**Education and climate change**

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On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had already massively disrupted the systems’ and students’ ability to catch up on lost learning, the recent floods have thrown Pakistan’s frail education system into a fresh limbo.

Early estimates speak of partial or complete damage to nearly 20,000 schools, halting the education of more than 3 million students in most parts of Sindh, Balochistan, and South Punjab.

Needless to say, there’s a lot that needs to be done in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. In the areas where water has receded and temporary shelters have been set up, access to education, no matter how impromptu initially, must be ensured. There is of course the uphill task of reconstructing the destroyed educational infrastructure that needs to be embraced with urgency as soon as the response shifts to the reconstruction phase.

Thinking beyond the calamity at hand, however, one can’t help but wonder if merely rebuilding brick-and-mortar schools is the only response when it comes to our education system. True, infrastructure holds immense value in the overall scheme of things but Pakistan’s response to the floods needs to be seen beyond convention.

[US conducts separate military exercises with Japan, South Korea after North's missile launch](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Oct-2022/us-conducts-separate-military-exercises-with-japan-south-korea-after-north-s-missile-launch)

As the eighth most impacted country by climate change, natural disasters, in all likelihood will become a norm for Pakistan. If the country must brace itself against regular climate disasters, rather than merely focusing on “rescuing” education, it is extremely important to consider how education itself can be used to protect against climate change and build resilience.

Unfortunately for Pakistan, decades of neglect meted out to the education system has left the country without a sizable workforce that has the necessary knowledge and skills to combat climate change. To say that we are lagging by at least three decades would be an understatement. However, no matter how glaring the lapse, it is no excuse to not take corrective measures.

A truly sustainable response to climate and environmental change lies in equipping young people with the necessary knowledge and information to encourage positive climate action. This should however not be taken to mean jargonised textbooks that are designed to test students’ ability to reproduce memorised definitions. On the contrary, a truly meaningful climate education would entail providing students with cross-disciplinary access points to understand what contributes to climate change coupled with practical skills to develop indigenous solutions to combat its causes, mitigate inevitable disasters and build resilience against them.

[US re-engagement with Pakistan: Ideas for reviving an important relationship](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Oct-2022/us-re-engagement-with-pakistan-ideas-for-reviving-an-important-relationship)

Developing this sort of knowledge base from the school level is integral to Pakistan’s ability to produce qualified specialists to combat climate change and promote a green economy in the long run. In the short term, plugging in climate education in the school curriculum is essential to prompt individual climate action and slow down the pace at which future disasters might attack us.

Modern, integrated approaches to learning such as STEAM (i.e., science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) can serve as important catalysts to mainstreaming climate education in Pakistan. Earlier this year, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training launched the five-year STEAM Pakistan project, which aims not only to introduce innovative instruction and management but also to build synergies and change the avoidant mindsets toward STEAM subjects that have already been brought to the fore by the climate crisis around the world. This could very well be a huge step in the right direction. Adopting the STEAM model of education—that discards the conventional subject-segregated pedagogy in favour of integrated learning—for climate action can potentially be a window of opportunity that both the government and the donor community must actively explore.

[PM Shehbaz Sharif to unveil ‘historic’ Kissan package next week](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Oct-2022/pm-shehbaz-sharif-to-unveil-historic-kissan-package-next-week)

With the time to ponder having passed long ago, rather than treating education as an afterthought, we must finally exploit its potential as an all-encompassing, befitting response to Pakistan’s climate conundrum.