**Teleschools in Pakistan**

**[SHAHZEB NAEEM](https://nation.com.pk/Reporter/shahzeb-naeem)**

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Ever since the pandemic struck I’ve been assisting kids of my helping staff on how to operate a mobile tablet that my staff was able to procure in order for his child to take online classes. This made me think regarding the issue of education access particularly during the pandemic and what has been our state’s response towards it.

The carnage and destruction wrought by the pandemic resulted in more than 50 million children (private and public) not having access to education. At this stage, it was important for the state to come up with an emergency response to tackle as well as manage such an issue. A series of necessary and important interventions were rolled out by the provincial education ministries but it is important to highlight that the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training has been the torchbearer for rolling out ‘COVID specific responses’ to tackle issues facing the education sector the especially when online instruction has become the standard to ensure continuity of learning.

[NAB summons CM Buzdar's principal secretary on July 8](https://nation.com.pk/02-Jul-2021/nab-summons-cm-buzdar-s-principal-secretary-on-july-8)

The main question that the ministry had to tackle was to understand how to provide universal access to online education for the country’s children that are enrolled in public schools. Subsequent questions that will be branched out through this will be to understand how the ministry has undertaken or utilised online tools to conduct assessments in order to measure learning during the pandemic.

In this regard, it is heartening to learn about the progressive initiatives introduced by the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training in the past year as it has taken the lead in introducing education innovations n Pakistan through blended learning programs such as the tele-school, e-taleem, Radio School, increasing the number of Ed-Tech partnerships as well as plans to launch ‘hotspot’ connectivity centres to provide pre-installed digital content to students who are unable to access digital infrastructure. It can be possibly argued that the encouraging steps taken by the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training are helping in reinventing the wheel on education crisis management in terms of design, delivery as well as evaluation in order to ensure equitable learning for all and the respective provincial departments of education can definitely learn and possibly emulate the steps undertaken by the Ministry.

[India still trying to derail Afghanistan peace push: President Arif Alvi](https://nation.com.pk/02-Jul-2021/india-still-trying-to-derail-afghanistan-peace-push-president-arif-alvi)

The pandemic set the stage for an unprecedented crisis which had to be carefully managed. It was quite encouraging to observe that the Ministry was able to roll-out its Teleschool programme within a few weeks after the closure of schools back in April 2020. The teleschool is essentially an educational TV programme which was used as a remote learning tool by leveraging existing stakeholders as well as resources that were recalibrated to ensure that student learning continued during the school closures. The MoFEPT utilised its networking by collaborating with private education partners for their inputs with regards to the design and delivery of educational content through Tele-School. Ultimately Tele-School was able to broadcast programs for Grades 1-12 while offering subjects such as Mathematics, English, Science and Urdu. Given that television reach in Pakistan stands at roughly 95% compared to our internet penetration as well as the amount of individuals that have access to 3G/4G technology, this was a welcome move by the Ministry as it allowed the medium of television to be used as a vital source for remote learning.

[Denmark to vaccinate children on immediate basis; paediatricians remain sceptical](https://nation.com.pk/02-Jul-2021/denmark-to-vaccinate-children-on-immediate-basis-paediatricians-remain-sceptical)

After personally observing the contents of the programmes that were broadcasted, I was able to witness that the content that is available at teleschool has been carefully curated and adapted for students of each grade level to make it easily accessible while being engaging at the same time. A lot of empirical data on school education in Pakistan suggests that despite the increasing enrolment and participation rates it can be argued that children at school are not learning nor do existing pedagogical practices help in creating an enabling environment for our students which encourages the student to learn. The content displayed through teleschool makes the whole classroom experience more interactive and engaging for the students which is a step in the right direction for the state with regards to devising their education strategies and policies i.e understanding how to make content more engaging so that the student has an incentive to learn.

It is also a welcoming step to learn that multiple stakeholders ranging from government school teachers, subject experts and timetable specialists were deployed by the Ministry to develop a sequencing of lessons aligned to the national curriculum while carefully evaluating the student learning objectives of the courses that are being broadcasted via the Teleschool.

[Renowned screenwriter Asma Nabeel passes away](https://nation.com.pk/02-Jul-2021/renowned-screenwriter-asma-nabeel-passes-away)

Additionally, in terms of evaluating the impact of Tele-School, the ministry gauged the services of Gallup Pakistan to conduct a ‘Rapid Assessment’ to measure the short-term impact of the teleschool in Pakistan. The sample size consisted of 1200 households which were spread across 100 urban and rural districts of Pakistan. These households had children within the age group of 5-15 and factors such as awareness, viewership, quality and loyalty were measured. The survey ultimately indicated that nearly 2 in 5 Pakistanis (around 32 million adults) were aware of the Tele-School initiative which

It was found that nearly 32 million adults, 2 in every 5 Pakistanis, were aware of Teleschool while Gallup estimated in May 2020 that around 6-7 million children have been introduced to Tele-School. Furthermore 77 percent of respondents are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the educational content of the Teleschool with rural respondents more satisfied than urban respondents.

[PM lauds FBR for collecting tax revenue of Rs4732bn](https://nation.com.pk/02-Jul-2021/pm-lauds-fbr-for-collecting-tax-revenue-of-rs4732bn)

Furthermore, in order to tackle the issue of formative assessments of student learnings, MOFE&PT was able to set up a two-way SMS based service to communicate with students regarding existing educational content for free for emergency television programming. programming. It sent multiple-choice questions to students to assess learning and quality.

As adults we sometimes forget how important it is to engage with children and provide them with content that they can enjoy and watch repeatedly. Initiatives such as Tele-School have taken a welcoming first step to create that environment of engagement for our children. Perhaps in the future, the teleschool may also be able to focus on building language, literacy as well as citizenship skills in our children especially in their own local language. It is ultimately our state’s responsibility to ensure that its understanding of Digital Pakistan is inclusive while at the same time is able to help students, instructors and the leadership to adapt quickly to digital learning systems hence initiatives such as the teleschool need to be applauded and encouraged while also assessing these interventions through a critical lens.