

## The Role of NGOs in Pakistani Education

Ishaq Ahmad <sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *This paper provides a thorough review of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to enhancing education in Pakistan, exploring the current educational landscape in the country. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the findings highlight that the educational conditions for the less privileged have not seen substantial improvements nationwide, with a specific emphasis on Pakistan. This study holds significance given the ongoing debates among various stakeholders, including the government, regarding the efficacy of NGOs in the education sector. Despite NGOs proclaiming success, particularly in Pakistan, this research prompts further inquiry to scrutinize and substantiate the assertions made by these organizations, suggesting a need for additional research to assess the actual impact of NGO efforts in the realm of education within the country.*

**Keywords:** NGOs, Education, Curriculum initiatives, Educational Infrastructure

### Introduction

Education's pivotal role in both social and economic development needs no reiteration. Widespread access empowers individuals and societies, raising income levels and fostering a superior quality of life. Though Pakistan has implemented educational initiatives across all levels, the nation's unique economic and political landscape restricts its effectiveness. While the private sector contributes, a sizable population with limited income lacks access to its benefits. Consequently, the government sector falters under the overwhelming demand, necessitating significant reliance on NGOs, as the Asian Development Bank emphasizes, to fulfil the educational needs of a substantial portion of the population.

Pakistan's education system is still in its infancy, but the government is working hard to make improvements. In addition to official initiatives, several non-governmental organizations are contributing to the advancement of Pakistan's educational system. These nonprofit educational organizations provide first-rate educational services to Pakistani children who are impoverished and in need of education. These NGOs oversee hundreds of universities and schools in Pakistan.

Moreover, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the educational landscape of Pakistan is increasingly crucial. NGOs often step in to bridge the gap, providing educational opportunities, materials, and support to underserved communities. Their agility and community-focused approach allow them to address specific needs that may be overlooked by larger government initiatives. As Pakistan navigates its economic and political challenges, the collaborative efforts of the government, private sector, and NGOs become paramount in ensuring equitable access to quality education for all citizens (Mohmand, 1999).

Pakistan's citizens meet several obstacles in their quest for access to education. Not only is it one of the countries with the highest proportion of non-school-age children globally, but over half of its adult population is illiterate. According to the most recent data (2021–2022), there are about 22.8 million children aged 5-16 who are not in school, with a higher proportion of females than boys. Due to limited access or a belief that receiving a subpar

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Political Science, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Wari Campus, Upper Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

**Correspondence to** Ishaq Ahmad, Lecturer in Political Science, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Wari Campus, Upper Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: [ishaq@sbbu.edu.pk](mailto:ishaq@sbbu.edu.pk)

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education is not important, these kids do not attend school. The Pakistani government ascribes these subpar educational results to inadequate funding, wasteful budgetary expenditures, and incompetent administration.

## **Literature Review**

Everyone agrees that education is the primary force behind social progress, and in Pakistan's particular context, cooperation between the state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is becoming more and more important as it seeks to tackle enduring issues in the field of education. The goal of this assessment of the literature is to present a thorough knowledge of the various ways that non-governmental organizations have shaped and changed Pakistan's educational environment.

The research continuously emphasizes how important NGOs are in helping neglected and distant communities confront their infrastructure deficiency (Gul, 2015). In these areas, where the government's funding is frequently scarce, NGOs take an active role in building classrooms, supplying the equipment that's needed, and guaranteeing that people have access to necessities (Mohmand, 1999). These efforts immediately improve access to education, especially in places where there haven't been enough educational facilities in the past.

Gender inequality is still a major problem in Pakistani education, with significant obstacles for females. According to Reza (2022), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a proactive role in tackling this issue by implementing programs, including awareness campaigns, scholarship programs, and vocational training. NGOs undermine conventional gender norms and create a more inclusive learning environment by actively supporting girls' education (Gul, 2015).

The body of research emphasizes how crucial NGOs are to raising educational standards through creative curricula and innovative teaching strategies (Mohmand, 1999). Working together with local communities is essential to making sure that educational initiatives are population-specific and relevant in their setting (Farah, 2007). Programs for teacher training become more important as a means of guaranteeing that teachers have the abilities required for both teaching and learning.

Effective NGOs actively interact with nearby communities to learn about their unique requirements and difficulties (Bari, 2005). NGOs encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility for education by including parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders in decision-making processes (Khan, 2003). This community-centred strategy guarantees the long-term viability of projects and supports sustainable educational growth.

It is acknowledged that NGOs' advocacy work has a significant influence on Pakistan's educational policy (Bashir, 2016). Saud (2021) emphasizes how crucial it is for NGOs to put their knowledge and data-driven insights to shape laws that deal with the underlying causes of problems in education. Engaging actively in policy debates guarantees that policies are developed with a thorough awareness of reality on the ground, which promotes good change and long-term sustainability in the education sector.

As a result, the body of research clearly demonstrates how important NGOs are to tackling the complex issues facing Pakistan's educational system. A more inclusive, accessible, and productive atmosphere for learning is produced by their combined efforts in policy lobbying, infrastructural development, gender equality, quality education programs, and community participation. The government's and NGOs' joint efforts are emphasized as crucial to the success and long-term viability of these educational programs, ultimately forming a more optimistic future for Pakistan's young.

## NGOs in Pakistani Education

NGOs are the education sector's torchbearers, guiding people toward knowledge and opportunity and enabling them to use their ideas to create a better future. Education is a potent catalyst for social advancement and personal development. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been actively involved in starting and supporting several learning initiatives across the Country for a long time because they realize the transforming power of education. Educational NGOs aim to improve access to education, particularly in isolated and underprivileged communities of Pakistan. Children who may not otherwise get the chance to attend school are frequently given resources and schools established by them. By educating teachers, several NGOs aim to raise the standard of education in Pakistan. Supplying instructional resources and putting creative teaching strategies into practice. They try to improve both public and private school academic standards in the context of national interest (Saud, 2021).

Educational non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in Pakistan's education system by tackling diverse concerns and bolstering governmental initiatives. By advancing community involvement, lobbying for legislative changes, and facilitating access to high-quality education. They aid in the creation of a nation's education system that is more egalitarian and inclusive (Gali, 2020).

**Table 1**

*List of NGOs which work for educational purposes in Pakistan*

NGO Name	Initiatives and Focus Areas
The Citizens Foundation (TCF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishment of schools in urban slums and rural areas</li> <li>- Emphasis on quality education</li> <li>- Scholarships for students from low-income families</li> <li>- Vocational training for skill development</li> </ul>
Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early childhood education programs</li> <li>- Teacher training initiatives</li> <li>- Campaigns for education awareness</li> <li>- Curriculum development and innovation in teaching methods</li> <li>- Infrastructure development for schools in remote areas</li> </ul>
Bunyard Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adult literacy programs</li> <li>- Girls' education initiatives</li> <li>- Community engagement for sustainable educational development</li> </ul>
Developments in Literacy (DIL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on primary and secondary education</li> <li>- Teacher training programs</li> <li>- Technology integration in education</li> <li>- Girls' education empowerment programs</li> <li>- Recruitment and training of young professionals as teachers</li> </ul>
Teach for Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placement in underprivileged schools</li> <li>- Leadership development programs for teachers</li> <li>- Advocacy for education equity and quality</li> </ul>
CARE Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishment of schools in rural areas</li> <li>- Teacher training and capacity-building programs</li> <li>- Health and hygiene education</li> <li>- Scholarships for deserving students</li> </ul>

Indus Resource Centre (IRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Community-based schools in Sindh and Balochistan</li><li>- Adult literacy programs</li><li>- Skills development for youth</li><li>- Girls' education initiatives</li></ul>
Akhuwat Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Interest-free microfinance for education</li><li>- Support for educational institutions</li><li>- Scholarships and financial aid for students</li><li>- Vocational training programs</li></ul>
READ Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Establishment of schools in various regions</li><li>- Teacher training and professional development</li><li>- Community engagement for education awareness</li><li>- Focus on gender equity in education</li></ul>

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The above list of NGOs has a crucial role in promoting and enacting reforms in basic education because of their versatility in serving society. They have advantages and strategic chances to develop novel approaches that can aid in achieving intended results and educational objectives because of their status as non-governmental organizations.

### **The Citizens Foundation (TCF)**

Pakistan has a great deal of significant problems, many of which are related to the absence of an effective educational system for the country's impoverished population. Overwhelming issues include decreasing educational standards and widespread illiteracy. Education reform task teams, new education policies, and well-intentioned but mostly symbolic initiatives like the recent constitutional amendment requiring free primary and secondary education have not resulted in any significant change. Millions of kids should be in school but can't afford to go to school. This fosters a climate that is conducive to young radicalization and religious fanaticism. This grave scenario is painted in great depth in the International Crisis Group study "Education Reform in Pakistan," which was released recently.

Nine million children in Pakistan do not attend school, according to the research, which also highlights gaps in access to education across urban and rural areas and gender inequality. However, overall government investment in education remains fixed at 2% of GDP, which is the lowest amount in South Asia. The study indicates that Pakistan would not be able to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education. In an effort to solve the issue, The Citizens Foundation (TCF) has established 1,000 schools in rural and urban slums, offering 145,000 low-income girls and boys access to high-quality education (Gali, 2020).

TCF has created a successful model for managing schools and dispelled the misconception that parents who are illiterate and impoverished do not value education and would not send their daughters to school. In contrast, our system has almost equal representation for both sexes. Enrollment of females is also encouraged by the fact that all 7,700 of our teachers are highly qualified women. Pakistan has to modify its curriculum, improve its administration, put an end to corruption, stop tolerating teacher absenteeism, and address a host of other issues related to education. However, there are fruits that are easier to pick than others.

### **Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)**

Pakistan's Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) is a non-governmental organization (NGO). Baela Raza Jamil, a public policy and education specialist, created it in 2006. The goal of ITA is to advance education as an all-encompassing process for social and personal development. Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), also known as the "Centre of

Education and Consciousness" Public Trust, was established in response to the several crises that make up the core of the Education Challenge and the severe crisis facing education. ITA was founded as a result of the rising understanding that Pakistani citizens were being deprived of the most fundamental human rights—the ability to learn, access knowledge systems, develop citizenship skills, and preserve their 9,000-year-old cultural legacy.

### **Bunyad Foundation**

One of the primary areas of concentration for the Bunyad Foundation is education since we think that teaching kids from marginalized communities may result in real societal transformation. The Bunyad Foundation has extended its educational outreach to 835 schools situated in isolated regions in eight rural Punjabi districts. This program has positively impacted 78,980 children by increasing enrollment, retaining students, and enhancing their academic achievement via high-quality instruction. Three-quarters of our receivers were men and sixty-three per cent were women. Our foundation's outreach plan was designed to support the establishment of school councils, which are mandated by law in every school. Additionally, school development plans, fundamental budgeting knowledge, performance monitoring, and community mobilization mandated that schools modify their capabilities.

### **Developments in Literacy (DIL)**

Currently teaching over 59,000 kids in 168 schools, Developments in Literacy has been giving thousands of underprivileged children in Pakistan access to high-quality, affordable education. Our students are shaping the future of their nation today by working in a variety of disciplines, including engineering, public service, and medicine. Focus on primary and secondary education, Teacher training programs, Technology integration in education, and Girls' education empowerment programs.

### **Teach for Pakistan**

Teach for Pakistan is an educational-based NGO which works for the Recruitment and training of young professionals as teachers, Placement in underprivileged schools, Leadership development programs for teachers, and Advocacy for education equity and quality.

### **CARE Foundation**

The Pakistani government has a special public-private partnership whereby under-performing government schools are taken over and given the necessary infrastructure and skilled people to turn them around. Because money is spent directly on education rather than in physical buildings, CARE's PPP approach is extremely scalable, repeatable, and cost-effective. For example, a child's excellent education may be provided for as low as Rs. 1000, or £5, every month. Over 300,000 children are now receiving education from CARE in 888 schools.

CARE Foundation focus on the establishment of schools in rural areas, Teacher training and capacity-building programs, health and hygiene education, and scholarships for deserving students.

### **Indus Resource Centre (IRC)**

Indus Resource Centre acknowledges that in order to meet the needs of the global economy, education must be current and relevant, and the transmission of marketable skills is crucial. In addition to its grassroots efforts in the field of education, IRC actively promotes gender parity reduction and better education systems with powerful government figures. Through its adult literacy initiatives and non-formal education, it also actively helps to raise the literacy rate. IRC is keen to promote the community-based schools in Sindh and Baluchistan, Adult literacy programs, skills development for youth and girls' education initiatives.

### Akhuwat Foundation

Akhuwat Foundation is focused on interest-free microfinance for education, support for educational institutions, scholarships, financial aid for students, and vocational training programs.

More than 4,000 shuttered schools have been brought back into operation by Akhuwat and the Punjabi government under the Public-School Support Program. In six districts of Punjab, it has adopted over 350 public elementary schools. These schools offer high-quality education, and the organization is now working to improve academic facilities since it is essential for every community to have access to education for all of its citizens.

### READ Foundation

The READ Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that strives to provide access to high-quality education in Pakistan. The education of Pakistani youngsters, both in urban and rural regions, is greatly aided by the work that our institutes around the country are doing. At present, the READ Foundation operates 400 educational institutions across Pakistan, accommodating 118,000 pupils. Of these, 13,000 are orphan kids who are being educated by 5,967 male and female teachers.

Read Foundation initiated the establishment of schools in various regions, teacher training and professional development, community engagement for education awareness, a Focus on gender equity in education and a special focus on orphan education.

### Initiatives for Quality Education

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have emerged as crucial players in supporting programs aimed at increasing the quality of education in Pakistan, where educational problems continue. Quality education is a vital driver of individual and social development. This section examines the research on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involvement in advancing high-quality education in Pakistan.

**Table 2**

*Literacy rate of Pakistan from 2010 to 2022*

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2029	2020	2021	2022
Literacy Rate	54.74	56.76	56.59	56.98	57.95	58.70	59.13	57.01	58.00	58.90	59.30	59.70	62.3

Pakistan's education system is changing, with an emphasis on creative teaching techniques. Pakistan is aware of the relevance and worth of the education institutions. At present, Pakistan has a 62.3 per cent literacy rate, meaning that 60 million people in the nation lack formal education. Moreover, it has acknowledged the importance of education growth throughout the nation, adopting fresh perspectives and cutting-edge tactics that combine captivating teaching strategies with student involvement and potential development. In this context, NGOs in Pakistan have been at the forefront of implementing cutting-edge instructional strategies to raise educational standards (Yemini, 2014).

NGOs' engagement in curriculum creation adds an additional dimension to their efforts to promote high-quality education. Insofar as NGOs are involved in civil society, they can serve as an outlet for the inclusion of demands from the community in the curriculum, particularly in the educational programs of various higher education institutions. However, NGOs' activities and products can play a significant role in the curriculum. As a result, NGOs may be used as a teaching tool to introduce students to civil society concerns or as a topic or subject theme area within the curriculum. Put another way, NGOs contribute significantly to the official, informal, and non-formal

curricula used in Active Citizenship education. Practically speaking, social education programs may gain from NGO initiatives. NGOs have created specialized educational resources in the Country. NGOs have many possibilities to demonstrate examples of active citizenship in action as a result of their operations.

The talents of educators are inextricably linked to the standard of education. In order to improve the abilities and skills of teachers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Pakistan regularly participate in teacher training programs. According to a study, these programs address a wide range of topics, such as classroom management, current teaching approaches, and the incorporation of technology in education (Mohmand, 1999).

Initiatives for teacher training improve the teaching profession while also fostering a more flexible and dynamic learning environment. NGOs play a crucial role in creating an ecosystem where high-quality education is not only a goal but an actual reality by providing instructors with the resources and expertise they need to deliver teaching effectively.

The development of educational resources for Active Citizenship can benefit from the involvement of NGOs. Practical activities can foster active citizenship. The benefits of working together between NGOs and schools are numerous: the organizations may publicize their goals and efforts, while schools can have immediate access to their specialized knowledge. NGOs typically view their educational function as beneficial. Since not all instructors are interested, certain teachers in the school are responsible for helping students learn cooperation.

It is crucial for there to be a variety of participants in an open society who can provide their viewpoints on societal issues. Then, a lot of things may be viewed in a wider context. One of the main objectives of social education is to broaden perceptions. Students do not learn to make educated political judgments in a free society if they do not consider a wide range of viewpoints.

### **Community Engagement and Empowerment**

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Pakistan have been at the forefront of efforts aimed at fostering active participation and empowerment within local communities. Community engagement and empowerment are key components of educational progress.

Successful NGOs are aware of how critical it is to comprehend the particular requirements and difficulties faced by the communities they support. The need for NGOs to actively interact with local communities is emphasized by Bano and Sajid (2021) in order to obtain an understanding of the social, economic, and cultural aspects that influence education. This knowledge serves as the cornerstone for interventions that are specifically designed to meet the requirements of each community, guaranteeing their efficacy and relevance.

Community participation entails actively including stakeholders in education decision-making processes, including parents, local educators, and community leaders, in addition to offering resources. Kieu (2017) emphasizes how crucial it is for NGOs to encourage cooperation with different community members. The community becomes an active participant in its members' educational journeys as a result of this participation, which fosters a sense of shared duty and ownership.

In Pakistan, non-governmental organizations aggressively encourage parental engagement since parents are integral to a child's education. NGOs provide forums for parents to comprehend the importance of education and take an active role in their children's educational journeys through seminars, awareness campaigns, and community gatherings (Khan, 2003). Students' educational results are positively impacted by this participation, which also strengthens their support network.

NGOs frequently work on skill development and capacity-building projects in communities in addition to conventional educational endeavours. This entails educating the local population on a range of topics, such as sustainable practices, business, and health. This all-encompassing strategy acknowledges the relationship between education and more general community development (Bari, 2005). NGOs help build resilient and self-sufficient communities by enabling people with a variety of talents.

NGOs actively work to advocate for the value of education in communities and raise awareness of its significance. Khan (2003) states that these groups strive to modify attitudes, tackle cultural obstacles, and highlight the educational advantages of education through campaigns, seminars, and community gatherings. NGOs help create a welcoming atmosphere that promotes lifelong learning by cultivating a culture that values education.

In Pakistan, there are still gender differences in education, and non-governmental organizations are essential in fostering inclusion and gender awareness. Breaking down hurdles and encouraging females to pursue education is made possible by initiatives that expressly target girls' education, offer scholarships, and challenge gender conventions (Bari, 2005). All community members will have access to educational opportunities thanks to this emphasis on inclusiveness.

### **Advocacy and Policy Influence**

One of the most important ways that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have shaped Pakistan's educational environment is through their advocacy and policy impact.

In Pakistan, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) undertake advocacy campaigns with the goal of enacting significant education changes. Bashir (2016) draws attention to the proactive role played by non-governmental organizations in promoting policy modifications concerning curriculum development, teacher preparation, and infrastructure improvement. NGOs seek to impact the decision-making processes that determine the course of educational changes through research, campaigning, and partnerships.

NGOs actively engage in policy debates at many levels, working with international organizations, government agencies, and academic institutions. According to Khalid and Nawaz (2019), having NGOs participate in these conversations allows for the inclusion of a variety of viewpoints and levels of competence. Through this partnership, a thorough grasp of the difficulties the educational system faces is cultivated, which results in more thoughtful and practical policy proposals.

NGOs prioritize inclusivity and equality in their advocacy campaigns. According to Khalid and Nawaz (2019), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) strive to advance laws that equalize access to education, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized groups. This includes supporting attempts to address the gender gap in education, diversity initiatives, and scholarship programs.

### **Conclusion**

There is still much to be discovered about the complex history of NGOs in Pakistani education. The fabric they weave is filled with a great deal of optimism, as seen by classrooms full of inquisitive students, communities strengthened by knowledge, and laws pushed in the direction of inclusion. However, there are still loose ends - constraints that need to be untied and problems that need cooperative solutions.

This fragile fabric needs a symphony of voices to rise through. To overcome financing uncertainties and capacity deficits, the government, non-governmental organizations, and the larger community must coordinate their



activities and make use of their resources and experience. Similar to tying knots, partnerships may increase effect, guarantee sustainability, and reduce duplication.

In addition, the tapestry requires ongoing rejuvenation. Like colourful new threads, creative funding approaches can guarantee long-term stability. NGOs may adjust to the always-changing terrain of education by making investments in research and knowledge exchange, which can enhance existing patterns.

The tale of NGOs in Pakistani education is ultimately one of advancement, but there is still room for growth. A greater educational future for all Pakistanis may be woven into this delicate tapestry by embracing the complexity, promoting collaboration, and persistently pursuing progress. The canvas is ready, calling on all interested parties to contribute to the process of creating, thread by stitch, a legacy of transformational teaching.

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