles and books delving into the intricacies of literacy, its methodologies, and the process of curriculum development.

Throughout the 1960s, Freire conducted transformative dialogues with marginalized communities. In these discussions, he actively engaged individuals who were disenfranchised and voiceless in social, political, and cultural discourses. By encouraging their participation and perspectives, often utilizing visual aids to underscore social issues, Freire witnessed remarkable results within a short

timeframe. Following these successes, he proceeded to train 300 workers who achieved literacy within a mere 45 days. By 1963, his literacy program had expanded nationwide, catalysing transformative shifts in the thinking and behaviour of the underprivileged (Freire, Paulo 1970); Freire, Paulo (1974).

Freire faced accusations of employing his literacy methods to disseminate subversive and revolutionary ideas, as his methodologies inherently instilled a sense of awareness regarding oppressive conditions. His seminal work, *Educação como prática da Liberdade* (Education as the Practice of Freedom), found extensive application in Chile. Excerpts of his groundbreaking approach also feature in his English book, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Freire, Paulo 1974).

9.2.1. The World-Famous Freire Paulo Methods of Literacy Training:

The Freire, Paulo Methods of Literacy Training, as meticulously delineated in his acclaimed work "Education for Critical Consciousness," represent a transformative approach grounded in four distinct yet interconnected stages. This method, cultivated through collaborative endeavours with community members, stands as a quintessential bottom-up strategy, offering a viable and financially modest solution to combat the pervasive issue of high illiteracy rates, particularly evident in regions such as Pakistan over the span of 75 years.

9.2.1.1. Stage One: Contextual Immersion and Community Understanding

A proficiently trained team immerses itself within the community, undertaking a thorough examination of the local context and engaging intimately with the lives of its residents.

Through extensive and participatory discussion sessions, the team meticulously records the common vocabulary prevalent in the community, concurrently identifying and documenting the prevailing issues confronted by its members.

Leveraging open-ended yet thought-provoking questions, the team skilfully elicits the community's aspirations, frustrations, and hopes, ensuring that the narrative and language used in literacy training emerge organically from the community members rather than being imposed by external educators.

9.2.1.2. Stage Two: Selection of Generative Words

Building upon the comprehensive insights gathered in the initial stage, the team systematically reviews and scrutinizes the amassed words, discerning and selecting what Freire terms "Generative words."

The selection of Generative words adheres to three pivotal criteria:

Fundamental Sounds: Chosen words should encapsulate the essential sounds inherent to the language.

Progressive Organization: When organized, these words must facilitate learners' progression from mastering simple letters and sounds to more intricate linguistic elements.

Relevance to Reality: Selected words must be relevant for addressing the multifaceted social, cultural, moral, and political realities prevalent within the community.

Through exhaustive analysis, Freire's team meticulously compiles comprehensive lists of words tailored to each specific area and theme within the community. These lists, characterized by their generative potential, serve as the cornerstone of the literacy course, forming the fundamental basis for learning reading and writing.

9.2.1.3. Stage Three: Implementation and Empowerment

In Stage Three, the Freire Paulo Literacy Model transitions into the practical implementation phase of training and teaching, signifying a pivotal juncture in the transformative journey.

Motivational Sessions and Cultural Reflection:

- Before the onset of literacy training, a series of at least three motivational sessions are conducted. These sessions serve as a crucial foundation, empowering learners to analyse the concept of culture. This analytical exploration aims to foster a profound understanding of individuals as genuine creators of their own cultural context.

Syllabic Breakdown and Word Creation:

- In the discussions centred around generative words and their accompanying illustrations, each word undergoes a meticulous breakdown into its constituent syllables.
- Learners are exposed to the families of syllables, unfolding a systematic exploration of each word under discussion. This process unfolds in a sequential manner.
- Encouraged and guided by the facilitators, learners actively engage in the creation of new words by manipulating these syllables and their respective families.

Iterative Word Manipulation:

- The selected words are introduced one by one, with learners encouraged to break them into syllables, fostering a dynamic learning environment.
- Learners are prompted to create novel words using the provided syllables and explore the synthesis of syllables from multiple words, showcasing the interconnectedness of language elements.
- This iterative process is repeated for all words selected for the session, ensuring comprehensive engagement and understanding.

Sentence Comprehension and Reading Skills Development:

- Alongside word manipulation exercises, learners actively engage with sentences, learning how to read and understand not just words but also sentences. Through guided activities, they decode sentence structures, comprehend meaning, and develop essential reading skills.

Simultaneous Decoding of Language and Reality:

- As students engage in the deconstruction of words, they simultaneously embark on decoding both the linguistic elements and the tangible reality of the slum environment in which they are immersed.

- Freire's approach transcends traditional literacy training, positioning it as a dynamic process that not only imparts the mechanical skills of reading and writing but, more significantly, leads individuals toward critical consciousness. This consciousness extends to an acute awareness of oppressive forces in their lives and the realization of their inherent power to denounce these forces in the pursuit of freedom.
- This multifaceted stage underscores the richness and depth of the Freire, Paulo Literacy Model, where literacy skills intertwine with a profound understanding of societal realities, paving the way for critical consciousness and emancipation.

9.2.1.4. Stage Four: Post Literacy - Political Literacy

In the fourth and final stage, aptly coined by Freire as "Post Literacy" or "Political Literacy," the focus transcends conventional literacy to cultivate critical consciousness among those already literate. This advanced stage marks a paradigm shift, with generative themes taking precedence over generative words.

Elevation of Critical Consciousness:

- This stage aims to elevate critical consciousness among individuals who have attained basic literacy, propelling them to a deeper understanding of the societal and cultural forces shaping their lives. The ultimate goal is to empower them with the capacity to actively transform their reality through informed action.

Generative Themes as Educational Foundations:

- Departing from generative words, generative themes become the educational bedrock of the second, third, and fourth stages. These themes, extracted from the key words identified in the initial stage, provide ample opportunities for reading, writing, and dynamic discussions on pertinent issues and solutions emerging from their lived experiences.

9.2.2. Conscientization as the Cornerstone:

Freire, P's literacy model is fundamentally rooted in "conscientization," a concept he defines as the process through which individuals, not merely as passive recipients but as informed subjects, attain a profound awareness of the social-cultural reality shaping their lives. Simultaneously, they recognize their capacity to effect transformative change through purposeful action .

9.2.3. Critique of Traditional Educational Approaches:

Freire, Paulo (1970) vehemently opposes the banking concept of education, challenging the traditional model where knowledge is deposited into the minds of students by teachers, positioning the teacher as the sole authority. He also critiques primer-based approaches prevalent in both formal and non-formal education settings, echoing the sentiments of learners, as explored in the chapter titled "Amplifying the Voices of Learners and Teachers." This critique revolves around the imposition of words and ideas on learners, emphasizing Freire's insistence on using words and themes common among the people being educated.

9.2.4. Global Replication and Success:

Despite criticism, Freire's model stands as a beacon of success, with many countries replicating it with necessary modifications, yielding positive outcomes. Other successful literacy models,

including Khit-Pen, REFLECT, Turkish Literacy Model, and more, have been developed based on the key features of Freire's pioneering approach.

9.2.5. Implications for Pakistan:

The significance of Freire's model resonates strongly for a country like Pakistan. Planners and teachers are urged to learn from this model and undertake a comprehensive review. There is a compelling need to develop a revised model rooted in robust training guidelines and substantial capacity building to address the unique educational challenges faced by the nation.

In considering the implementation of Freire-style programs in Pakistan, it's crucial to acknowledge the potential political complexities involved. Securing funding and garnering governmental support for such initiatives may indeed present challenges. However, with a concerted effort and strategic approach, it's feasible to navigate these obstacles.

Governance, supported by donors and international INGOs, can play a pivotal role in funding such programs. Yet, motivating and convincing the government to allocate resources requires showcasing the effectiveness of these approaches through sharing success stories and engaging in continuous dialogues. By demonstrating the positive impact of Freire-style programs and highlighting their alignment with national educational objectives, stakeholders can work towards securing the necessary support and funding for their implementation.

In the profound words of Freire, Paulo (1997). *Pedagogy of the Heart*. New York: Continuum, "I'd like to say to us as educators: poor are those among us who lose their capacity to dream, to create, their courage to denounce and announce." This encapsulates the essence of a literacy model that not only imparts knowledge but also instills the courage to challenge and transform one's reality.

9.3. The "Khit-Pen" Theological Educational Model of Literacy for Youth and Adults

The Khit-Pen Theological Educational Model represents a significant advancement in Non-Formal Education, stemming from the adaptation of indigenous Thai principles of youth and adult learning. Dr. Kowit Vorapipatana conceived this model in the 1970s, aiming to empower individuals who lacked formal education, encouraging them to embrace innovation in their daily lives while imparting valuable technical skills (Varopipatana, Kowit 1975).

This model's enduring success is evident in its adaptation to the unique requirements of developing nations such as the Philippines, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Ghana.

Key Assumptions: The term "Khit-Pen" translates to "to think" or "to be able to think." This model is grounded in two fundamental assumptions that significantly influence its essence within the context of Thai identity and Thai Christianity.

The first assumption draws from Buddhist philosophy, emphasizing life's intrinsic suffering yet holding the potential for healing, a fundamental concept in Buddhist teachings. However, this philosophical standpoint has historically hindered proactive problem-solving. The second assumption delves into the Western influence on education, deeply embedded in the nation's educational framework and traditional Western theological programs. The uncritical transmission of Western theological concepts has not only hindered learners' leadership potential but also constrained their capacity and freedom to independently interpret and reflect upon Scriptural truths for themselves and their communities.

As aptly noted by Bevans S B in 1992, the Khit-Pen model represents a balanced approach, serving as a "middle of the road" and "both/and" theological education model. It rigorously upholds Scriptural integrity while recognizing the importance of integrating spiritual insights with truths found beyond the scriptural and theological domains. This comprehensive approach ensures a nuanced theological education that addresses both internal spiritual truths and external realities.

The Khit-Pen model synthesizes elements from both Buddhism and Christianity, incorporating theological ideas from both traditions. While rooted in Thai Christianity, it draws upon Buddhist philosophy, particularly regarding the understanding of suffering and healing. In terms of Christianity, the model encompasses various denominational perspectives, aiming for inclusivity and diversity in theological education. It encourages learners to engage critically with both Buddhist and Christian teachings, fostering a holistic understanding of spirituality and promoting independent interpretation and reflection.

9.3.1. Strengths of the Khit-Pen Theological Educational Model

9.3.1.1. Integration of Influential Models:

A notable strength of the Khit-Pen model lies in its intentional incorporation of successful elements from several influential educational models. Derived from Gromme's, Elemer's, Freire's, Pazmino's, Hiebert's, and Vorapiptana's models, the Khit-Pen framework uniquely synthesizes these influences. Each of these models shares a common thread—embedding spiritual dynamics and theological implications into their methodological components. This deliberate fusion of key messages and similarities from these renowned models contributes to the potency and replicability of the Khit-Pen model on a global scale.

In essence, this refers to the integration of spiritual and theological aspects into the practical components of educational models. It means that these models not only focus on imparting knowledge or skills but also incorporate elements related to spiritual growth, ethical considerations, and theological reflection. In the context of the Khit-Pen model, it means that alongside technical skills and innovation, there is a deliberate emphasis on spiritual development and theological understanding, which enriches the educational experience for learners.

9.3.1.2. Educational Philosophy Integration:

The Khit-Pen model seamlessly integrates the educational philosophies and implications found in Freire's and Vorapipatana's models, as indicated by Duke C (1982). Emphasizing active, dialogical, and interactive theological training, this model fosters an environment conducive to critical thinking. This intentional design accommodates the unique and diversified needs and potentials of learners while prioritizing cultural relevance.

9.3.1.3. Reflecting Reality and Responding to Cultural Values:

In contrast to conventional educational models rooted in the Western world, the Khit-Pen model is purposefully designed to reflect and respond to the realities of its context. As noted by Andrew F. Walls in 1996, traditional educational models often fall short of reflecting reality. The Khit-Pen model, however, seeks to address and confront existing religious values, rendering it more realistic, relevant to the lives of learners, and universally acceptable. This distinct feature not only enhances its impact but also captures the attention of other nations seeking to develop similar models.

9.3.1.4. Similarities with ESRA/USAID Integrated Literacy Model (ILM):

A parallel can be drawn between the Khit-Pen model and ESRA/USAID, ILM model (2006), where "Ilm" translates to knowledge in Urdu. This model encompasses three vital features—Integration (I), Linkages with the community (L), and Moral values of society (M). These features, mirroring the core principles of the Khit-Pen model, underscore the universal foundations essential for effective NFE approaches.

In essence, the Khit-Pen Theological Educational model distinguishes itself through its comprehensive integration of influential models, commitment to cultural relevance, and responsiveness to the unique realities of its context.

9.3.2. The Structure of the Khit-Pen Theological Model

9.3.2.1 Stage 1: Preparation/Planning Phase:

The structural foundation of the Khit-Pen Theological model unfolds across five seamlessly integrated stages, each drawing from the essence of successful educational models. This intricate structure not only serves as a comprehensive framework but also serves as an exemplary guide for those engaged in NFE, encouraging them to learn and adapt these methodologies to suit their respective contexts.

Preparation/Planning Phase Overview:

In the inaugural stage, meticulous preparation and planning set the tone for the entire model. This phase involves teacher and organizational representative engagement in meetings with potential learners—a process aptly termed as "in-house SEANBC (Systematic Education and Needs-Based Consultation)." The facilitator undertakes the crucial task of collecting life stories, challenges, and expectations from the learners through a thoughtful exploration based on seven key questions.

Guided Information Collection:

The seven questions encompass:

1. Religious and spiritual knowledge: An exploration of the learners' understanding of their religion, such as their journey to Christianity or any other faith.
2. Tangible evidence of life: A request for a concrete illustration from their life experiences.
3. Expectations about the course: Gaining insights into what the learners anticipate from the educational journey.
4. Preferred teaching and learning styles: Understanding the learners' preferences in instructional approaches.
5. Least preferred teaching and learning styles: Identifying the styles that may not resonate with the learners.
6. Courses deemed most helpful: Discerning the subjects considered most beneficial for their future.
7. Courses deemed least helpful: Identifying areas perceived as less relevant to their future.

Educational Pedagogy and Historical Context:

The utilization of guided questions during this phase aligns with educational pedagogies also suggested by Groome, Thomas H. (1980), the historical teaching methods of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) (as referenced by Muhammad Al Shreef-2), and Socrates. This approach transcends traditional factual questioning by fostering active, alert, and enthusiastic participation in the teaching-learning process.

Teacher's Role and Openness to Rethinking:

Preparation, as defined within the Khit-Pen model, extends beyond a mere logistics consideration. It involves a deep understanding, as Pazmiño, Robert W. (1992) eloquently states, of "a large framework of the students on the part of the teacher." This signifies the teacher's comprehensive grasp of what, why, when, where, whom, and why they are teaching. Furthermore, this phase embodies a unique strength—the teacher's openness to rethinking, redesigning, and revising their teaching methodologies in response to the learners' collected feedback.

Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment:

The beauty and strength of this model manifest as it ensures students feel comfortable, welcome, equal, and empowered to actively participate in the teaching and learning process. It not only recognizes the diverse needs and potentials of learners but also positions the teacher as a facilitator of an inclusive and meaningful educational journey.

In essence, the Preparation/Planning Phase sets the groundwork for a transformative educational experience within the Khit-Pen Theological model.

9.3.2.2. Stage Two - Exploration of Issues

Overview of the Stage:

Moving forward in the Khit-Pen Theological Educational Model, Stage Two is dedicated to exploring the core issues that form the crux of real teaching and learning. At this pivotal juncture, teachers implement the carefully crafted plans, bringing to life the groundwork laid in the preparation phase. The significance of this stage lies in its alignment with what Hiebert, Paul G. (1994A) aptly terms the "exegesis of the culture," where teachers and students collaboratively delve into local problems, questions, and issues with an objective, non-judgmental perspective. The ultimate aim is to comprehend these challenges, discuss potential solutions, and initiate improvements.

Critical Reflection and Cultural Engagement:

Drawing inspiration from Groome, Thomas H. (1980), this stage is akin to an invitation for students to embark on critical reflection, encouraging them to view these issues from their own unique perspectives. The emphasis here is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the prevalent concerns and questions within their immediate context, directly influencing their personalities, learning experiences, and knowledge acquisition. This stage is a deliberate attempt to empower students to identify and articulate their opinions on situations that impact them.

Value of Reflection in Learning:

According to Thorsen, Donald A. (1990), the value of this stage is evident in its alignment with methods that encompass observation, investigation, maintaining written records, making comparisons, and drawing inductions from personal experiences. Thorsen, Donald A. (1990) underscores the importance of the techniques employed in this critical teaching phase. The observations made during this stage are a precursor to understanding and responding to societal concerns, anchored in the investigation of truths available in scripture.

Purpose and Methodology:

The purpose of this stage is to engage students in a meaningful exploration of the challenges around them, fostering a deeper comprehension of their cultural milieu. Through the methodologies employed, students are guided to observe, inquire, and reflect, thus equipping them to understand and respond to societal concerns based on the truths derived from scriptural teachings.

As the Khit-Pen model progresses through Stage Two, it underscores the importance of fostering critical thinking, cultural engagement, and scriptural insights in the pursuit of a transformative educational experience.

9.3.2.3. Stage Three - Integration with Scripture

Introduction to the Stage:

In Stage Three of the Khit-Pen Theological Educational Model, the focus shifts to the pivotal task of integrating teachings from the Holy Scriptures. Elemer (1984) labels it a "recall" or "mastery" of essential information foundational to learning, while Hiebert, Paul G. (1994B) views it as an attempt to understand one's circumstances in light of scriptural truth. Groome, Thomas H. (1980) describes this stage as a "critique of the stories (Scripture) in the light of stories (realities) and a critique of the students' present stories in light of the past story."

Teacher's Role and Approach:

During this stage, the teacher assumes a leadership role in guiding students to comprehend what the Holy Scriptures convey regarding the prevalent issues and questions within the community. Unlike traditional models where conclusions were imposed on students, the Khit-Pen approach places emphasis on the teacher facilitating an understanding of scriptural truth. The teacher does not dictate interpretations but strives to empower students to discern the scriptural truth within the context of their own circumstances.

Contrast with Traditional Models:

This approach starkly contrasts with traditional teaching methods where students were merely informed of what the Scripture said and meant. The Khit-Pen model fosters an interactive learning environment where students actively engage with scriptural teachings, enhancing their capacity to apply these teachings to real-world issues.

Integration and Meaningful Application:

The integration phase marks the initiation of a collaborative effort between the teacher and students to make sense of local issues and questions. Tradition, reason, and experience collectively play a vital role in understanding, interpreting, and applying the truths found in the Holy Book to one's

life. In essence, the significance and relevance of scriptural truths are most pronounced when they directly address the immediate needs at hand.

As Stage Three unfolds, the Khit-Pen model continues to prioritize a thoughtful integration of scriptural wisdom into the daily realities faced by the learners, fostering a holistic and meaningful educational experience.

9.3.2.4. Stage Four - Interacting with the Community

Centrality of Community in the Khit-Pen Model:

At the core of the Khit-Pen Theological Educational Model lies a profound emphasis on community interaction, making it the nucleus of the teaching curriculum. Echoing Elemer's insights from the 1997 and 98 school year, the Khit-Pen model is committed to a seamless integration of cognitive and behavioural activities. This includes the continuous interplay between knowing and doing, rhetoric and behaviour, reflection and action, theory and practice, cognitive and psychomotor, truth and experience, witness and life.

Ensuring Relevance and Street Credibility:

Research and personal experiences underscore the pivotal role of these integrated features in ensuring the success of education programs, especially NFE and literacy initiatives tailored for mixed-age groups, as seen in NFE programs in Pakistan. Nearly half of the total course requirements are designed to facilitate students' meaningful interaction with the community, religious institutions, and key community figures. This intentional engagement is more than a mere demonstration; it embodies what Griffiths, Michael (1990) defines as "street credibility"—the ability to relate to people where they are, rather than relying solely on "library credibility," which may be detached from the realities of life.

Empowering Through Interaction:

Students' involvement in community interaction serves a dual purpose. It not only helps them bridge the gap between theory and practice but also empowers community members to reflect on and engage with their own context. Hiebert, Paul G. (1994B) emphasizes the significance of people's involvement in evaluating their culture in light of new truths, drawing strength from their own experiences.

Decision-Making and Theological Formulation:

In this stage, following the acquisition of scriptural truths, students deliberate on how to apply these principles in the context of their own lives. Their focus shifts to the insights gained from their active involvement and interaction with the community. This input serves to affirm and attest to the reflections and decisions they make, ultimately leading to the formulation of their unique theological perspectives concerning the prevalent issues and questions within their lived context.

As Stage Four unfolds, the Khit-Pen model demonstrates its commitment to experiential learning, community engagement, and the synthesis of theoretical insights with practical wisdom.

9.3.2.5. Stage Five - Implementation

Culmination of the Educational Journey:

In the culminating stage of the Khit-Pen Theological Educational Model, students transition to the crucial phase of implementation. Having traversed the preceding stages, students now possess the tools to think, reflect, and take action on issues from a biblical perspective, interwoven with their unique worldviews, cultures, values, and social-historical situations. This culmination is the tangible result of a critical integration with the Scriptures and a meaningful interaction with the community.

Equipped for Contextual Reflection:

Empowered by their engagement with scriptural truths and community interactions, students are now capable of reflecting on the teachings of the Scripture in the context of their socio-cultural frameworks. They discern the intricate relationship between their faith and the dynamic contexts in which they live. Learning the truth goes beyond mere acquisition; it involves aligning that truth with one's life and the life of the community, making continuous adjustments and refinements until a confident pattern emerges—both in their individual lives and in the lives of the community.

Contextual and Culturally Embedded:

This implementation phase is inherently contextual, created by the people within their specific context, utilizing forms they understand within their own culture. Elmer, Duane H. (1984) aptly terms this stage "Recall and Resolution," providing students with the opportunity to take decisive actions in response to the issues and questions prevalent in their context.

Dynamic Response to Contextual Realities:

Through this implementation stage, students not only internalize the truths they have learned but actively apply them in response to the pressing issues of their community. It signifies a dynamic and responsive approach to contextual realities, ensuring that the solutions devised resonate authentically with the cultural fabric of the community.

As Stage Five unfolds, the Khit-Pen model manifests its commitment to fostering transformative action, where theoretical insights are translated into tangible, culturally embedded practices that positively impact both individual lives and the broader community.

9.3.3. Strong Foundations of the Khit-Pen Model

Relevance and Applicability:

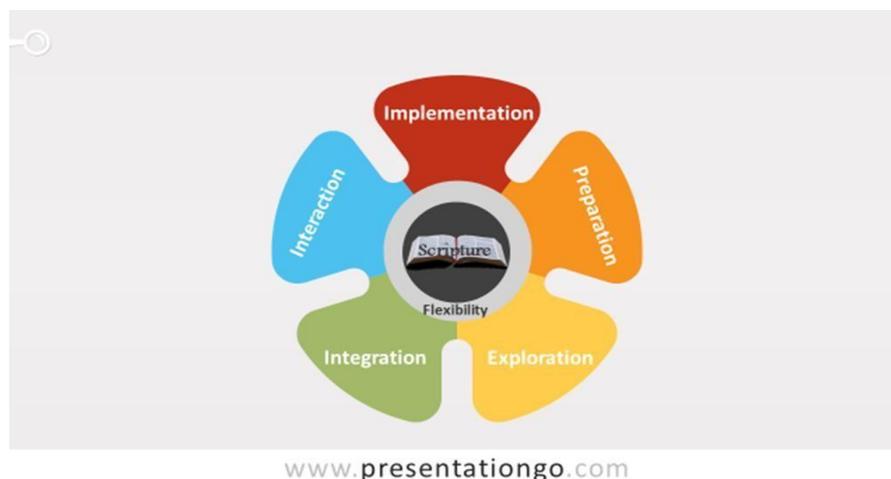
The Khit-Pen Theological Education Model stands as a beacon of innovation, drawing from the strengths of numerous successful Non-Formal literacy programs. It extends its educational offerings to all those earnestly seeking to instigate change in the realm of NFE and aiming to reach the seemingly unreachable. Pakistan, in particular, could derive valuable insights from this model to enhance and tailor its NFE programs, making them more pertinent and needs-driven.

9.3.4. Key Features of the Khit-Pen Model:

1. Scriptural Primacy: At its core, the Khit-Pen model places the Scripture at the nucleus, forming the foundation for the five transformative stages.

2. Flexibility and Adaptability: A stark departure from rigidity defines the operational ethos of this indigenous theological education model. Its inherent flexibility allows students the freedom and creativity to respond dynamically in new, varied, and contextually appropriate ways, contrasting the often rigid nature of traditional teaching and learning processes.
3. Universality of Application: The strong features and approaches embedded in the Khit-Pen model render it applicable to any educational context, complementing various curriculum structures and accommodating diverse teaching-learning processes.
4. Cultural Sensitivity: In a cultural landscape where rigidity often prevails, this model emphasizes flexibility, ensuring powerful linkages and relevance. It serves as a dynamic response to the need for contextually appropriate education.
5. Focus on Non-Formal Education: With a specific focus on NFE for youth and adults, the Khit-Pen model addresses the unique needs of learners beyond the traditional formal education settings.
6. Emphasis on Reflective and Creative Learning: The model consistently emphasizes reflective thinking, creative problem-solving, interactive learning, coordination between theory and praxis, and an adaptable quality that aligns with the evolving educational landscape.
7. Interfaith and Secular Applicability: While rooted in Buddhist philosophy and the unique identity of Thai Christians, the Khit-Pen model transcends religious boundaries. It can be seamlessly applied in any religious or secular setting, providing a framework adaptable to diverse religious values. The model's universal applicability is facilitated by its core principles, which prioritize critical thinking, innovation, and technical skills over specific religious doctrines. Teachers can tailor the model to fit the cultural and religious contexts of various communities, focusing on broader principles that resonate across religious and secular beliefs. This adaptability ensures the Khit-Pen model's relevance and effectiveness in diverse educational settings.

As the Khit-Pen model continues to demonstrate its versatility and efficacy, it serves as a guiding light for educational reform, inspiring a more inclusive and responsive approach to Non-Formal Education.



9.4. Empowering Change: Unveiling the Transformative REFLECT Model by Action Aid

The REFLECT Model by Action Aid stands as a testament to the organization's commitment to international development, originating in 1972 with its initial programs launched in India and Kenya. With a primary focus on addressing local needs in education, health, and livelihood, Action Aid's trajectory led to the inception of the REFLECT Model, a non-primer based approach to youth and adult learning.

The REFLECT Model emerged in 1993 following a comprehensive research project conducted in Bangladesh and Uganda, showcasing its robust foundation. Diverging from traditional primer-based methods, this model is distinguished for its adaptability and empowerment-focused philosophy, aligning seamlessly with the principles of Paulo Freire's theory of "conscientization." This theory, rooted in effective and relevant literacy approaches, forms the basis for the REFLECT acronym: Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques.

The success of the REFLECT Model transcends borders, as it expanded its reach to 70 countries and over 500 organizations by 2012, including notable implementation in Pakistan. Notably, within the ESRA/USAID program (2002-2007), organisations such as HANDS successfully utilized this model, attesting to its efficacy.

In contrast to conventional non-formal literacy programs that rely heavily on textbook content, often disconnected from the actual needs of learners and communities, the REFLECT Model champions a learner-centric paradigm. It diverges from rigid teaching guides, empowering learners to actively shape their learning experiences, content, and objectives.

This departure from the norm resonates with the overarching concern expressed by learners worldwide, highlighted in the chapter "Voice of Voiceless" within this book. Moreover, the REFLECT Model addresses the concerns elucidated by Freire Paulo, yielding remarkably effective results. The acronym itself encapsulates the essence of the model's philosophy, reflecting the core principles of Freire's influential theory.

My exploration of literacy models, including Amin Baba's ten steps of learning and Plumber's steps of learning (Rafat Nabi et al. 2009), further underscores the organic and natural applicability of Paulo Freire's approaches within the REFLECT Model. This revelation reinforces the notion that Paulo's methodologies are inherently versatile, capable of yielding successful results anywhere and by anyone. Ultimately, the REFLECT Model emerges as a harmonious blend of international development, pedagogical innovation, and the enduring wisdom of Freire's educational philosophy.

The distinguishing features of the REFLECT Model underscore its transformative impact on addressing development challenges. Noteworthy aspects include:

1. Expanding Horizons: The REFLECT Model serves as a catalyst for delving into development challenges, offering a collaborative space where learners and communities collectively define and agree upon relevant content. This collaborative approach fosters a dynamic exploration of solutions to overcome hurdles.
2. Empowerment Through Dialogue: An integral facet of the REFLECT Model lies in its empowering processes and techniques. These mechanisms provide a unique opportunity for open discussions on any theme, even those rooted in sensitive cultural traditions that

may impede educational and empowerment endeavours. The model cultivates a stress-free and respectful environment conducive to addressing and resolving these challenges.

3. Innovative and Integrated Approach: The REFLECT Model distinguishes itself through an innovative and integrated approach, aligning seamlessly with the immediate environment. Its potential to instigate positive social, personal, and economic change becomes evident as learners engage with their surroundings in a holistic manner.
4. Local Needs-Based Development Planning: The model empowers learners to plan developmental activities based on local needs, establishing direct links with environmental, social, and economic requirements. This localization ensures that interventions are tailored to the specific context, thereby enhancing their effectiveness.
5. Enhancement of Communication Skills: A natural outcome of REFLECT approaches is the enhancement of communication skills among participants. This newfound strength and confidence empower individuals to articulate their thoughts and opinions. Learners are better equipped to discuss, raise their voices against injustice and inequality, and contribute viable solutions on relevant platforms.
6. Alignment with Paulo's Beliefs: At its core, the REFLECT Model embodies Freire's philosophy of "Reading the world through word/Reading the word and world." This alignment strengthens learners' connection to Freire's transformative ideologies, fostering a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of literacy and societal realities.

9.4.1. Key Phases of REFLECT Model and Process:

The REFLECT Model unfolds across a structured 24-month timeline, comprising three distinct steps:

1. Pre-Circle Period (3 months): Geared towards beginners, this initial phase sets the foundation for subsequent learning experiences.
2. Basic Circle Period (9 months): The core of the model, this period emphasizes active participation within the unique Circle setting, challenging traditional classroom norms.
3. Post Circle Period (12 months): The concluding phase allows learners to reflect on their journey, consolidating knowledge gained and contemplating future endeavours.

Importance of the Circle:

In lieu of conventional classrooms, the Circle serves as a symbolic and practical departure from traditional learning environments. It facilitates face-to-face interactions, encouraging engagement and fostering a sense of equality among participants. The Circle embodies the ethos of REFLECT, ensuring that no hierarchy prevails and all learners are equal contributors.

Terminology:

The REFLECT Model adopts specific terminology, imbued with conceptual significance:

- Circle Instead of Classroom: Reflecting the departure from traditional settings, the Circle underscores the unique nature of the learning process, promoting equality and active participation. In the Circle, students sit facing each other, fostering an environment

conducive to involvement, participation, and discussion, thereby enhancing the learning experience.

- Learner/Participant Instead of Student: This terminology emphasizes active participation, partnership, and engagement, aligning with the philosophy of involving every participant in the learning process. It signifies a shift from passive recipients of knowledge to active contributors to their own learning journey.
- Facilitator Instead of Teacher: Derived from Freire's pedagogy, the term "facilitator" embodies the philosophy that the facilitator's role is to create a conducive learning environment, facilitating active participation. This stands in stark contrast to the traditional teaching model characterized by authoritative teaching and the "banking concept" that Freire vehemently criticized. The facilitator's role is to guide and support learners, encouraging critical thinking and collaboration, rather than merely transmitting information.

9.4.2. Key Methodologies of the REFLECT Model

The REFLECT Model unfolds its transformative impact through a meticulously crafted series of methodologies, each aimed at empowering participants and fostering community-driven change. The key methodologies encompass the following steps:

Facilitated Problem Identification and Analysis:

- Skilled facilitators guide participants through the identification and analysis of their community's existing challenges.
- Various sessions are dedicated to delving into different problems, with facilitators strategically planning and guiding the process.

Collaborative Problem Solving and Action Planning:

- Participants collectively engage in discussions to identify, prioritize, and analyse problems.
- Solutions, along with the availability of resources (human, financial, and environmental), are thoroughly discussed, prioritized, and converted into actionable plans. In instances where solutions require resources that can't easily be found, participants delve deeper into problem-solving methodologies, exploring alternative avenues and potential collaborations with external entities. Brainstorming contingency plans and fostering partnerships can help acquire the requisite resources, ensuring adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges.
- Presentations are prepared, incorporating graphic elements or alternative forms of communication to articulate the learnings effectively.

Dynamic Graphic Representation:

- Graphics serve as powerful tools, covering diverse themes such as household maps, social maps, health calendars, income-expenditure trees, workload calendars, mobility maps, land use, land tenure, credit sources, and preference rankings of crops, among others.

- Participants have the flexibility to choose themes based on the facilitator's guidance and mutual agreement.

Word-Centric Learning:

- Participants, having identified key issues, select a word to represent the issue/challenge/problem pivotal to their analytical discussions. These words encapsulate the essence of the challenges at hand, facilitating focused deliberations and innovative problem-solving approaches.
- The facilitator guides the participants in dissecting the chosen word into individual letters, associating each with its respective sound.

Alphabet Sound Synthesis:

- Leveraging their existing knowledge and experiences, participants combine sounds and alphabets to create new words. These words are intricately linked to the challenges identified earlier, reflecting participants' deep understanding and engagement with the underlying issues. By synthesizing sounds and alphabets, participants construct a vocabulary tailored to address specific challenges, fostering ownership and creativity in problem-solving endeavours. This engaging word-making game becomes an interactive strategy, extending to participants' homes where they involve family members and siblings.

Enhanced Vocabulary and Creative Thinking:

- Beyond merely expanding vocabulary, this step fosters creative thinking and problem-solving skills among participants.
- The process becomes a dynamic and interesting linguistic exercise that transcends the learning environment.

Structured Literacy Development:

- Participants progress to constructing meaningful sentences and small paragraphs, honing their creative writing skills. This progression unfolds through a structured approach grounded in language game methods, designed to scaffold participants' literacy development systematically. Each time they learn a new word and break it into letters to make new words, their vocabulary enhances. This progression equips them to effectively communicate their problems and solutions to relevant authorities.
- Numeracy skills are concurrently developed through similar techniques, creating a holistic approach to literacy.

9.4.3. The Success of REFLECT Approach:

The REFLECT approach stands as a testament to its success in literacy development, drawing inspiration from the effective methodologies of Freire Paulo. It serves as a dynamic platform for transformative learning experiences, adaptable to diverse contexts. The richness of its strategies opens avenues for further exploration, providing valuable insights that can inform the development of literacy models tailored to the unique needs and ground situations of countries like Pakistan. In essence, the REFLECT Model serves as a beacon of innovation and inclusivity in the realm of literacy and community development.

9.5. Key Insights from Analysed Literacy Models: A Blueprint for Transformative Education

The synthesis of key learnings from the examination and analysis of The Freire Paulo Literacy Model, The "Khit-Pen" Theological Educational Model, and the REFLECT Model by Action Aid yields a compelling framework for policymakers and IPs/NGOs. This compendium of insights serves as a guiding beacon towards refining NFE policies and implementation strategies. Here are the amalgamated features that resonate across these transformative literacy models:

9.5.1. Bottom-Up Approach to Content Development:

All models underscore a bottom-up approach, where themes are collaboratively selected with active participation from communities and learners. This stands in stark contrast to imposition, a prevalent issue in various educational systems, including that of Pakistan.

9.5.2. Values-Driven Implementation:

Love, respect, ethical and moral values, civic responsibility, consciousness, praxis, and political engagement are pervasive in the implementation phase of all models. In this context, praxis refers to the integration of theory and practice, where individuals actively engage in reflection and action to effect meaningful change. It embodies the notion of applying knowledge and values in practical situations, fostering a dynamic process of learning through action and reflection. In the implementation phase of all models, praxis underscores the importance of not only understanding and espousing values but also embodying them through deliberate and transformative actions. It involves critically examining one's beliefs and principles and translating them into tangible efforts aimed at promoting social justice, equity, and positive societal change. Thus, praxis serves as a guiding principle that emphasizes the interconnectedness of thought and action, inspiring individuals to become proactive agents of change in their communities.

9.5.3. Facilitation of Expression:

Learners are afforded the freedom to express their viewpoints and raise questions in a stress-free, respectful, and conducive learning environment.

9.5.4. Community-Centric Approach:

Deep-rooted in community issues, all models prioritize community concerns and their subsequent improvement.

9.5.5. Talent Development and Empowerment:

Each model creates an environment conducive to learners discovering and harnessing their latent talents for personal empowerment and community welfare.

9.5.6. Encouragement of Critical Skills:

The models prioritize the development of critical skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. Through interactive and participatory methodologies, learners are encouraged to hone these skills, enabling them to navigate challenges and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

9.5.7. Linking Learning to Real-World Application:

Strong linkages exist between learning and its practical application, empowering learners to contribute positively to their immediate environment.

9.5.8. Ownership and Advocacy:

Learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning journeys, advocating for inclusivity and compassion. Regardless of their background or status, learners are encouraged to champion the principles of love and understanding, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

9.5.9. Inclusivity and Friendship:

The models promote inclusivity and friendship, resonating with millions of children, out-of-school youth, and adults.

When we say resonating with children worldwide, we're emphasizing that the models are designed to evoke a strong sense of connection and relevance among children globally. However, it's important to acknowledge that the term "resonating" may inadvertently suggest exclusivity to children, which is not the intention. Rather, the models are crafted to be universally appealing and engaging for individuals of all ages. They are structured to foster inclusivity and camaraderie among diverse groups, including out-of-school youth and adults. By employing interactive and participatory methodologies, the models create an environment where people of different ages can come together, share their perspectives, and collaborate effectively. Therefore, while children are indeed a significant focus, the models extend their reach to encompass a broader audience, ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, feels welcomed and empowered to participate in the transformative process.

9.5.10. Cost-Effective and Flexible Implementation:

The models prove less expensive and adaptable to various settings, provided there is adequate training and comprehension of NFE model approaches. Which are discussed in above effective literacy models.

In this context, the approaches referred to encompass a range of strategies discussed within the effective literacy models, including but not limited to facilitator-led problem identification and analysis, collaborative problem-solving and action planning, dynamic graphic representation, word-centric learning, alphabet sound synthesis, structured literacy development, and numeracy skill development. These approaches are designed to be cost-effective and flexible, ensuring that they can be implemented in diverse contexts with minimal resource requirements while maximizing their impact on literacy and community development.

9.5.11. Building on Successful Predecessors:

Not developed in isolation, the described models incorporate successful features and learnings from earlier models such as Khit-Pen and Reflect.

9.5.12. Empowerment as Central Focus:

Empowerment and self-directed learning are central tenets of the models, allowing learners to tailor their educational experiences to local needs. By fostering a sense of agency and autonomy,

learners are equipped to plan and implement activities that address community challenges, leading to tangible and sustainable development outcomes

9.5.13. Innovation and Integration:

Each model, in its era, was innovative and integrative, adapting to the evolving educational landscape.

9.5.14. Theme-Based Open Approach:

These models represent highly successful approaches to literacy education, applicable within NFE contexts. Unlike traditional primer or textbook methods, these models embrace open thematic structures, offering learners a dynamic and engaging learning experience. By exploring themes relevant to their lives and communities, learners not only develop literacy skills but also deepen their understanding of diverse subjects. This approach encourages active participation, empowering learners to create their vocabulary and fostering increased engagement and comprehension.

Certainly, these models extend beyond mere literacy instruction; they encompass broader forms of non-formal education. While literacy development is a significant aspect, these models also promote holistic learning, encompassing cognitive, socio-emotional, and practical skills. Embracing thematic structures within NFE settings allows for a rich and immersive educational experience, catering to diverse learner needs and fostering a deeper understanding of the world around them. Thus, these models serve as versatile tools within NFE, facilitating comprehensive learning outcomes beyond traditional literacy goals.

9.5.15. Learner-Centric Evolution:

Learners, through open-ended interviews, classroom observations, and fieldwork, consistently highlight these factors, as evidenced in the chapter titled "Desires of Learners."

9.5.16. Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptability:

The models exhibit a keen awareness of cultural nuances and adaptability, recognizing the diverse backgrounds and contexts of learners.

9.5.17. Continuous Learning and Adaptation:

Successful literacy models emphasize the need for continuous learning and adaptation, reflecting a commitment to staying relevant in dynamic educational landscapes.

These amalgamated insights form a patchwork of success and a vibrant spectrum of colours, providing planners and implementers with a resourceful roadmap to refine their NFE models. This compendium of successful approaches spanning decades beckons reflection and a visionary outlook beyond established boundaries.

9.6. Charting a Visionary Future: A Symphony of Educational Transformation

In conclusion, these distilled insights from the three luminary NFE models create a compelling mosaic—a vibrant tapestry that not only illuminates the path of successful educational endeavours but also guides policymakers and implementers/NGOs toward a transformative future. As we stand on the precipice of change, these models beckon us to transcend conventional boundaries, urging

us to envision an educational landscape where every learner is not merely a passive recipient but an active participant in their journey to knowledge.

The canvas of success painted by The Freire Paulo Literacy Model, The "Khit-Pen" Theological Educational Model, and the REFLECT Model by Action Aid resonates with echoes of inclusivity, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity. It is a testament to the potential inherent in approaches that prioritize community involvement, ethical values, and the cultivation of critical skills.

As we absorb the radiant hues of innovation and integration, let these lessons propel us toward a future where education is not confined by walls but extends into the very fabric of society. The harmonious symphony of these models instils a resounding message: education is a dynamic force that evolves, adapts, and thrives when rooted in the principles of inclusivity, empowerment, and continual learning.

Armed with these learnings, let us forge ahead, challenging the status quo, and sculpting an educational paradigm that transcends limitations. The journey from inspiration to implementation is a voyage of commitment and courage. The time is ripe to harness the wisdom embedded in these models, steering education towards a horizon where every learner's potential is unleashed, and the transformative power of knowledge reverberates across generations.

Indeed, the practical implementation of these NFE models can pose challenges, especially in the context where centralized education systems dominate or where funding constraints hinder innovation. Governments, NGOs, and donors often prioritize other models/forms of education or face resource limitations that affect the adoption of decentralized approaches. The decentralized nature of these models may indeed be perceived as a challenge to central governments, as they promote community involvement and autonomy in educational decision-making. However, despite these obstacles, the transformative potential of NFE models remains undeniable. By highlighting the success stories and emphasizing the principles of inclusivity, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity embedded within these models, we can advocate for their adoption and garner support from stakeholders at all levels. It is through collaborative efforts and a shared vision for educational renaissance that we can overcome barriers and realize the promise of a more vibrant, inclusive, and transformative educational landscape.

Embrace the legacy of these models, for they are not mere blueprints but beacons that illuminate the path to an educational renaissance—a future where the kaleidoscope of knowledge is vivid, inclusive, and transformative. The journey continues, and the symphony of educational transformation awaits its next virtuoso.

Chapter 10

Unsung Champions: Insights from Non-Formal Education Practices in Marginalized Areas

10.1. Introduction:

Inspiration is drawn from the belief that *'One Child, One Teacher, One Pen, and One Book can change the world'* (Yousafzai, Malala 2013, Nobel Prize laureate from Pakistan).

In my professional journey, I've actively engaged in the education sector in Pakistan, both within formal and non-formal education settings. However, a significant gap I've noticed is the absence of a centralized learning platform where stakeholders can convene regularly to exchange insights and experiences. By "learning platform," I refer to a structured space where teachers, educators, policymakers, administrators, and other relevant stakeholders gather periodically to discuss challenges, successes, and innovative practices in education.

In the context of Pakistan, a learning platform could serve as a crucial mechanism for addressing the longstanding issues in education. Over the past 75 years, Pakistan has grappled with significant challenges in basic education and literacy, lagging behind neighbouring countries in overall development. Therefore, establishing a dedicated learning platform becomes imperative to foster collaboration, exchange ideas, and catalyse systemic improvements.

During my interactions with NFE centres across Pakistan, I've encountered numerous commendable practices that often go unnoticed by policymakers and implementers. For instance, in 2013, I witnessed several instances that exemplified innovative approaches to education delivery and community engagement. These experiences underscore the untapped potential within NFE settings and the need to elevate them to the forefront of educational discourse.

To address this gap, it's crucial for implementers to shift their focus from merely achieving numerical targets to embracing a qualitative perspective. This involves empowering staff and teachers within NFE centres to document and share their successes, lessons learned, and challenges encountered. By doing so, we can transcend the limitations of a purely quantitative approach and foster a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement.

In summary, the establishment of a learning platform in Pakistan's education landscape is paramount for fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and evidence-based decision-making. By leveraging the wealth of insights from both formal and non-formal education sectors, we can drive meaningful change and propel Pakistan towards a brighter future in education and development.

10.2. Sadia's Journey: A Luminary in Non-Formal Education

In the heart of Khairpur district in the Province of Sindh, our visit to a NFE centre in a small village uncovered a stark contrast between the potential for education and the harsh reality faced by many children. Despite the presence of a vacant primary school building, the doors to formal education were firmly shut for primary-age children. However, amidst this educational desolation, a beacon of hope emerged in the form of a thriving NFE centre.

Upon our arrival, the dilapidated state of the unused primary school building weighed heavy on our hearts. A group of children, bearing the unmistakable signs of economic hardship with bare feet and tattered clothing, rushed towards us. Among them, a brave soul grasped my hand and inquired with a glimmer of hope in his eyes, "Did you come to open the school for us?" The inability to provide a definitive answer to this earnest question left a profound sense of responsibility.

Consulting with a colleague, we learned of a potential solution embodied in the story of Sadia, a student enrolled in what was equivalent to grade VI and VII under the NFE program. Her narrative unfolded as a tale of resilience and determination, transforming her from a student to a voluntary teacher. Beneath the veranda of her humble abode, Sadia dedicated herself to educating grade one or two students with meagre resources but an abundance of passion.

Our subsequent visits revealed the blossoming of Sadia's class into a vibrant, productive environment. Encouraged by the provision of basic stationery, sports equipment, and art and craft materials, the children, once deprived and barefoot, now revelled in a nurturing atmosphere conducive to learning. Sadia, once a student in need, had become a symbol of possibility and inspiration.

Her journey transcended the confines of her village. Recognized by UNICEF as a role model, Sadia found herself sharing her experiences with other nations. This unexpected global exposure not only broadened Sadia's horizons but also ignited a newfound confidence and enthusiasm within her. A young girl who had hardly ventured beyond her provincial confines was now a confident advocate, passionately advocating for more opportunities in her home region.

10.2.1. Key Learnings:

Feasibility of Non-Formal Education: Sadia's story underscores the viability of NFE even in resource-constrained environments, providing an alternative educational pathway. In Pakistan, where resources for education may be limited, the success of Sadia's initiative lies in its innovative approach of leveraging existing resources within the community. By utilizing locally available materials and spaces, such as Sadia's veranda, and by tapping into the voluntary efforts of senior students as teachers, the program manages to thrive. This demonstrates how NFE can effectively function with minimal resources, making it an approach that others can adapt and replicate.

Leveraging Senior Students as Teachers: Governments can explore the potential of deploying senior students as teachers in areas where formal education is inaccessible, as demonstrated by Sadia's transformation from student to teacher. In Pakistan, where access to formal education may be limited due to various factors, utilizing senior students as teachers can bridge the gap and provide educational opportunities to underserved communities. Sadia's example showcases how senior students can effectively contribute to the education system, benefiting both themselves and younger students.

Integrating "Teach One or Few": The concept of "Teach one or few" can be incorporated into the formal study program, with senior students teaching smaller groups and receiving recognition through appreciation tokens, certificates, or monitoring benefits. While it may initially seem challenging to motivate many senior students to take on teaching roles voluntarily, my personal experience strongly indicates that small incentives, such as monitoring benefits, can indeed motivate community volunteers. In Pakistan, where community-driven initiatives play a

significant role in education, this approach can encourage more senior students to participate in teaching roles, thereby expanding educational opportunities for all.

Drawing Inspiration from Global Examples: Learning from successful examples in countries like Bangladesh and India, initiatives can be designed to increase literacy through competitions between villages, fostering a sense of healthy competition. While this may not directly relate to Sadia's story, it highlights the importance of seeking inspiration from global successes to inform local initiatives. In Pakistan, where community-driven initiatives are key to educational progress, adopting successful strategies from other countries can contribute to improving literacy rates and educational outcomes nationwide.

Community-Driven Initiatives: The transformative journey of Sadia emphasizes the potential of initiatives driven by community support and active student participation, showcasing the power of local engagement. In Pakistan, where communities often play a crucial role in addressing educational challenges, Sadia's story serves as a testament to the impact of community-driven initiatives. By empowering individuals like Sadia and fostering a culture of active participation, communities can create lasting changes in education and beyond.

In the words of Yousafzai, Malala 2013, "*Some people only ask others to do something. I believe why should I wait for someone else? Why don't I take a step to move forward?*" Sadia, with her proactive spirit, has not only taken steps but has left an indelible mark as a torchbearer, urging others to follow the path of education and empowerment she has illuminated.

10.3. Implementing the Buddy System: A Viable Solution for Enhanced Access to Basic Education

In the course of my visit to the NF Centre in Ali Murad Channa village, situated in the Khairpur district, a remarkable and unconventional practice caught my attention. The class was conducted beneath the lush canopy of a verdant tree, fostering a dynamic learning environment. Students were engaged in collaborative work, enjoying the freedom to move, talk, and discuss among themselves rather than adhering to the traditional model of silently listening to the teacher. Notably, a few elderly observers provided valuable insights and suggestions while seated on a local bed.

However, the most intriguing discovery awaited me in two makeshift rooms, devoid of roofs but with sturdy walls. Approximately 20 to 25 students occupied each room, guided by a helper or "buddy" who circulated among them, offering assistance. The NF teacher vigilantly supervised both classes, occasionally visiting to assess the progress of his students.

Upon inquiry, the coordinator accompanying me revealed an inspiring story. These young learners, aged 5 or 6, were not part of the formal education program due to age restrictions preventing them from accessing primary school. However, driven by their curiosity and eagerness to learn, the NFE teacher periodically visited these makeshift classes, delivering short lessons or assignments. To further optimize this unique educational setting, the teacher formed groups and appointed academically proficient learners as mentors. These mentors were typically older students within the NFE program, which typically consists of mixed-age groups ranging from 6 to 16 years old. These young mentors, in turn, assisted their peers in their academic endeavours. With all classes conducted in an open-air setting, supervision was seamless.

Recognizing the need for formal education, these students were eventually enrolled in a neighbouring school, and a volunteer teacher was appointed. The NF centre teacher, in

collaboration with the volunteer teacher and supported by the mentor students, successfully initiated and managed grade 1 and 2 formal classes. In Pakistan, it's not uncommon for older students, typically those in higher grades of formal schooling, to participate in NFE programs as mentors. These older students often attend formal schools themselves but also engage in mentoring roles within NFE settings. The mentor students, who are enrolled in formal schools, volunteer their time to assist younger children in the NFE program. They act as peer mentors, providing academic support and guidance to their younger peers in subjects like reading, writing, and mathematics. So, while the mentor students attend formal school themselves, they also play an active role in teaching younger children in the non-formal education program during their free time or as part of community service efforts. This dual role allows them to both receive education in formal settings and contribute to the education of others in non-formal settings, thereby creating a supportive learning ecosystem within the community.

10.3.1. Key Learnings:

Unnoticed Gems: This exemplary practice is one among many existing in various communities, often overlooked and unacknowledged. These concealed innovations possess untapped potential for study, reflection, and integration into educational policies, requiring recognition and support.

Empowering Senior Students: Senior students from NF centres or schools can assume the crucial role of mentors or volunteer teachers, earning the title of literacy promoters with clear delineation of their responsibilities.

Coordinated Efforts: Village elders or NF centre teachers can serve as coordinators with focused training provided by implementers or literacy departments. This ensures a structured approach to the implementation of such initiatives.

Cost-Effective Literacy Provision: The presented model, simple and cost-effective, stands as a highly efficient means of delivering basic literacy education to underserved populations. Its replication and scaling can significantly contribute to broader educational accessibility initiatives.

10.4. Unveiling the Alpine Classroom: A Tale of Resilience, Resourcefulness, and the Power of Education

Embarking on a journey through the scenic landscapes of Gilgit province, my eyes chanced upon a sight that would leave an indelible mark on my perception of education and resilience. As I was returning from a visit to a NFC, I encountered a tableau of inspiration that unfolded before me like a captivating story.

Amidst the rugged terrains and snow-capped peaks, a disabled man, devoid of one leg, sat on a basic chair surrounded by a circle of eager young minds. This dedicated teacher, despite his physical challenges, ardently imparted mathematical wisdom to a group of 10 to 15 children, all aged between 5 and 10. The setting was humble, under the open sky, with a simple chair serving as the teacher's throne and a circle of curious faces encircling him.

In this impromptu outdoor classroom, the teacher ingeniously utilized learning materials crafted from the environment and salvaged items. These materials include plants, flowers, colours, angles, shapes, stones, and other resources found in the environment. Parents and the local community rallied behind this noble cause, providing unwavering support. Intrigued by this grassroots educational initiative, I couldn't help but halt my journey to observe this remarkable scene.

As I observed, the children were deeply engrossed in the lesson, challenging each other, and counting with enthusiasm. Their energy was palpable, and they remained oblivious to our presence, immersed in the world of numbers and discovery. The class was not just a mere recitation of facts; it was a lively, interactive session where problem-solving took centre stage, facilitated by hands-on activities.

Driven by curiosity, I approached the teacher, seeking insights into his story. *"Who appointed you as a teacher, and how do you manage the expenses?"* I inquired. With a serene smile, he responded, *"I am disabled, but I completed my matriculation (10 years of schooling). In this challenging terrain, finding employment is not feasible for me at this stage of life. So, I decided to channel my time into a meaningful activity that could benefit others. With no school in my village and the little ones unable to travel far, I took it upon myself to teach them."*

When probed about the learning materials, he shared, *"We have a few books, slates, chalk, a blackboard, and a handful of copies. We gather whatever we can from the village and receive occasional support from those who visit the city. We make use of natural resources like plants, flowers, colours, angles, shapes, stones, and other resources found in the environment, which can be collected and used as learning materials available to us. I teach voluntarily, driven by a passion for education."*

This tale unfolds as a beacon of hope, revealing profound lessons:

Resourceful Education: The environment is rich with teaching resources; all it takes is a creative and observant eye.

Community of Learners: In every village, there are individuals with basic literacy skills who can be encouraged to teach voluntarily.

Resilience and Willpower: In the face of challenges, where there's a will, there's a way. Nothing can stand in the way of determined individuals.

Disability as a Source of Inspiration: Disability does not impede one's ability to contribute. Instead, it can become a source of inspiration for teaching social, moral, and civic values, promoting inclusiveness and respect.

Collective Support: The example of the children assisting the teacher in holding books and aiding him on his journey home showcases the strength of a community united for a noble cause.

As the story concludes, it echoes the sentiment expressed by Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani Nobel Prize Holder, *"Let us pick up our books and pens. They are the most powerful weapons."* This living example from the mountains of Gilgit reinforces the power of education to transcend barriers and ignite the flame of knowledge even in the face of adversity.

10.5. Rethinking Education: Insights from Ground-Rooted Examples for Alternative Paths to Accessible Learning"

The instances mentioned above, carefully selected to showcase successful initiatives, serve as illuminating benchmarks, providing compelling evidence for contemplating alternative, straightforward, and locally embedded avenues for expanding educational access. These examples, purposefully chosen for their profound impact, underscore the versatility of educational solutions that can be implemented anywhere and at any time.

In light of these revelations, it is imperative for planners and policymakers to convene, assimilate insights from indigenous models, draw inspiration from successful practices in neighbouring countries, and critically reassess the NFE framework from its foundational principles. The objective is to devise a comprehensive approach to providing basic education through alternative pathways. In the contemporary landscape, achieving this goal is not insurmountable; rather, it demands a departure from conventional thinking and a commitment to creative, innovative methodologies.

While ICT can indeed be very helpful, it's crucial to note that in the examples provided, ICT did not play a significant role. Therefore, while ICT holds potential benefits, its applicability may vary depending on the context. Merely perpetuating failed models year after year is counterproductive, emphasizing the need for a holistic re-evaluation, coupled with the strategic integration of ICT techniques.

To echo the sentiments of Allama Iqbal, the poet of the East, "Khol Ankh" — an invitation to open our eyes to the possibilities, embrace proactive measures, and break the silence that hinders progress. It is through such visionary approaches that we can catalyse meaningful change in the educational landscape, ensuring that every learner, regardless of circumstance, has unfettered access to the transformative power of knowledge.

10.6. "In Conclusion: A Holistic Approach to Educational Revitalization"

In this chapter, we have delved into the realms of pedagogical luminaries such as Freire Paulo, embraced the transformative potential of Kith Pen, and navigated the reflective avenues of the Reflection Model. The amalgamation of theoretical insights and practical application has underscored the multifaceted nature of educational reform. From the ivory towers of pedagogical philosophy to the vibrant landscapes of field implementation, our journey has been rich in diverse learning experiences.

By scrutinizing existing models and immersing ourselves in the dynamic tapestry of real-world scenarios, we have unveiled a profound truth: the capacity to revise, rejuvenate, and reshape educational models is not merely a theoretical construct but a palpable and potent reality. The fusion of theoretical wisdom and pragmatic insights has resulted in a paradigm that is not only fruitful but also exceedingly practical and deeply grounded in the realities of the educational landscape.

Learning from revered models like Freire's and embracing the experiential wisdom emanating from the field has positioned us at the vanguard of educational innovation. As we stand at this juncture, it is evident that the synthesis of theoretical frameworks and on-the-ground implementation yields a synergy capable of bringing about tangible, transformative change.

As we move forward, let this chapter serve as a testament to the power of holistic learning. By marrying the wisdom drawn from educational luminaries with the practical lessons distilled from the field, we pave the way for a more responsive, adaptable, and inclusive educational paradigm. It is through this integrated approach that we can usher in an era of educational excellence that resonates with the needs and aspirations of learners in diverse contexts.

Chapter 11

Amplifying the Voices of Learners and Teachers: Empowering Non-Formal Education

11.1 Introduction

In the realm of NFE, teachers and learners emerge as the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries. Policies, procedures, and programs are meticulously designed to empower teachers in delivering fundamental education to those who missed the conventional avenues of learning. The onus lies heavily on teachers to instigate a substantial, effective, and relevant transformation in the classroom's teaching-learning dynamics. Simultaneously, learners are expected not only to be recipients of classroom education but to shoulder the responsibility of self-directed learning, accessing knowledge from diverse sources such as media, Google, and other ICT-based programs. The assertions made in the first paragraph regarding learners engaging in self-directed learning are based on extensive interactions with both learners and teachers during formal and informal discussions. These insights were gleaned through visits to educational settings, where candid conversations provided a nuanced understanding of their perspectives.

Moreover, the availability of technology, as highlighted in the second paragraph, can indeed vary across different educational contexts. However, observations from field visits, such as those to institutions like the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) and NGOs like HANDS, where initiatives like Digital Classrooms have been implemented, reveal promising efforts to bridge the gap, particularly in rural areas. These initiatives underscore the potential of technology to facilitate learning even in resource-constrained environments and pave the way for NFE to reach marginalized communities.

In this age of technology, educators/teachers play a pivotal role, integrating it seamlessly into the educational process as an indispensable facet of our daily lives.

Teachers and learners, the key pillars of the NFE framework, possess the potential to shape the educational landscape either as an exemplary model for others or contribute to its present shortcomings. Historically, the genuine views, desires, and challenges of these prime stakeholders, the learners, and teachers, have been marginalized in the formulation of policies and curricula. The prevalent top-down approach often neglects the essential collaboration with teachers and learners in developing plans, procedures, and resources. Teachers find themselves compelled to impart textbook knowledge without a nuanced understanding of the curriculum's critical features, including assessment patterns.

This chapter aims to spotlight the desires of voiceless learners and teachers who, in a friendly, non-harassing, and fearless environment, expressed their wishes. To ensure their comfort, their identities will remain confidential, and only their desires and valuable insights will be shared. The focus is on amplifying their voices while preserving their anonymity, underscoring the significance of their thoughts over individual identities.

As an ethnographer, my enduring interest lies in engaging with real stakeholders, deciphering their preferences, and incorporating new elements to enhance the NFE experience. Throughout my field visits, I endeavoured to unearth the unheard voices of learners and teachers, presenting their perspectives to those wielding the power to shape policies and procedures. This book, with a central focus on viewing the NFE scenario through the lenses of learners and teachers, endeavours to comprehend their thoughts and emotions, especially in the face of criticism and blame. This chapter seeks to articulate the unspoken desires of these voiceless beneficiaries.

11.2. Surveying the Unheard Voices of Learners: Questions and Insights

I posed three fundamental questions, both directly and indirectly, to learners of NFE centres (ages 6 to 16+), seeking to capture their candid sentiments:

1. What activities do you find most enjoyable in your centre's teaching?
2. What activities do you not enjoy in your centre's teaching?
3. What features would you like to witness in your centre's teaching?

Data was meticulously collected during field visits, primarily in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Over the last five years (2018–2023), insights from 100 selected centres were analysed from my field diaries.

While the selection of these centres was not entirely random, it was based on practical considerations such as accessibility and existing contacts, as clarified. During these visits, I endeavoured to gather a diverse range of perspectives by selecting centres from different regions and demographics. The ensuing analysis unveils the eye-opening responses of these learners, shedding light on the intricacies of their educational experiences.

Activities Learners (Age 6 to 16+) Enjoyed Most in NFE Centre Classrooms

In quest of understanding the preferences of individual learners or groups within the age range of 6 to 16+, regarding activities conducted within the NFE Centre classrooms, a consistent pattern emerged. Across various centres, the time taken by learners to contemplate this question varied, showcasing nuances in the educational environments.

In several instances, learners exhibited a thoughtful pause before responding, highlighting the significance they attributed to this inquiry. However, notable exceptions existed in select regions where responses were prompt. In these particular centres, teachers adopted diverse teaching methodologies, fostering an environment that encouraged collaboration among learners. The pedagogical approach encompassed collaborative efforts towards engaging activities, and the meticulous planning of event days.

Interestingly, the swift and meaningful responses primarily emanated from older learners. Their adeptness in articulating preferences revealed a depth of understanding and a keen awareness of the learning process. On the other hand, responses from younger learners, while more straightforward, conveyed crucial insights into the fundamental elements that resonated with them in the educational setting.

Key responses are given here by mostly 10 to 16-year-old learners.

1. *When the teacher does something a little different from their usual, boring teaching routine—such as engaging us in activities where we listen, copy, and answer questions that the teacher has already discussed—it piques our interest.*
2. *Occasionally, when the teacher assigns group work, the task is not challenging enough for us to discuss and explore different options. The answer is often apparent within the group task, eliminating the need for discussion. When asked for examples, in two to three instances, they provided solid ones. Tasks in group work included questions like, “How many seasons are there in a year” and “When do we celebrate Independence Day?” Typically, we find ourselves with free time during these tasks, as they are not intended for discussion. In such moments, we engage in casual conversations and discuss topics we want to learn or share recent community news.*
3. *Sometimes, when the teacher allows us to ask questions or create our own language games, it's usually during visits from special guests or when there are visitors. Unfortunately, this is not a regular feature of teaching. I have personally witnessed these special arrangements at many places.*
4. *We appreciate it when the teacher is in a good mood, talking to us, encouraging us, asking riddles, cracking jokes, and even permitting us to write our own stories. However, this happens infrequently.*
5. *We particularly enjoy it when the teacher appoints older learners to be our buddies. It makes us feel proud and confident, and we try our best to help younger learners in the centre, especially those between 6 to 10 years old. Both teaching and learning become enjoyable in such scenarios. We wish the buddy system could be a regular part of NFE centres.*
6. *We value applying our learning in our community and homes, such as conducting community surveys, managing home budgets, and implementing health and environmental activities.*
7. *We find joy in celebrating events at the centre with the support of parents and learners, such as Independence Day, Cultural Day, Reading Day, etc. This is a platform where we can showcase our talents and receive appreciation.*
8. *The centre serves as a social hub for us, providing an opportunity to step out of our homes, chat, and learn from each other. Older students often express that this is the strength of the centre—coming not just for certificates but to meet and interact with each other. Most of what the teachers teach, we already know or can do, and we appreciate the chance to share our knowledge.*
9. *We also enjoy when the teacher asks us to review each other's writing and maths problems, identifying mistakes if any. We find this process enjoyable, and there is no fear that the teacher will insult us in front of the younger learners in the class.”*

The following responses were given by younger learners (ages 6 to 10+) from the NFE centres:

1. *Playing outside the centre and creating drawings, although this happens only sometimes.*
2. *Playing language games, such as word-making and word correction in mathematics. We also enjoy activities like guessing the answer and scenarios such as 'If this happens, what could possibly be the results?' (These responses were collected from different centres).*
3. *When guests come, and the teacher employs different teaching methods.*

4. *In the absence of the teacher or when the teacher is busy with work and has left the class, this is the time we enjoy the most and learn from our elder sisters and brothers in the class. No fear.*
5. *When the teacher is in a good mood, and we feel no stress about being scolded or insulted. The teacher listens to our responses before reacting.*

Presented above are select responses, chosen randomly from an extensive list. Only those recurrently cited by learners across the board have been included.

Activities Not Enjoyed/Liked by Learners in NFE Centre Classrooms

The responses regarding activities not enjoyed or liked were swift, coming from nearly every learner. There was a palpable sense of anticipation among them, a yearning for someone to alter the landscape of their educational experience. My apprehension is whether they might expect me to take some action that could instigate change. While I may not possess the capacity to resolve these fundamental challenges, requiring not financial resources but steadfast support, vigilant monitoring, and, most crucially, focused lesson planning with proper execution and assessment tied to the learners' immediate environment. Nevertheless, these insights will undoubtedly be shared with policymakers, the Ministry of Education, implementing partners, donors, and other relevant stakeholders. Readers are encouraged to contemplate whether the learners' lack of enjoyment or liking is unjust.

1. *Sit quietly and do nothing.*
2. *When we hear the teacher say, "Sit quietly," we ask each other, "We didn't come to the centre to sit quietly. We are grown-up and sometimes know better. We came here to learn, and learning without discussion and talking is impossible."*
3. *Copy from the blackboard and repeat after the teacher without understanding.*
4. *The teacher's mood and attitude when she shouts, using harsh words without understanding our feelings and sometimes our reasons, makes us feel ashamed in front of our younger classmates when we see them smiling and sharing these episodes with their family members.*
5. *Teachers make wrong corrections, ignore mistakes, or sometimes teach incorrect spellings and explain maths incorrectly by using wrong symbols or placing symbols in the wrong place or direction. Correction is a serious problem.*
6. *When basic resources like textbooks and materials arrive at the centres very late, teachers start repeating the previous grade chapters, and we hardly do any work.*
7. *The testing and examination system is very old-fashioned and cannot do justice to our learning and knowledge.*
8. *Limited or no use of ICT-based material.*
9. *The only motivation is to receive a certificate, but teaching is very boring, and teachers often waste a significant percentage of our learning time.*
10. *There is no proper monitoring and guidance from the implementing partners/NGOs. Otherwise, they could guide teachers in basic areas where we can see improvement.*
11. *Very limited opportunities for interactions, involvement, coordination, communication, and the use of thinking-based activities. Sometimes, when we give answers in our words, the teacher does not appreciate it and wants word-for-word answers from the book.*
12. *It seems like we are in a religious place, quiet, and only listening.*

13. *Listening to boring talks and being in class.*
14. *Reading from the blackboard and textbook. While we read, other learners' attention is somewhere else.*
15. *The only source of reading and writing is the textbook. We need storybooks, cooking recipe books, etc.*
16. *The teachers' single, boring teaching method is based on lecturing from the textbook and pouring textbook knowledge into our brains without knowing how much we already know and where we can use this knowledge.*
17. *Sometimes, we feel frightened when buffaloes, dogs, and goats come close to us in the centre, sniff our clothes, try to pull pencils, or peep from the windows or doors. As most of the centres are muddy rooms provided by community members, during the day, these are centres, and after the centres, these become their living rooms, with cattle being a part of every home.*

Upon a cursory examination, even individuals without an academic background can readily discern the likes or preferences and dislikes or activities not enjoyed by learners in non-formal classrooms, where learners of mixed ages are seated. The disconcerting aspect is the apparent lack of awareness among teachers, trainers, monitors, evaluators, implementing organizations, donors, and the government regarding these discernible aspects, which should seamlessly integrate into the teaching and training process. These are fundamental, effective, and practical desires that deserve consistent incorporation into regular teaching practices, not merely showcased when guests are present. It is imperative to minimize the aspects that learners do not enjoy and concurrently accentuate those they like. Importantly, both learners and teachers would appreciate an environment that avoids encountering these challenges, especially during training sessions.

Features Learners Would Like to See or Witness in NFE Centre Classroom

1. *“Treat us respectfully, not like little children”.* Older learners strongly emphasized this, while younger learners mentioned treating them with love and avoiding threats such as complaining to parents or belittling remarks, as it hurts and makes them feel ashamed in front of their peers.
2. *Embrace and accept diversity, including people with disabilities. We are all here to support each other, just as we do at home and in the community.*
3. *Utilize our skills and knowledge to make the teaching-learning process more interactive.*
4. *Incorporate a variety of activities, such as doing, exploring, thinking, and competitions like spelling, maths, reading and writing, sports, material making, health, and planting.*
5. *Increase the use of ICT, computers, and smartphones. Many of us have already formed groups to share and learn from each other.*
6. *Ensure that learning is in line with the latest techniques. Living in rural areas does not mean we cannot utilize technology. Many of us already know how to send messages on WhatsApp, use social media, and search on Google. Build on what learners already know and experience.*
7. *Invite community members and other professionals to the centre who can open doors to job opportunities.*
8. *Allocate time for skills-based training.*
9. *Appoint responsibilities to older learners so they can assist teachers and younger children.*

10. *Provide opportunities to develop projects or assignments and present them.*
11. *Encourage asking questions from teachers and other students and foster a culture of sharing.*
12. *Ensure proper monitoring from Implementing partners/NGOs beyond just filling in numbers. Acknowledge and address issues promptly.*
13. *Establish close coordination with the government to prevent delays in government procedures and ensure the continuity of education.*
14. *Create opportunities for inter-NFE centre competitions of various types.*
15. *Establish a committee consisting of teachers, NGOs, and learners to share stories, strengths, and issues.*
16. *Train and utilize us as a reserve community force of volunteers during natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.*
17. *Provide opportunities to visit other centres within the district and learn from each other.*
18. *Implementing partners/NGOs should create a learning platform where we can meet once or twice to share our experiences and support each other.*
19. *Address dropouts and punctuality issues of both teachers and students. The centre must listen to the reasons and provide support with flexible approaches to minimize the issue.*
20. *Place more emphasis on moral, social, and environmental issues through stories, practical activities, and projects.*

While meticulously reviewing all the responses regarding students' preferences, likes, dislikes, what they don't enjoy, and what they would like to see in the class, I encountered numerous instances of shock and surprise. Learners' knowledge and understanding of issues and features are not only impactful on quality but also emerge as one of the reasons for dropouts in the field of NFE. NFE demands a distinctive approach that not only caters to the needs of mixed-age groups but also understands how to deal with and incorporate learners' experiences and expectations.

11.3. Teachers' Desires for the Improvement of NFE Scenario

It is observed that teachers often hesitate to respond candidly, especially in informal settings without representatives of implementing partners/ NGOs present. The typical response tends to be overly positive, with statements such as "everything is best, and there is no problem." Many teachers seem unaware of their weaknesses, and even when aware, they are reluctant to share, citing reasons such as "our teaching is good." However, when assured of anonymity, teachers become more open. The following reflections encapsulate the voices of teachers from various parts of Pakistan, and similar sentiments are likely shared by teachers in many Asian and African countries.

Teachers strongly believe that addressing their desires seriously would lead to guaranteed improvements in quality, minimizing dropout rates and absenteeism. While some of their desires align with community expectations, specific ones are detailed here.

11.3.1. Capacity Building:

Teachers express the need for specialized training in NFE, emphasizing that short-duration general training is ineffective. They stress the importance of focused training in areas such as NFE principles, differentiation from formal education, content enhancement, short lesson planning,

assessment techniques, play-based learning, accelerated learning, and activity-based learning. Teachers want to be equipped with answers to questions posed by visitors to their centres.

"We are not trained and have basic education. Short duration general training is not useful. The focus training in NFE is needed for teachers with a follow-up system. Two to three days of training just for the sake of training are not effective at all."

"We need proper training in areas like what NFE is, how it is different from formal education, content enhancement, proper short lesson planning, assessment techniques, play-based learning, accelerated learning, and activity-based learning. How to integrate with the environment of the learners. As these kinds of questions guests us when they visit centres, and we don't know the answers."

11.32. Lack of Understanding in Concepts of Science and Maths:

A significant number of teachers admit difficulty understanding the content and concepts of Maths and Science. They express the need for content enhancement training along with teaching methodology training to better teach these subjects.

"We feel great difficulty to understand the content and concepts of Maths and Science, as our own maths is weak. We are not able to teach science and other subjects as it should be taught. So we teach science, social studies, and other subjects like language, reading, and answering questions. There is an acute need that after hiring teachers, content enhancement training along with teaching methodologies training should be necessary."

11.33. Lack of Understanding on Curriculum and Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

Many teachers confess ignorance about the contents of documents, including SLOs. They request copies of these documents and seek organizational support to comprehend and apply them in their teaching.

"We did not know the contents which are written in documents. We did not see the documents. What are SLOs and how can be achieved through teaching? We need to have a copy of this document, and we wish the organization should make sure that we understand and apply it in our teaching."

11.34. Strong Monitoring/Support, Guidance, and Follow-up:

Teachers highlight the shortcomings in the monitoring and support systems provided by IPs/NGOs. They feel that IPs/NGOs should better understand their strengths and weaknesses during the hiring process and offer proper training, monitoring, and support to enhance their teaching quality.

"If we are not teaching well or the quality of teaching is poor, it clearly means that the responsible organization's monitoring and support system are weak."

"IPs/ NGOs' monitoring staff come fill the forms, ask number questions and done. They hardly observe classes, give focused feedback, and document agreed points for further improvement and follow-up in upcoming meetings."

"IPs/NGOs at the time of our hiring should know our strengths and weaknesses and through proper training, monitoring, and support system acknowledge improvement and minimize our weaknesses."

"I strongly feel that IPs/NGOs themselves have limited knowledge and expertise in implementing NFE projects and IPs/NGOs should enhance their capacity."

11.35. Gaps Between Expectations and Capacity Building Themes:

Teachers feel the expectations placed on them are unfair, given that short-duration training courses do not align with those expectations. They seek clear guidelines for learning expectations, allowing some flexibility to use other techniques with the support of the learners.

"Expectations from us are unfair, as short-duration training courses are not based on the expectations. We are not fully equipped for the teaching job in NFC and don't even know the key features and approaches to teach in NFC."

"Many times we are felt that we are bound by textbooks and teaching guides, and very little space is left for us to teach the way we want. Give us clear guidelines of learning expectations. Then also allow little flexibility to use other techniques with the support of adult learners. Through focused monitoring of classroom observation, guide us for further improvement."

11.36. Provision of Resources in Time:

Teachers emphasize the importance of receiving basic teaching resources on time, holding IPs/NGOs accountable for timely provision.

"We need basic resources in time. IPs/NGOs should be bound to provide basic teaching resources before time."

11.37. Recognition of Our Good Work:

Teachers express a desire for recognition and appreciation of their effective teaching methods, which involve planning with the support of community members and older learners. They feel that their efforts often go unnoticed by IPs/NGOs, which discourages them.

"Mostly implementing partners treat teachers on the same yardstick. Many of us really teach in an effective way, their teaching based on planning with the support of community members and older learners, but hardly noticed, recognized, and appropriated by IPs/NGOs. It discourages us."

11.3.8. Addressing Dropout Rates and Attendance Challenges:

Teachers play a crucial role in identifying and addressing the factors contributing to dropout rates and irregular attendance among learners in NFE centres. When asked about the reasons for learner dropouts and irregular attendance, teachers highlighted several significant factors:

- Lack of female and untrained teachers
- Delayed availability of textbooks/resources
- Irrelevance of educational content for the learners
- Teachers' absenteeism
- Utilization of boring teaching methods
- Inflexible classroom schedules conflicting with domestic and agricultural tasks
- Disconnect between education content and practical life issues
- Rigid rules and regulations
- Insecurity within and outside the centres
- Lack of supervision and monitoring regarding the quality of education and learning outcomes

These challenges underscore the complex environment in which NFE teachers operate and the multifaceted issues they encounter in their efforts to provide effective education.

While these challenges are significant, it's essential to acknowledge the aspirations and desires expressed by teachers for improving the NFE scenario. Teachers, along with learners, have voiced concerns regarding the limitations of textbooks in fostering creativity and independent thought. They question why teaching is solely reliant on textbooks, advocating for a more dynamic and engaging approach to education.

Furthermore, teachers emphasize the importance of need-based training and support, as well as thorough monitoring and guidance from IPs/NGOs. Before providing funds, donors should ensure that IPs/NGOs have the capacity and staff required for project implementation. Both teachers' and learners' voices must be actively incorporated into policy discussions, with necessary amendments made to enhance the overall effectiveness of NFE initiatives.

When given the opportunity to share their experiences, both learners and teachers have articulated SMART ideas—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-bound—that reflect a commitment to enhancing the learning environment. Additionally, the concept of SMILE—Strengthening Multiple Intelligences Learning Environment—has emerged, highlighting the importance of creating a conducive learning environment that promotes diverse forms of intelligence.

These desires and aspirations, expressed in various languages and contexts, underscore the importance of inclusive and responsive approaches to NFE. While challenges remain, the collective voices of teachers and learners provide valuable insights and guidance for shaping the future of NFE initiatives.

11.4. Concluding Reflections: Insights from Learners and Teachers in Non-Formal Education

In the realm of NFE, the voices of learners and teachers emerge as crucial guides for shaping policies, practices, and programs. Through candid reflections and insights, both stakeholders have illuminated the challenges, aspirations, and opportunities within NFE settings. From the desire for more engaging teaching methods to the need for specialized training and support, their collective voices underscore the importance of responsive and inclusive approaches to education.

As this chapter has revealed, learners and teachers alike yearn for a learning environment that respects their individuality, fosters creativity, and promotes active participation. They seek curriculum alignment with real-life experiences, timely provision of resources, and recognition of their efforts. Moreover, they emphasize the importance of strong monitoring and support systems, community engagement, and addressing dropout rates and attendance challenges.

In summary, the desires and aspirations expressed by learners and teachers provide valuable insights for enhancing the quality and relevance of NFE initiatives. By listening attentively to their voices, policymakers, IPs/NGOs, and teachers can work together to create more inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environments for all.

Chapter 12

Pot-pourri of Success in Non-Formal Education (NFE): Illuminating Insights and Strategic Pathways for Inclusive Education

(A-to-Z Successful Ingredients of the NFC: My Decades of Insights into Non-Formal Education)

12.1. Introduction:

In this pivotal chapter, I draw upon my extensive immersion in Non-Formal (NF) education, synthesizing observations and dialogues with NF learners, teachers (educators), and community stakeholders into a comprehensive framework. The genesis of this chapter lies in my unwavering commitment to unearth the ground realities of NF educational settings, aiming to glean invaluable lessons from authentic teaching-learning dynamics observed during visits to NF centres and noted during meetings with learners, teachers, community members, representatives of implementing partners, and members of government departments.

As articulated in the introductory section of this book, there exists a palpable dissonance between the intended outreach of governmental, donor-supported initiatives and the actual terrain they traverse. Cosmetic endeavors, while well-intentioned, have proven insufficient in leveraging the financial and managerial resources invested over many years. An ominous forecast, as outlined in the CSO-GRALE report of Pakistan 2021, warns of a deteriorating educational landscape if current trajectories persist—a clarion call for introspection and action.

Regrettably, scant research endeavors have delved into the nuanced perspectives of NF learners, leaving a void in understanding the true chasms within the educational paradigm. As a practitioner-researcher, my modus operandi has been to discern the singular strengths embedded within each classroom milieu. Even amidst the veneer of monotony, an inherent vitality exists, often obscured from superficial quantitative assessments favored by implementing agencies.

Upon perusal of my meticulously curated classroom observation diaries, a revelation ensued—a tapestry of strengths gleaned from diverse settings coalesced into what I term the "A-to-Z Successful Ingredients of the NFC." This compendium not only serves as a testament to the resilience and ingenuity inherent in NF education but also offers a roadmap for professional development departments tasked with honing the pedagogical acumen of NF teachers.

Moreover, this delineation of essential ingredients serves as a beacon for curriculum developers, illuminating the path towards fostering a learner-centric ethos. Textbook compilers and educational material developers are implored to imbibe these insights, thereby facilitating the transition from a teacher-centric to a learning-centric paradigm.

In essence, this compendium transcends the confines of a mere list—it embodies a collective wisdom distilled from the crucible of NF classrooms. Its resonance extends beyond the confines of this book, beckoning stakeholders across the educational spectrum to heed its counsel and forge a future where education transcends mere instruction to become a transformative journey of empowerment and enlightenment.

12.2. A=Accelerated Teaching Methods (Pioneering the Path to Expedited Learning):

Accelerated Teaching Methods epitomize innovative approaches geared towards expediting the learning process within a compressed timeframe. Diametrically opposed to traditional passive methodologies, these dynamic techniques prioritize active engagement, fostering an environment where learners are not mere recipients but active participants in their educational journey.

By integrating activities rooted in arts and crafts, sports/games, problem-solving, and hands-on experimentation, Accelerated Teaching Methods ignite a passion for learning while cultivating critical thinking and practical skills. Moreover, these methods advocate for a multifaceted approach to assessment, encompassing teacher evaluations, self-assessment, and peer feedback, thus enabling learners to gauge their progress comprehensively across various dimensions.

Ultimately, Accelerated Teaching Methods serve as catalysts for holistic development, empowering learners to unlock their full potential intellectually, socially, and creatively. Through their implementation, teachers and educators can nurture a culture of lifelong learning and foster a generation of agile and adaptive individuals poised to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

12.3. B=Buddy System (Forging Lifelong Connections: The Impact of Peer Mentorship in Non-Formal Education):

Within the diverse age spectrum often found in NFCs, the Buddy System emerges as a strategic solution. Here, teachers/educators handpick older learners within the class, entrusting them with the role of mentors for their peers. These appointed buddies serve as catalysts for literacy and numeracy advancement, offering invaluable assistance with homework and navigating school-related matters.

Beyond its practical benefits of alleviating teacher workload, the Buddy System fosters a nurturing, participatory atmosphere. Within this supportive framework, learners not only enhance their academic proficiency but also refine their social, moral, and personal aptitudes. Active involvement in group work, joint planning, and discussions allows them to listen and accept others' points of view, present their own perspectives, and learn to work and learn together. This approach not only responds to the expressed desires of learners across numerous centres but also cultivates a culture of mutual respect, cooperation, and camaraderie.

Central to its effectiveness are principles of respect, involvement, cooperation, and open communication, all nurtured within a friendly and inclusive environment. Based on field experience within NFE centres, the Buddy System stands as a testament to the transformative power of collaborative learning and peer support.

12.4. C= Conducive Print-Rich Learning Environment (Cultivating Optimal Learning Spaces for Knowledge Enrichment):

In centres where the atmosphere exudes relaxation, joy, and a wealth of engaging, cost-effective print-rich materials, a conducive learning environment thrives. These materials, crafted collaboratively by teachers/educators, learners, parents, and the community, are strategically integrated into teaching practices, setting the stage for meaningful learning experiences.

Observing such environments, one is struck by the palpable energy as learners interact, explore materials, pose questions, and tackle thinking-based tasks derived from their textbooks. Excitement permeates the air, catering to the diverse learning styles of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners alike. Moreover, the utilization of environmental resources and the active involvement of parents foster a sense of cohesion among all stakeholders.

Stepping into these centres, one cannot help but be inspired by the walls adorned with educational stimuli, the dynamic interactions among learners, and the overall ambiance. Emotionally uplifting, these spaces instill a profound sense of happiness, relaxation, and positivity.

To preserve and enhance these invaluable features, it is imperative to embed them within curricula, training guides, textbooks, and policies. During the development of learning materials and monitoring frameworks, indicators should be incorporated to assess the presence of these elements. Additionally, teachers must receive training on how to cultivate and effectively utilize print-rich environments to enrich their instructional practices.

12.5. D=Digital-Based Learning (Navigating Innovation in Non-Formal Education):

As I traverse the realm of NFE, the advent of digital-based learning heralds a transformative frontier, albeit currently observed in select centres. Here, within the dynamic tapestry of mixed-age classrooms, I witness firsthand the integration of digital platforms such as Google and other search engines. Guiding students through task assignments via specific websites, I witness the burgeoning potential of digital resources as indispensable tools for pedagogical innovation.

While presently confined to a minority of classrooms, this pioneering approach holds promise for broader integration within capacity-building initiatives. My experiences underscore the imperative for creative adaptation, signaling a shift towards enhanced educational efficacy across diverse settings.

12.6. E=Engaging and Exploring (Empowering Learners through Active Exploration):

At the core of effective learning lies the dual pursuit of engagement and exploration—an ethos echoed by learners across NFE centres. Interacting directly with students, I encounter their fervent desire for varied activities and opportunities to delve into uncharted realms of knowledge. Yet, I also witness their enthusiasm for self-driven engagement and collaboration, even in the absence of teachers. Witnessing their exchange of riddles, puzzles, development of small group inquiry-based learning projects, and sharing community news, where students work together and with the community, I am reminded of the intrinsic drive for exploration and collaboration that permeates these learning spaces.

12.7. F=Flexibility (Fostering Dynamic Learning Environments):

Anchored in the ethos of adaptability, flexibility emerges as a linchpin of success within NFE centres. Navigating the dynamic landscape of education, I am acutely aware of the pivotal role played by flexibility in shaping teaching methodologies, scheduling practices, and assessment frameworks. Flexibility facilitates innovation and progress, allowing educators to tailor learning experiences to the diverse needs and interests of learners. As I engage with learners, I am inspired

by their enthusiasm for flexible approaches that transcend the constraints of traditional textbooks and prescribed materials. Together, we envision an educational paradigm characterized by fluidity of thought and a willingness to transcend conventional boundaries—a paradigm that fosters a spirit of inquiry, creativity, and lifelong learning.

12.8. G=Group Work and Skills Development (Cultivating Collaboration and Life Skills):

In the realm of NFE, the synergy of group work unfolds as a powerful catalyst for both academic engagement and holistic growth. Learners express a keen affinity for collaborative tasks, particularly when they present challenges that demand collective problem-solving.

During classroom observations, I encountered instances where learners engaged in lively discussions, navigated complex questions, and drew on real-life examples to substantiate their arguments. I found myself invigorated by the vibrancy of these sessions as learners honed essential life skills such as communication, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

These meaningful group tasks serve as invaluable opportunities for nurturing learners, fostering social cohesion, emotional resilience, and respectful dialogue. Beyond the confines of traditional lectures and textbook-based learning, group work cultivates an enriched learning environment characterized by flexibility, collaboration, and stress-free exploration.

12.9. H=Holistic Approach of Teaching Towards Learning (Nurturing Mind, Body, and Spirit):

In one NFE classroom, I witnessed the subtle orchestration of a holistic approach to teaching and learning—a paradigm that transcends mere academic instruction to embrace the multifaceted dimensions of human experience. At the conclusion of the session, the teacher engaged learners in reflective dialogue, prompting them to articulate their learning, emotional experiences, and interactions within the group.

This reflective exercise unveiled a deeper dimension of learning, as learners grappled not only with academic content but also with interpersonal dynamics and emotional regulation. Addressing instances of discord with grace and empathy, the teacher facilitated a collective discussion, eliciting feedback and co-creating group norms for future collaboration.

This exemplar of holistic pedagogy underscores the transformative potential inherent in NFE settings. By embracing a holistic approach, educators foster a learning environment that nurtures the entirety of the individual—mind, body, and spirit. In doing so, they cultivate emotional intelligence, social resilience, and a profound sense of interconnectedness—a testament to the transformative power of education beyond the confines of textbooks and standardized assessments.

12.10. I=Integration (Fostering a Seamless Tapestry of Learning):

The integration of knowledge across various subjects not only enhances the effectiveness of learning but also adds a layer of enjoyment and efficiency. Within the realm of NFE, only a handful of centers exemplify this integrated approach, where teachers invest time in meticulous planning, albeit informally.

I vividly recall a science lesson in one such center, where a teacher engaged a Grade Four NF class on the theme of animals. What transpired was remarkable—a symphony of science concepts intertwined with moral/religious, geography, and environmental themes, seamlessly integrated with language skills and fostered creativity and critical thinking through project work.

This holistic approach, akin to what I term 'fragrance talking class' (Mahakti Bolti class), transcends traditional boundaries, weaving together horizontal and vertical connections across grades and subjects. Learners are empowered to forge conceptual links between various domains of knowledge, drawing upon their past experiences as scaffolding for deeper understanding.

Integrated teaching and learning foster a dynamic environment where learners of all ages—youth, adults, and children—engage collaboratively in activities. While integration remains an underutilized approach in NFE, its profound impact on engagement and depth of learning underscores its significance as a cornerstone of effective pedagogy.

12.11. J=Justice and Joyful Class (Cultivating Equity and Delight in Learning Environments):

Amidst the diverse landscape of NFE classrooms, one crucial facet emerges repeatedly: the quest for justice in teachers' behavior and actions. Learners articulate a desire for equal treatment, irrespective of factors such as color, caste, familial connections, or perceived academic prowess.

Yet, in rare instances, I have had the privilege of witnessing classrooms characterized by fairness and levity—a juxtaposition of equitable treatment and joyful camaraderie. In these classrooms, teachers dispense humor alongside instruction, fostering an atmosphere where learners feel respected, valued, and secure.

The pursuit of justice in educational settings transcends mere academic achievement, encapsulating the fundamental human need for dignity, respect, and inclusion. By nurturing classrooms imbued with fairness and joy, teachers not only inspire a love for learning but also cultivate a sense of belonging and empowerment among learners, ensuring that no child feels left behind on the journey to knowledge and self-discovery.

12.12. K=Kinaesthetic-Based Learning (Engaging the Senses and Energizing Education):

In the mosaic of learning styles, kinaesthetic learning emerges as a vibrant thread—a testament to the diversity of human cognition.

Kinaesthetic learning, often characterized by hands-on activities and tactile engagement, serves as a gateway to experiential understanding. In conversations with learners, a resounding desire for more active and participatory experiences echoes throughout. They yearn for the thrill of engaging in sports, the satisfaction of hands-on activities, and the sensory immersion that accompanies tactile learning.

As stewards of education, it behooves us to infuse lessons with a rich tapestry of activities that cater to all learning styles. Whether through auditory storytelling, visual aids, reading and writing exercises, or dynamic kinaesthetic experiences, each lesson should strive to strike a harmonious balance—one that invigorates the senses, stimulates the intellect, and nourishes the soul.

For in the realm of NFE, where diversity reigns supreme and individuality is celebrated, it is this integration of body, mind, and heart that truly embodies the essence of transformative education. Let us embark on this journey together, weaving the threads of kinaesthetic learning into the fabric of our educational tapestry, enriching the lives of learners and educators alike.

12.13. L=Learning-Focused Teaching (Nurturing the Seeds of Knowledge):

In NFE centers, there's a growing recognition of the importance of shifting from a teaching-focused to a learning-focused approach. Conversations with educators like Ms. Sophia reveal a desire to move beyond mere content delivery towards facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

Embracing student-centered approaches is paramount. This involves prioritizing deep understanding and engagement over completing syllabi and adhering to timetables. By placing the learner at the center of education, we can create an environment where curiosity, critical thinking, and genuine learning flourish.

To achieve this shift, collaboration among policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators is essential. Together, we can craft an educational landscape that nurtures the seeds of knowledge and fosters a culture of lifelong learning.

12.14. M=Monitoring and Evaluation of Progress (Nurturing Holistic Growth Through Insightful Assessment):

In the realm of educational systems, the process of monitoring and evaluation acts as a guiding compass. However, there exists a critical imbalance, with a tendency to prioritize quantitative metrics over qualitative understanding.

Traditionally, monitoring and evaluation have been confined to numerical analysis, reducing learners to mere data points. Yet, learners yearn to be seen and understood beyond standardized tests and assessments.

A paradigm shift is necessary, one that embraces qualitative exploration and insightful reflection. Progress portfolios offer a dynamic solution, empowering learners to curate narratives of their educational journeys.

Through qualitative assessment, teachers gain deeper insights into each learner's trajectory, fostering empathy and appreciation within educational settings.

As we navigate education's landscape, let's heed the call for assessment practices that honor human growth and celebrate the richness of the educational journey. Let us aspire not merely to quantify progress but to illuminate the path toward holistic enlightenment and transformative learning experiences.

12.15. N=Nurturing the Potentials of Learners (Cultivating Excellence Through Recognizing and Developing Talents):

In education, there's a remarkable practice often overlooked—a practice that unlocks the boundless potential within each learner. Dedicated educators undertake a remarkable initiative, crafting lists that unveil the talents and potentials of their students. These lists, prominently displayed in

classrooms, serve as poignant reminders of the transformative power of recognition and encouragement.

With unwavering dedication, educators embark on a mission to harness the latent abilities of their students, seamlessly integrating opportunities for growth and development into their teaching. Through engaging activities like quiz competitions, discussions, and collaborative projects, learners explore, experiment, and excel, fostering a symbiotic relationship where each individual's talents propel their peers towards greater achievement.

The impact of this initiative resonates deeply within the hearts of learners, parents, and community members alike, witnessing the blossoming of young minds guided by nurturing hands and fueled by ambition. As learners gather to fill the Talents and Potentials Improvements Chart periodically, camaraderie prevails, with teachers, peers, and parents joining hands in a shared quest for growth and improvement.

Talents and Potentials Improvements Chart:

Period from - to -

Sr. No.	Name of the Learners	Talents, Skills, and Potential	Action Points for Further Improvement	Date, Month, and Signature
1				
2				
3				
4				

This exemplary practice represents the untapped potential within educational systems. It inspires educators worldwide, igniting a flame of passion and purpose that illuminates the path toward a brighter future for all.

12.16. O=Orchestrating Objectives-Based Teaching and Learning (Illuminating Paths in the Fog of Educational Ambiguity):

In the vast landscape of NFE centres, I often witness a remarkable practice—a reliance on objectives-based teaching and learning. Chapters of textbooks are neatly compartmentalized into monthly allocations, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to structured learning. Remarkably, this approach fosters unparalleled clarity and direction in educational endeavors.

Amidst this landscape, exceptional centers have embraced objectives-based teaching and learning as a guiding principle. These centres stand as beacons of innovation, illuminating paths toward a

brighter educational future. Their transformative impact is undeniable, providing a crystal-clear framework for both teachers and students alike.

In one such center, a heartening tableau unfolds at day's end. With a mere twenty minutes remaining before the final bell tolls, I embark on a journey of reflection alongside students, guided by four fundamental queries. These queries serve as guiding stars, leading us through the labyrinth of our collective learning: What knowledge did we acquire across various subjects today? How can we share these newfound insights with our families and peers? Where do these lessons find resonance in our daily lives? And lastly, is there any homework awaiting our diligent attention? With each query, I capture the essence of the day's learning, inscribing key points onto the chalkboard with a deft hand.

Even in the fleeting moments allotted, the brilliance of purpose shines like a beacon, dispelling any lingering shadows of ambiguity. Students and I stand united in our shared understanding of the day's lessons and their practical applications. As the final notes are transcribed into personal reflection diaries, a profound sense of empowerment permeates the classroom—a testament to the efficacy of a simple yet profound approach.

Yet, amidst the jubilation sparked by this pedagogical breakthrough, a resounding realization emerges—the transformative nature of objectives-based teaching and learning. This approach, a true beacon of hope, deserves widespread recognition and adoption.

Let us enthusiastically heed the call to action, fervently advocating for the integration of objectives-based teaching and learning into NF training programs. Through unwavering commitment and concerted efforts, we can ensure that every student experiences the transformative power of this practice, guiding them toward educational clarity and unparalleled success.

12.17. P=Participatory Problem-solving Based Learning (Nurturing Minds Through Collaborative Inquiry):

Problem-solving approaches are foundational to effective teaching, offering students a rich intellectual feast that fosters growth and satisfies their curiosity. Acquiring problem-solving skills is crucial for developing essential life skills, encouraging critical thinking, lively discussions, and the pursuit of viable solutions to real-world challenges. Embedded within this approach lies a structured cycle of inquiry, guiding students through the process of identifying, analyzing, and resolving problems.

In my exploration of educational centers, I encountered a remarkable example of participatory problem-solving in action. Within a modest space, two classes in science and mathematics showcased the power of collaborative inquiry. In the science class, students were organized into groups and tasked with creating riddles based on the concepts of force, motion, and machines, drawn from their textbooks. Within just fifteen minutes, they crafted an impressive array of twenty thought-provoking riddles.

The teacher then invited group leaders to present their riddles, sparking excitement and anticipation among the students. Animated discussions ensued as students deliberated over

potential answers, demonstrating intellectual vigor and engagement. Remarkably, what would typically take a month to cover was condensed into two brief periods, highlighting the efficacy of participatory problem-solving and student ownership of learning.

12.18. Q=Quality of Learning and Teaching (Fostering Excellence in Non-Formal Education):

In many NFCs under observation, a predominant teaching method prevails—one rooted in textbooks and characterized by one-sided instruction, where students play a passive role as recipients of information delivered by the teacher. However, amidst this prevalent paradigm, glimmers of hope emerge in select NFCs, where positive signs of quality education surface, often unbeknownst to the teachers themselves.

The examples elucidated under the A to P ingredients serve as beacons of quality indicators. These include students' active involvement in lesson planning, thereby lightening the teacher's load by assuming roles as mentors or literacy promoters. Additionally, the cultivation of thinking-based tasks, group work dynamics, talent grooming initiatives, and the integration of accelerated teaching methodologies all contribute to the enrichment of students' learning experiences. Furthermore, educators and learners alike carry the torch of daily learning, actively engaging family members through activities such as riddle-solving and problem identification, thereby fostering a holistic approach to education.

Among the myriad features observed in select NFCs, one particularly noteworthy aspect stands out: the art of questioning. Teachers adeptly pose thought-provoking inquiries, prompting students to delve into the realm of "why" and "how," fostering critical reasoning and independent thought. Furthermore, students in one center maintain records of their progress, proactively strategizing on ways to enhance their academic performance—a testament to their ownership of their educational journey.

There exists an urgent imperative for educators to grasp the essence of quality education within their specific context and adopt ongoing improvement strategies. Through this iterative process, educators and learners alike will witness remarkable results—a testament to the transformative power of simple, realistic training approaches grounded in the principles of non-formal education.

12.19. R=Reflect, Review, and Revise (Fostering Continuous Improvement in Teaching Practice):

In many classrooms observed, there's a notable absence of reflective practices where teachers review the lesson's effectiveness with students. However, amidst this norm, one school stands out for its exemplary practice. Teachers here have implemented a structured routine for reflection and review. At the end of each session, they allocate a dedicated 15-minute period for collective reflection on the day's learning objectives. Together, they discuss how these concepts interconnect with other subjects and their relevance within the community. They also collaboratively identify areas for improvement—an exemplary partnership between teacher and learners.

This practice exemplifies a commendable approach to continuous improvement and should be integrated into every teacher training program and institutional policy governing NFCs. While

some centers have embraced such practices, the challenge lies in disseminating these successes widely. Unfortunately, these pockets of excellence often remain hidden, unrecognized by implementing partners and absent from broader educational discourse.

Efforts must be made to amplify these best practices, ensuring their adoption across all NFCs. By doing so, educators can cultivate a culture of reflective teaching, driving sustained improvement in teaching quality and student learning outcomes. This necessitates elevating these sparks of innovation from obscurity to the forefront of educational reform agendas.

12.20. S=Safety and Sufficiency (Pillars of Effective Learning Environments):

In every NFE Centre, safety and sufficiency are paramount for maintaining class regularity and fostering a genuine interest in learning. These centers often cater to mixed-age learners and are situated within community households, where ensuring safety and security is crucial. Family members bustling about lend a unique dynamic to these environments, and it's essential for learners and parents to feel a sense of safety and comfort within these communal spaces. To address any unease, clear criteria and memoranda of understanding between implementing partners and community hosts are imperative, outlining safety protocols to prioritize learners' well-being.

Timely availability of resources is equally critical for effective teaching and learning. Implementing partners must ensure timely delivery of resources, recognizing that effective teaching can transcend reliance solely on textbooks. Instead, teaching should align with SLOs.

In one center, I observed the implementation of a book bank concept. Leveraging creative teaching methodologies, teachers develop engaging learning materials, ensuring continuity of learning experiences even without textbooks. This initiative showcases teachers' resourcefulness and adaptability in navigating resource constraints while maintaining high-quality learning experiences for students.

12.21. T=Transformative Teaching (Cultivating a "Thinking Class"):

A "thinking classroom" epitomizes a dynamic educational milieu where teachers harness an array of techniques and approaches to invigorate both individual and collective cognitive processes. Within this pedagogical realm, "thinking-based activities" serve as vital nourishment for the intellect, fostering a culture of innovative thinking that transcends conventional boundaries. Notably, Islamic teaching methods, if adeptly employed and comprehended by educators, offer a treasure trove of strategies conducive to nurturing critical thought processes, especially within the NFE landscape.

Among the techniques elucidated by Mohammad Al-Shareef in *21 Teaching Methods of the Prophet* are strategies such as: (Mohammad Al-Shareef, *21 Teaching Methods of the Prophet*, retrieved from <https://archive.org>).

"not bore the listeners; speak at the intellectual level of students; use questions and debates; use analogies; use diagrams and drawings; Use gestures while talking; use tangible examples; Answer questions before they are asked; Answer more than what is asked; Turn the questions into something that will be more beneficial; Allow others to answer the question; Take advantage of

teaching moments; Use playful fun; Repeat, repeat and repeat; Calling out to the listener and remaining silent; Making eye contact when speaking; Using cliff hangers; Using stories accounts from the past; Paying attention to the group."

These methods represent highly effective pedagogical strategies for cultivating a "Thinking Class." However, it is disheartening that many educators remain unaware of their existence and transformative potential. While sporadic instances of their application were observed during evaluations, they often occurred haphazardly, without deliberate planning. Nevertheless, even these sporadic occurrences succeeded in fostering an atmosphere of engaged learning, where learners actively participated in problem-solving tasks and responded thoughtfully to questions.

The essence of a "thinking classroom" transcends mere mental stimulation; it aims to fortify learners' cognitive abilities, empowering them with enhanced intellectual prowess and skills. Rooted in Islamic teachings, which uphold the sanctity of the human mind as a divine gift, these methods resonate deeply with the ethos of NF education. As the Quran proclaims, "It is the faculty by which Allah has honoured a human being and favoured him over other creatures (Quran 17:70)." Thus, it is incumbent upon every individual to harness their cognitive faculties for the collective benefit of society.

It is imperative that the aforementioned methods be seamlessly integrated into teacher training programs and enshrined within educational curricula. Given their alignment with Islamic principles and their demonstrated efficacy in fostering critical thinking, their adoption is likely to resonate strongly with educators. By embedding these methods into instructional practices, teachers can cultivate a culture of independent inquiry among students, thereby fostering high levels of teacher satisfaction, joyful participation in learning, and cognitive empowerment.

Embracing the transformative potential of a "thinking classroom" represents a pivotal step towards enriching the educational experience within NF settings, empowering learners to unleash the full extent of their cognitive capabilities.

12.22. U=Unique Learners (Celebrating Individual Abilities):

NFE embraces the uniqueness of every learner, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach falls short in meeting diverse needs. In one NFE center, a remarkable teacher exemplified this belief by tailoring activities to match each student's learning style. Her holistic approach, blending visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements, celebrated the individual talents and interests of her students. From engaging dialogue to hands-on experimentation, she fostered an environment where every learner felt valued and supported.

It's vital to embed this celebration of individuality into teacher training programs, empowering educators to cultivate and nurture the diverse abilities of their students. By embracing and appreciating the unique strengths of each learner, NFC can become a space where every individual thrives and reaches their full potential. Through this approach, teachers can inspire a culture of positivity and empowerment, ensuring that every student feels recognized and valued in their educational journey.

12.23. V=Values-Based Learning (Nurturing Morality and Ethics):

In our education system, a glaring weakness often lies in the approach to teaching values. Values are often treated as mere content to be covered in a chapter, without ensuring that true learning and application take place. However, amidst this prevailing trend, there are shining examples of teachers who are committed to values-based teaching and learning. During a visit to one such centre, I was pleasantly surprised to witness a teacher whose pedagogy was deeply rooted in moral values and ethics. In a language class focused on the topic of plants, she concluded the lesson by engaging students in a discussion on their moral responsibilities towards the environment. She then assigned homework tasks that encouraged students to take practical steps to care for nature, including developing action plans and creating educational videos to share with their peers.

This holistic approach to education, integrating values seamlessly into the curriculum, is a hallmark of the teacher's instructional style. Beyond academic knowledge, she prioritizes the cultivation of moral character and social responsibility in her students. For instance, she shared with me her practice of having students reflect on their actions each week, identifying both positive and negative behaviors and their associated emotions. This values-based approach to teaching and learning stands in stark contrast to the prevailing mindset among educators, many of whom perceive their role solely as instructors of textbook content. By prioritizing the enhancement and assessment of moral values in daily life, we can foster a generation of learners who are not only academically proficient but also morally upright and socially responsible.

12.24. W=Well-Mannered (Cultivating Ethical Conduct):

In my extensive experience spanning decades, I have witnessed numerous successful strategies for cultivating well-mannered learners. Teachers play a vital role in instilling decorum and ethical behavior in students, serving as invaluable assets to any community.

The cultivation of well-mannered and well-behaved learners plays a pivotal role in fostering peace, promoting diversity acceptance, and instilling respect for others. Through moral-based education and behavior principles, teachers can empower students to embody these values, preparing them to contribute positively to society.

12.25. X, Y, Z = Xanthic, Youthful, and Zesty (Infusing Vibrancy into Learning):

I firmly believe that when teaching fully embraces the elements from A to W, the result is learners who are Xanthic, Youthful, and Zesty.

Xanthic learners radiate vibrant energy, displaying enthusiasm and a zest for learning. They actively engage with the material, demonstrating creative thinking and a willingness to explore new ideas and concepts.

Youthful learners embody curiosity, resilience, and boundless potential. They approach learning with a fresh perspective, seeing challenges as opportunities for growth and discovery. Their youthful vigor brings vitality and dynamism to the classroom.

Zesty learners exude passion, drive, and enthusiasm for both life and learning. They tackle tasks with vigor and excitement, immersing themselves fully in the learning process. Their zestful

attitude creates an atmosphere of enthusiasm and inspiration, motivating their peers and enriching the learning experience.

By creating an educational environment that integrates the full spectrum of elements from A to W, educators can nurture learners who not only excel academically but also radiate the vibrancy, vitality, and zest embodied by Xanthic, Youthful, and Zesty individuals.

In conclusion, the transformation of NFE requires a holistic approach encompassing policies, curriculum, materials, professional development, and monitoring systems. This voice is coming from the field—from policymakers, communities, teacher trainers, resource developers, and curriculum developers. Strong collaboration and close coordination between teacher training institutes, government, donors, NGOs, INGOs, and the community should be established to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts. Donors should empower NGOs to effectively implement NFE by integrating the A to Z ingredients into training and teaching plans, supported by ongoing guidance. With commitment, honesty, focused training, and diligent execution, success is not just possible but assured. Let us embark on this journey with determination, knowing that embracing these ingredients will unleash learners' potential, fostering critical thinking, creativity, curiosity, collaboration, hope, optimism, and mindful agency. Together, we pave the way for a brighter future through education.

In our quest, let us march forward with unwavering resolve, fueled by education's transformative power to break barriers and illuminate paths to progress. As stewards of learning, let us sow the seeds of knowledge with diligence and nurture them with compassion, creating a flourishing landscape of opportunity and empowerment. Together, we chart a course towards a future where every individual, irrespective of background, flourishes and contributes meaningfully to society through education's transformative force.

Chapter 13

Drawing the Curtain: Concluding Reflections on Non-Formal Education

In the diverse landscape of educational possibilities explored in 'Pot-pourri of Successful Ingredients for NFE,' NFE emerges as a dynamic catalyst for inclusive learning, offering pathways where traditional schooling falls short. This book meticulously delves into NFE in Pakistan and similar contexts, meticulously exploring its landscape, successes, challenges, and pathways for improvement to overcome barriers to educational success.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, under Article 25A, declares education a fundamental right for all children aged 5 to 16. Despite constitutional and international commitments like Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and quality education, Pakistan faces significant challenges. The Pakistan Institute of Education (N-EMIS 2022-2023) paints a bleak picture, showing that 26.2 million children are out of school. The Human Development Index (HDI) ranking has also worsened, from 120 in 1990 to 161 in 2023, indicating persistent issues of educational access and learning outcomes. Today, Pakistan's educational landscape reveals alarming statistics: many children fail to achieve basic learning levels, especially in rural and marginalized communities. Factors such as cultural norms, insecure environments, and outdated curricula exacerbate the situation, leading to a high number of out-of-school children and increasing dropout rates.

Acknowledging the limitations of formal education alone, the Ministry of Education recognizes the essential role of NFE in providing educational access. Despite efforts and donor support, universal educational access remains elusive, necessitating realistic and innovative approaches.

This book raises critical questions:

1. Can existing formal schools accommodate 26.2 million (39%) out-of-school children in current circumstances?
 - o No, they cannot.
2. Is a narrow view of formal and non-formal education sufficient when many villages lack any educational access?
 - o No, a broader approach is necessary.
3. Is it feasible to eliminate ghost schools and their associated budgets?
 - o Yes, with honesty and political will.
4. What impediments have hindered past efforts in educational access?
 - o Lack of understanding in NFE, reliance on outdated methods, and a neglect of successful indigenous practices.
5. Can we afford further delay in addressing these challenges?
 - o No, immediate action is imperative.

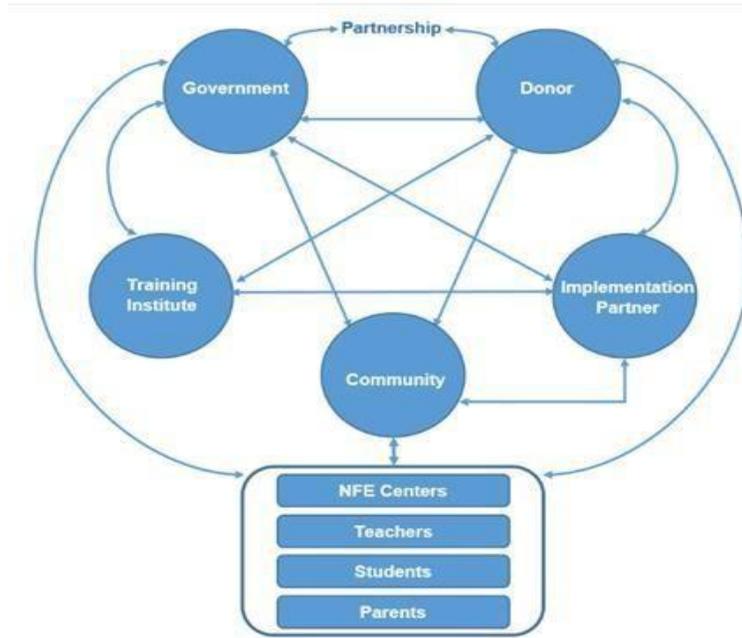
This book confronts these challenges head-on. Drawing on decades of field experience, it emphasizes uncovering effective NFE practices and advocating for their integration. NFE offers

flexibility, adaptability, and cost-effectiveness, making it a viable alternative educational path. It's time for policymakers, program developers, implementers, and donors to collaborate and adopt a comprehensive view of education. This book, enriched with practical insights, urges utilizing this knowledge to develop and implement NFE programs effectively, with transparency and stakeholder engagement.

This book serves as a treasure trove of discoveries, illuminating numerous overlooked, unacknowledged, and underappreciated facets of NFE in Pakistan. From confronting the stark educational crisis and amplifying marginalized voices to redefining the very essence of NFE and emphasizing its societal impact in fostering inclusive citizenship, this book also reveals NFE's untapped potential. It delves into the global evolution and historical context of NFE, celebrates its strengths in empowering marginalized communities and addresses barriers while advocating for strategic reforms. The book dispels confusions and myths surrounding NFE, amplifies the voices of diverse stakeholders and showcases transformative literacy models and innovative initiatives ripe for implementation. It underscores the importance of engaging, relevant educational experiences and highlights Objectives-Based Teaching and Learning as a cornerstone for reform, advocating for the application of A-to-Z successful ingredients at every level

These revelations underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive overhaul of policies and a meticulous re-evaluation of the non-formal education landscape. The seamless integration of successful ingredients—from A to Z—must be prioritized across policy-making, curriculum development and governmental frameworks. Equally crucial is the capacity building for all stakeholders, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to drive transformative change. Only through robust and dynamic partnerships between the government, donors, implementing partners, training institutes, and the community can we establish an inclusive and impactful NFE system. These partnerships are not merely beneficial but essential, serving as the foundation upon which a resilient and adaptive education system can thrive, as illustrated below.

In conclusion, I implore all stakeholders in NFE to steadfastly support and invest in this critical sector. By translating the discoveries and insights uncovered in this book into meaningful and sustained educational reforms, we can collectively forge a brighter, more inclusive future for all learners. Let us seize this opportunity to transform NFE into a beacon of hope and progress for generations to come. This book serves as "A Treasure Trove of Successful Ingredients for Non-Formal Education (NFE): Creative Alternatives for Educating All," offering practical strategies and creative alternatives to address the educational needs of marginalized communities. The discoveries within these pages provide a solid foundation for building a comprehensive, inclusive, and transformative NFE system. Let this be the beginning of an era where no child is left behind, and education truly becomes a universal right.



“Let’s learn together, work together, and achieve together.”
Dr. Rafat Nabi

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