**The social contract and education**

[**Moiz Hussain**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/moiz-hussain)

January 01, 2022

The role of the government in the provision of free and quality education—even in countries having the strongest traditions of free-market economies—remains paramount. This is simply because education serves as the bedrock for the citizens in any society to achieve equality and justice. And so, without education at its foundation, the whole philosophy of the social contract would lose its legitimacy.

The State of Pakistan promises this right to its children through Article 25-A of the constitution. It further has been a signatory to several international treaties aimed at protecting the rights of the child, including education. A few among these include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All and in the 2000’s, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and their recent upgrade, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).However, despite signing these treaties and the decision-makers having an in-depth understanding of the supreme importance of education in the national development agenda, Pakistan continues to stumble and struggle in pursuit of realising its education development aspirations.

[Sudan’s prime minister resigns amid deadlock, anti-coup protests](https://nation.com.pk/03-Jan-2022/sudan-s-prime-minister-resigns-amid-deadlock-anti-coup-protests)

A manifestation of this is the fact that after failing to achieve the target of universal primary education outlined in the MDGs, Pakistan, it seems, is once again on the road to repeating history by failing to achieve SDG-4, i.e., inclusive, equitable and quality education.

As pointed out conspicuously in a recently released white paper, “Public Investment in Education: An Appraisal of SDG-4 in Pakistan,” despite the passage of more than five years since ratifying the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, Pakistan is yet to begin making the preliminary but significant adjustments identified in its National Framework. The fact that all provinces have not yet concluded work on their respective SDG frameworks has not helped the national cause. There are also several glaring discrepancies across provinces in terms of reporting, and evaluating their respective performances against SDG-4. These persistent issues have significantly contributed to the overall lag in devising a nationally representative strategy on education and wholly curtailed the country’s ability to evaluate its performance against Goal 4.

[PML-N will establish govt in general election 2022 says Ahsan Iqbal](https://nation.com.pk/02-Jan-2022/pml-n-will-establish-govt-in-general-election-2022-says-ahsan-iqbal)

The underlying state of inertia, both at the political- and systems-level serves as the most obvious culprit for the current state of affairs.

To undo this wrong, as a first step, there needs to be more active coordination between the federal and provincial governments. The National Command Operations Centre has been exemplary in synergising and articulating a unified national effort against Covid-19 by collating, analysing and processing information with the help of digital input and human intelligence. In the same spirit, we saw the revival of the Inter-provincial Education Ministers’ Conference (IPEMC) during the pandemic. While this mechanism had existed since the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, it had remained dormant for the major part of the last decade. However, its recent resurgence sufficiently demonstrated how a collaborative effort across the federating units can result in swift, nationwide decision-making to make education possible even during the most extraordinary of times. IPEMC must, thus, not revert to its old state of dormancy post the pandemic, but this platform must now diversify and be actively utilised to set Pakistan on the road to achieving SDG-4.

[Saqlain Mushtaq steps down as Pakistan's interim head coach](https://nation.com.pk/02-Jan-2022/saqlain-mushtaq-steps-down-as-pakistan-s-interim-head-coach)

On one hand, continued cooperation between the federating units on education is likely to result in much quicker progress to finalise the documentation and blueprints necessary to facilitate nationwide, simultaneous implementation of educational reforms. On the other hand, this will also provide an important opportunity for cross-learning and knowledge-sharing that will allow uniformity in documenting and reporting progress so that real-time and country-wide evaluation of SDG-4 can finally be made possible.

Unless this first step is taken, even after the passage of nine years, the Pakistani state is unlikely to live up to its part of the bargain in the social contract, leaving yet another generation of Pakistanis unskilled and in the lurch of illiteracy.