

Of Square Pegs and Round Holes: Training in Developing Countries

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Training is a central feature of most social sector development efforts. This paper examines the impact of training against the backdrop of the Education Sector Reforms Assistance (ESRA) program and draws the conclusion that without attending to the demand-side factors of training that: a) make public sector personnel seek out professional development opportunities that will enhance their job performance; and b) ensure that what they learn is actually utilized on behalf of better job performance—the impact will be of minimal value to the sector it was intended to improve. Donors and donor-country parliaments must take the long view and the political risks necessary to help put into place these critical demand-side factors.

Keywords: *Professional Development, Demand-side, Pakistan*

INTRODUCTION

The Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program was a United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded effort designed to support the Government of Pakistan's (GOP's) Education Sector Reforms (ESR) initiative. ESRA, which spanned from January 2003 to September 2007, operated across six technical areas (i.e., policy and planning, professional development, literacy, public-community partnerships, public-private partnerships, and information and communication technologies), 13 educational jurisdictions (i.e., nine districts, two provinces, the Islamabad Capital Territory [ICT], and the Federal Ministry of Education [MOE]), and thousands of school communities.¹

Training was a central and ubiquitous feature of ESRA. Over the course of the program's nearly 5-year run, ESRA trained teachers; teacher trainers; head teachers; district, provincial, and federal officers; managers; administrators; planners; information specialists; inspectors; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); school management committees; and local community members. Training was carried out through a variety of mediums, including participant training, extensive in-service training, 1–2 day workshops

¹ For a complete description of the ESRA program, see: <http://esra.rti.org/>.

and seminars,² shoulder-to-shoulder “technology transfer,” and interactive radio instruction. The number of individuals trained through ESRA is by no means insignificant. By the time the ESRA program closed in September 2007, it trained 45,679 teachers, head teachers, mentors, and master trainers; members of 7,596 school management committees; parents and community members of 7,596 schools; and hundreds of government officials.

This paper examines the issue of impact, resulting from training carried out by the ESRA program. To address this issue, however, one must survey the educational landscape on which ESRA unfolded, to determine the extent to which any meaningful impact *could* have been achieved given the myriad “realities” of Pakistan’s education system. Equally important is a theoretical understanding of the impact of ESRA, or any other project that features extensive training, *should* have achieved. To the extent that ESRA did not achieve what it should have, one must ask, “What lessons can be drawn from this experience that will enable similar future projects to maximize their impact and realize their full potential?”

A number of determinants factor into the level of impact that results from training. Some of these drivers relate to the *supply side* of training: design of a training program; ways and means of delivering training programs; abilities of the trainer; relevance of training programs to those being trained; relative efficacy of one modality (e.g., participant training) over another (e.g., shoulder-to-shoulder); and appropriateness of the people invited to participate. While others factor in with the *demand side* of training: performance standards; performance appraisal systems; incentive structures; accountability mechanisms; and career ladders tied to professional development. Although supply-side factors are important, this paper focuses on the demand side because regardless of whether the actual programs are of high caliber, if trained personnel cannot or will not use their training to improve public sector performance, that training serves no purpose.³

If you liken supply-side training to the creation of a square peg, why try to create one if a) the person being trained really doesn’t want to be trained—s/he has no interest in becoming a square peg, b) the training being offered really is not relevant—the system requires round pegs, and/or c) the trained person fails to put that training into day-to-day practice—s/he returns to a round-holed environment that eventually grinds them back down to a round peg? To the extent that training is about the development of square pegs, it must also be about the creation of a square-holed environment.⁴

2 One ESRA in-service teacher training program consisted of a 300-hour curriculum delivered in formal training sessions over the course of 8 months.

3 We accept the fact that the trained individual may benefit, especially if s/he can find a better job in the private sector, but this does not help improve overall public-sector performance.

SETTING THE STAGE: THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF PAKISTAN

On July 13, 2005, a headline in a local Pakistani newspaper read: “*Report of developing countries’ commitment to education: Pakistan education system ranked lowest in 14 Asian countries*” (*Daily News*, 2005). Referring to the report, the article noted that Pakistan “spends less per pupil than most of [its] South Asian neighbors and charges user fees in full. Such low spending can only deliver pitiable results: two out of three Pakistani adults are illiterate, with the same proportion of secondary school age children out of school; four out of 10 children are missing primary school; and girls and women constitute a majority of those who are denied access to and an equal chance for complete basic education. In addition, Pakistan’s primary school teachers are overworked and under trained (*Daily News*, 2005).” According to the *Daily News* (2005), Pakistan achieved a total score of 24/100 and received a grade of “F” on the report’s score card (*Daily News*, 2005).

Table 1 (below) presents the 2004–2005 enrollment numbers for girls and boys: combined public and private schools, the latter constituting 31% of total Grade 1 to Grade 12 enrollment (National Education Census [NEC], 2006). It also illustrates how large enrollment is by stage,⁵ relative to primary-stage enrollment. For both girls and boys, middle-stage enrollment is 30% of primary, while secondary-stage enrollment is 13% of primary. Higher secondary stage enrollment for girls is 6.4% that of primary, while for boys it is 4.7%.

Table 1				
Enrollment (Public and Private) 2005				
Stage	Girls	% Primary	Boys	% Primary
Primary	6,796,022	1.000	9,148,949	1.000
Middle	2,074,904	0.305	2,868,070	0.313
Secondary	881,213	0.130	1,230,222	0.134
Higher Secondary	431,903	0.064	430,561	0.047

Table 2 (below) shows the gross enrollment rates by stage, for both girls and boys in public and private schools (total), as well as public (NEC, 2006). Enrollment in the middle stage is only 36% of the appropriate age group (for girls), while it is 47% of the appropriate age group for boys. The situation worsens such that the enrollment in higher secondary for both girls and boys is only 12% of the appropriate age group.

4 While I was in Pakistan working on ESRA in late 2006, a colleague got off the phone with a friend. He told me that this friend, who had been sent away for some training, was lamenting the fact that he had lost all the knowledge and skills he had acquired because he was unable to use them when he returned to his public-sector post.

5 After 2004, there was a considerable amount of talk within the GOP about raising this value to 4%. This number has proven to be extraordinarily difficult to discern for the following reasons: a) education expenditure occurs across a number of ministries (there are military schools and railroad schools); b) one is never sure if private-sector expenditure has been included in the numerator; c) so much money that has been budgeted for education is not spent, and if it is not spent, it should not be included in the numerator; and d) data on education expenditure is difficult if not impossible to obtain.

Table 2				
Enrollment Rates				
	Girls Total	Girls Public	Boys Total	Boys Public
Primary	.67	.45	.84	.59
Middle	.36	.23	.47	.33
Secondary	.24	.16	.32	.23
Higher Secondary	.12	.10	.12	.10

These tables show an extraordinary retention and access problem. Access to primary education is modest, especially when considering that the enrollment rate is a gross rate, not net. However, the real problem lies in retention: more than half of students enrolled in the primary stage drop out. It should come as no surprise, then, that Pakistan's overall literacy rate ranks 102 out of 115 countries on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics' (UIS') Adult (15+) Literacy Rates and Illiterate Population by Country and by Gender tables for 2006 (UIS, 2006).

Poor enrollment figures, in terms of both access and retention can be attributed to a largely dysfunctional educational system. Nearly 25% of Pakistan's public primary schools are shelter-less, 61% are without latrines, 53% are without boundary walls, 23% are without water, and 57% are without electricity (NEC, 2006). Most lack basics such as desks, chairs, chalkboards, and fans. The deplorable circumstances can be attributed in large part to scant political and social will *vis-à-vis* public education. The lack of political and social will is evident in the fact that Pakistan was, at the time of the study, 1 of only 12 countries that spent less than 2% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on education (International Crisis Group, 2004).

Making matters worse is the fact that the limited funding available for education is not well spent. For example, teacher absenteeism is rampant, which results in a loss of such allocated resources. When a very high-ranking provincial education official was asked, "If X is the total amount of time (in one academic year) all of your Grades 1–12 teachers are supposed to be in the classroom teaching, what percentage of X would you actually find your teachers teaching in the classroom?" His response was 30%. Parenthetically, he was then asked, "And what percentage of that would you say is fairly decent teaching?" He responded 50%. It was then pointed out to him that anywhere from 70–85% of all resources devoted to teachers (e.g., salaries, benefits, pre-service training, and in-service professional development) is wasted due to teacher absenteeism. In turn, he noted that since most of the education budget is spent on teachers, why spend *any* money on education, as it is all wasted? Granted, these numbers are not empirical, but they are nevertheless indicative of a costly problem. Determining the costliness of teacher absenteeism in Pakistan will require rigorous research. By way of comparison, recent studies on teacher absenteeism show that across six developing countries (Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru, and Uganda), teacher absenteeism ranges from 11 to 27 percent among primary school teachers (Chaudhury et al., 2004), which may indicate that the 70% anecdotal figure offered above is high.

While significant amounts of funds are not well spent, some are not used at all. The MOE's *White Paper* (2006) reports that less than only 50% of funds allocated for non-recurrent expenditures are spent. The failure to spend available resources results from a number of factors surrounding the GOP's devolution plan. The Local Government Ordinance (2001) transferred various roles and responsibilities from the provinces to the districts in an attempt to improve overall social sector service delivery. However, the devolution visualized in the ordinance was "incomplete:" while the districts gained a fair amount of authority and responsibility over the education system, the provinces maintained control over key purse strings. Compounding this problem is the general perception that the districts lack much needed capacity, as well as the strong likelihood that the provinces see devolution as a threat—a dissipation of their power. When asked about unspent resources, the provinces cite the districts' lack of capacity to spend them, pointing to previous years' accruals (personal communication, March 16-April 11, 2006). When district officers were asked about unspent resources, they claimed that the provinces withheld funds until the last quarter, making it virtually impossible to spend them (personal communication, March 16-April 11, 2006). Regardless of where the truth lies in this matter, the result is the same: scarce resources fail to be channeled to where they are most needed.

When, during a series of visioning exercises,⁶ district education officers were asked to list the various problems encountered while trying to perform their jobs, political interference, or the problems arising from political interference ranked among the most cited. Because many teachers hold their jobs as a result of political interference,⁷ it is nearly impossible to apportion them across schools: some schools have an over-abundance of teachers while others are in dire need of them. When efforts are made by district officers to distribute teachers more equitably across schools, teachers simply go to their political patrons, who then threaten to make arrangements to have the district officer transferred. Moreover, if a teacher wants to be transferred to a more ideal location (and so exacerbate the teacher distribution issue), that teacher simply asks their political patron to make necessary arrangements. Whether or not the transfer actually takes place depends on the whims and needs of the respective politician.

7 In 2005–2006, ESRA conducted on behalf of the MOE a visioning exercise which was comprised of three sets of visioning workshops. The first set of workshops involved the district officials from nine districts in Sindh and Balochistan. The second and third sets of workshops involved district education officials from every district in the country. It was during these three sets of workshops that the district officials' views were expressed.

8 It is common knowledge that many teachers get in Pakistan jobs because they help the politicians with activities such as get the vote out. I asked a colleague who interacts several with teachers and officers if this is true. His response was: [I'm] "not sure how we can substantiate this any further than what we hear about it from the teachers'/officials mouth. It is according to them that politicians get teachers recruited for the following reasons: Except for salary grade 17 and above, all the other teacher recruitment is done without involving any formal mechanism such as the public service commission, and as such easier to recruit. In the process of doing so the politicians: a) fulfill their promises of employment generation; b) add votes to their constituency; and c) possibly seek undue support from the new recruits at the time of next elections.

Additionally, schools are largely constructed where politicians want them and not where they are most needed. As such, one can find areas with an overabundance of schools, while in others there are none. District officers also noted that because the education sector's local-level, nonsalary recurrent resources (i.e., money needed for such things as fuel and chalk) are lumped into a multisector block grant that is passed down from the province to the district (where it is wrangled over in the district assembly), there are times when the education sector does not receive any of these funds. In such cases, politicians may have decided that resources should be allocated to more visible initiatives, such as road construction.

The education information and data configuration in Pakistan—the National Education Management Information Systems (NEMIS)—is inadequate for similar reasons. If most of the decision making is based on political considerations, there is little need for good information; on the contrary, good transparent information can be seen as a threat because it will highlight problems. One can actually find published national figures on education with data from an entire province missing. That there is no real widespread demand for information is the reason why well-intentioned donor initiatives in education management information systems and data-for-decision-making so often fail. Given that Pakistan ranks fifth from the bottom on Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI),⁹ making it one of the most corrupt countries in the world, the generally poor informational situation should not be surprising: information-driven transparency is not wanted.

Generally speaking, the education situation in Pakistan is one in which performance is low and of little concern to many, where there is little to no accountability, where there is lack of clarity *vis-à-vis* roles and responsibilities, and where there is a significant degree of political interference and corruption. What impact could training possibly have in this environment? That answer depends in large part on what the impact should be.

WHAT THE IMPACT OF TRAINING SHOULD BE

If training is conducted for the sake of training, then the impact of 500 trained public sector professionals, for example, would be 500 trained public sector professionals. If however, training is not simply carried out for the sake of training and aims for a larger purpose, such as the improved performance of 500 trained public sector professionals, it should help teachers to teach better, enable planners to develop better plans; assist policy makers to develop better policies; and aid EMIS specialists to provide better information.

Moreover, improved performance should be geared toward improved classroom learning for all: *more and more children learning more and more*. Teachers should not teach for the sake of teaching; planners should not plan for the sake of planning; inspectors should not inspect for the sake of inspecting; and policy makers should not develop policies for the sake of developing policies. Every professional's performance should ultimately be

9 http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2005

directed toward improved classroom performance for all of Pakistan's children. After all, that is why the education sector allegedly exists.

If, however, training programs are intended to help education professionals perform at a higher level, the programs must be tied to the specifics of what "better performance" means for each professional. Training must be needs-based. Accordingly, each professional requires a job description: they need to be informed and aware of their scopes of work and responsibilities. As such, training programs should be designed to help professionals better perform their functions. Inasmuch as it may be deemed "beneficial" for a planner to be trained to develop a spreadsheet model, if s/he is not required to develop one, as per their job description, chances are that those skills will quickly dissipate as one's daily duties are carried out.

But what does it mean for a teacher to teach *better*? How does one know when a teacher teaches better? (How does one know when a planner plans better?) This can only be determined by looking at specific outcomes. Teachers instruct in better ways when there is evidence that more and more children are learning more and more. It is not enough to train a teacher to use a particular improved methodology (however needs-based it may be), and have that teacher successfully utilize it on a day-to-day basis, if students are not learning more. The same holds true for all education professionals: it makes little sense for planners to develop better plans if in the end those better plans do not help improve the level of learning among children. Accordingly, in Pakistan as elsewhere, there must be performance standards for each and every education professional, and those performance standards must somehow be tied to indicators that measure the outcome of improved access and quality (i.e., more and more learners learning more and more). With these performance standards in place, one can then develop training programs that help education professionals enhance their performance.

To the extent that training programs can be designed to facilitate better performance among education professionals, demand must still be considered. In other words, what *makes* an education professional *want* to perform better, and want to meaningfully participate in a relevant (needs-based) training program? Without this inherent demand, training is, verily, supply-driven, offered largely because others (i.e., donors) feel that training is necessary and/or beneficial.

For some, this "demand" does come from within: they are self-motivated professionals who simply want to perform at their highest level to help children learn more. Though, for many others, this motivation must come from specific external factors woven into the fabric of the system, such as accountability systems and career ladders.

Performance standards only make sense if they are part of a performance appraisal system, one that holds professionals accountable for achieving a particular level or standard of performance. If professionals are held accountable for achieving their performance standards, there will be widespread demand for training programs designed to improve performance. Additionally, if advancement along career ladders were based on performance *and* successful completion of a battery of training programs designed to

prepare professionals to assume the roles and responsibilities of the next rung of the ladder, training would be both demand-driven and needs-based.

Thus, the following is needed for demand-driven training:

1. Job descriptions;
2. Performance standards;
3. Performance appraisal systems;
4. Accountability systems; and
5. Career ladders tied to training.

It should come as no surprise that the requisite components for demand-driven training are largely absent from the educational landscape in Pakistan. To the extent that they may be in place,⁹ they are largely ignored. Therefore, what impact *can* training have within the public education sector of Pakistan? The answer is: very little, unless measures are also taken to address demand-side factors.

WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS

Recent literature on both capacity building and capacity development support the view that without the demand-side factors in place, supply-side training is of limited value (Grindle, 1997; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002; Nair, 2003; World Bank, 2005b; Nelson, 2006). According to Nelson (2006),

One of the key ways that developing countries and international donors have invested in capacity development in the past several decades has been through training and skills-building programs. The cost effectiveness of these investments, however, has been a matter of debate. Although it is clear that some individuals have benefited personally from training and some organizations in developing countries have reported that training helped them develop new competencies and efficiencies, the dominant finding of most evaluations of training in a development context is that it has proved to be less effective than expected. Donors have often supported training programs as a way of addressing a variety of institutional, organizational, and individual skills weaknesses that they assume that the training of key individuals can correct or improve. These expectations are seldom met, leading to the conclusion that training is rarely the optimal tool for capacity development. (p.1)

This does not mean that training is not an important element of capacity development—it is. Rather, it points to the fact that it is not the sole element. As noted by Thomas (2006):

¹⁰ According to the Bureau of Curriculum, there are no formal job descriptions for teacher or head teachers. Some people claim that job descriptions do exist for some posts, but that no one ever sees them.

Donors have addressed human resource problems mainly by financing training of individuals. These efforts have almost always achieved their target numbers of people to be trained. But training is only part of the solution to building human capacity. For example, low salaries and poor working conditions often contribute to high outflow of trained staff. More important, the record is mixed when it comes to the effectiveness of organizations where the trained people work. (p.1)

He further states that “individuals are too often trained for specific tasks before the organizational framework has been reformed to allow them to use the training effectively” (Thomas, 2006, p.1). This assumes, of course, that critical demand-side factors are also in place. As noted by Nair (2003, p.2), “skills [must] become embedded in organizations and individuals, but institutional incentives (“rules of the game”) shape utilization and retention of skills and determine scalability and sustainability of efforts to nurture capacity nationwide.” It is one thing for a person to be trained to do X; it is yet another for the organizational framework to be structured to allow that person to do X; it is still quite another to have the incentives in place that ensure that person does X on a regular basis. Accordingly, the training of *individuals* must be integrated into a larger effort that also addresses critical *organizational* and *institutional* factors (World Bank, 2005b).

Recent literature also notes that capacity development approaches should be “owned by the recipient countries and based on broad local participation” and that by “emphasizing [such] demand-led approaches to nurture capacity, this consensus also underscores the prime importance of transformational processes within the recipient countries: giving voice to various local stakeholders, creating transparent governance, and developing a culture of evidence-based policy formulation and execution” (Nair, 2003, p. 2). Ideally, an integrated capacity development approach should be demand-led by the recipient country, but when the institutional incentives—the “rules of the game”—translate into widespread public sector accountability, government demand may be hard to come by, especially in a country where public-sector accountability is virtually nonexistent, and where there is much to be gained from the chaos that is the status quo. This being the case in many countries underscores the need for overarching capacity development interventions to include *engaged societies* as a key objective (World Bank, 2005a). Engaged societies create the demand for widespread government accountability.

THE IMPACT OF ESRA’S TRAINING

What was the impact of ESRA’s training, given: a) the education situation in Pakistan; b) the impact it should have; and c) what the literature states about training and capacity development? To the extent that ESRA or any other project that trains public sector personnel has not addressed demand-side factors (e.g., the organizational and institutional elements of the system that pull much needed knowledge, skills, and behaviors into day-

to-day practice), the impact will be minimal.¹⁰ To some extent, however, ESRA and its GOP counterparts addressed these factors.

Vision 2025

The MOE had become acutely aware that, after decades of reform and donor-supported development, the educational situation in Pakistan was still dire. Moreover, they realized that a primary cause of the situation was the lack of a widely owned and well-informed vision of a high-performing education system, and how it functions. Specifically, they recognized that without such a vision in place, various and sundry reform and development efforts tended to veer in multiple directions, the net vector sum of which has proven to be close to zero. Accordingly, in 2005, the MOE asked ESRA to help them craft such a vision for the year 2025.

The visioning exercise which yielded Vision 2025 unfolded in three stages (see Table 3 below). It is worth noting that over the course of this exercise 1,319 stakeholders participated in 39 workshops throughout the country: this included the Executive District Officers for Education from every district in the country (a total of 126 at the time); education officials from every province; and a host of federal- and national-level education officials and professionals.

Table 3 MOE's Visioning Exercise		
Stage I	Initial visioning workshops, resulting in <i>Vision 2025: Discussion Document 1</i>	April–July 2005
Stage II	Feedback workshops on <i>Vision 2025: Discussion Document 1</i> , resulting in <i>Vision 2025: Discussion Document 2</i> (The document in your hands)	August 2005–February 2006
Stage III	Workshops to cost the vision, resulting in the <i>Final Vision Document</i>	March–July 2006

The exercise asked stakeholders to envision present-day classrooms; schools and communities; and district, provincial, and federal education systems. They were also instructed to delineate all the problems they could find therein, with a particular emphasis on classroom and system-wide learning, management, planning, and professional development. With this list of problems in hand, they were then asked to place themselves in the year 2025, assume these problems no longer existed, and describe what they saw. From this initial exercise came a nascent vision, which was outlined in a

11 This paper is examining the notion of impact as it relates to training: real, meaningful, lasting, impact. The ESRA program trained a great number of people because one of its many performance indicators was “number of teachers and education administrators trained.” There were two other performance indicators that warrant attention here, as well. The first is “percentage of teachers meeting improved performance standards,” the second is “improved student performance. With regard to the former, ESRA met/exceeded two of four target values. As for the latter, ESRA met/exceeded five of six target values

discussion document, along with a number of pointed questions—questions designed to further the vision.

This discussion document (*Vision 2025: Discussion Document 1*) was distributed to every district office in Pakistan and to a wide variety of provincial, federal, and national-level stakeholders. Recipients were instructed to: a) reflect upon the nascent vision; b) address the questions; and c) prepare themselves to participate in a series of feedback workshops in which answers would be discussed and the vision furthered.

With the information gathered during feedback workshops, the vision was furthered and summarized in a second discussion document (*Vision 2025: Discussion Document 2*), along with a series of pointed questions aimed to further this rendition of the vision. Most of these questions, however, focused on cost issues. This second discussion document was disseminated such as the first document, with the same instructions.

The last set of workshops, which covered costing, was supported by a computerized enrollment, input, and cost project model. With the aid of this policy options tool, the various cost implications of the emerging vision—vastly improved enrollment rates, more well-trained teachers, higher salaries, better equipped classrooms and schools, and meaningful operating budgets for district officers—were examined and assessed against the backdrop of a realistic set of finance assumptions. In the end, an affordable vision was realized.

Of note is the fact that throughout all the workshops, there was widespread consensus on the need for job descriptions, performance standards, performance appraisal systems, accountability systems, and career ladders tied to professional development. Key stakeholders throughout the system publicly acknowledged what was necessary to improve system-wide performance: performance-based accountability. The problem remains, however: to what extent does each and every one of these government officials want to be held personally accountable? If the answer to that question is little, any attempt to hold them accountable will be met with organized resistance.

National Education Policy

While Vision 2025 was being developed, the MOE launched a review of the National Education Policy. Once Vision 2025 was finalized, it became necessary to tether it to the National Education Policy review process to ensure that relevant policies were reviewed against the backdrop of the vision, and so aligned to it, such that their successful implementation over time would help realize the vision. It should be noted that Vision 2025 is now Chapter 7 of the revised National Education Policy. Accordingly, all of the key demand factors that are a central feature of Vision 2025—defined learning outcomes; a curriculum that is tightly aligned to those learning outcomes; assessment system that is tightly aligned to the curriculum and that determines how well each student has done *vis-à-vis* the learning outcomes; performance standards for every education professional in the system; performance appraisal systems that determine how well every education

professional has performed *vis-à-vis* their performance standards; accountability systems and mechanisms aligned to the performance appraisal systems; institutionalized deliberative forums that drive ongoing, well-informed and widely owned system-wide improvement; career ladders linked to professional development and performance; and sufficient funding—are now embedded in the National Education Policy.

Community Mobilization: Engaged Society

ESRA mobilized the communities of nearly 7,596 schools around the notion of school improvement, development of school improvement plans, and implementation of school improvement grants. It also strengthened School Management Committees (SMCs), and helped forge higher-level associations of SMCs (e.g., Union Council Associations of SMCs and District Associations of SMCs). ESRA thus enlisted society and established the foundation for an engaged society to serve as a permanent feature of the Pakistani educational landscape. In addition, an engaged society is a key element of Vision 2025.

CONCLUSION

While ESRA addressed the demand-side factors of a successful capacity development effort inasmuch as possible, the sequencing was such that it did not ensure that all the training conducted had significant impact. For supply-side training to yield a meaningful and lasting impact, demand-side factors must be in place. ESRA's supply-side training was initiated from the beginning of the project and was carried on throughout. However, it took nearly three years simply to create the policy space necessary for the demand-side elements. Policy implementation of these demand-side elements will take much longer. Further, ESRA merely touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of an engaged society. In spite of having mobilized 7,596 communities around school improvement, ESRA only laid the ground work for the type of engaged society needed to be a meaningful demand-side factor. And what type of engaged society is needed? Ponder the following: What would the educational landscape of Pakistan look like if the parents of poor children were as politically powerful and adroit as the military? Need more be said?

That the cart was very much before the horse in that ESRA carried out supply-side training before the demand-side factors were in place can be attributed to a variety of factors. Because education development unfolds within a political arena, donors, politicians, and host country governments need to see tangible results, quickly. One such tangible result is a large number of trained personnel. Moreover, large numbers of trained personnel can be generated fairly quickly and regularly. ESRA was accountable for training 34,000 teachers and administrators; when faced with that task, one starts training as soon as possible.

Few if any requests for proposals (RFP) or requests for applications (RFA) call for the creation of policy space for public sector accountability systems, much less for the accountability systems themselves. It is far too politically contentious territory for most

donors: the RFA issued for ESRA never mentioned it; it simply called for policies in support of various activities undertaken by the project.

Inasmuch as ESRA was asked to engage society (i.e., the public community partnerships component of the project), it was not asked to create the kinds of structure that could truly alter the political economic landscape of a country (i.e., a poor parents' equivalent of the teachers union); again, they are too politically contentious.

This points to a very serious problem: supply-side training has proven to be gravely wanting, yet the politics of education development are such that: a) RFPs/RFAs continue to ask for large numbers of trained personnel; and b) there is neither the patience nor the will necessary to put in place the demand-side factors needed for supply-side training to have a meaningful impact. The ESRA program was used to help elucidate this problem; however, ESRA is not alone.

How many donors are now designing projects that simply call for supply-side training without giving any attention to demand-side factors? How much donor-driven supply-side training is currently ongoing throughout the developing world? Until donors, and those to whom they are financially accountable, can take the long view and the political risks that come along with helping a country's public sector become more accountable to the people they allegedly serve, the impact of training will fall short, and valuable resources will continue to be squandered.

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