

Let each one teach one

Ajmal Kakar | 17th Mar 2025

Pakistan faces severe education crisis as country is ranked second lowest in South Asia with literacy rate of 62.8 %



A teacher is reading a lesson to students in her class on World Teacher's Day on October 5, 2023. — Online

Pakistan faces a severe education crisis, with millions of children out of school and an alarmingly high illiteracy rate. Article 25-A of the country's constitution says that "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years".

This highlights that, education is a fundamental human right, not a privilege, for all citizens of the state. Unfortunately, in Pakistan almost half of the population is deprived of this fundamental right of basic

education. In fact, the country is facing severe constraints in reaching universal literacy and numeracy, with approximately 70 million illiterate citizens.

Pakistan is ranked second lowest in South Asia, with a literacy rate of 62.8 per cent. And, the digital literacy is almost negligible with approximately 3.0 per cent of population. Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC), with approximately 22.8 million school age children are not attending school, representing 44 per cent of total population in this age category. These stumbling blocks immensely undermine the country's development goals and its global commitments, including but not limited to SDG 4.6 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Therefore, Pakistan is constitutionally and internationally bound to promote literacy and quality education for all citizens.

Recognising this, the government has launched the 'Each One Teach One' (EOTO) initiative, a student-driven literacy programme. In May, 2024, the prime minister announced a national education emergency and directed an urgent and strategic mechanism to overcome Pakistan's educational and literacy crisis. This emergency declaration includes but is not limited to concentrated efforts to promote literacy, school enrollment, infrastructure development and promotion of quality education in the country.

In this regard, the prime minister inaugurated the national literacy drive 'Roshan Pakistan' and initiated the 'Each One Teaches One' (EOTO) initiative, headed by the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training. Under this program student from the ninth grade to the PhD level in both public and private educational institutions will impart basic literacy and numeracy skills to one illiterate individual each within their community. Indeed, there are multiple ways to enhance literacy. Each One Teach One (EOTO) is one possible approach. Ultimately, the

successful implementation of the programme will increase the literacy and numeracy in Pakistan and will have spillover effects.

If successfully implemented, the EOTO programme could significantly improve literacy and numeracy rates, helping address Pakistan's ongoing educational crisis. By mobilising students to teach at least one illiterate individual, the initiative could substantially reduce the country's 70 million illiterate population.

EOTO also has the potential to re-engage out-of-school children, supporting the implementation of Article 25-A of the constitution and global commitments like SDG 4.6 and ICESCR. Beyond literacy gains, the programme could foster a culture of social responsibility and volunteerism while empowering marginalized communities. EOTO could also strengthen ties between educational institutions and local communities. Students themselves would also benefit, as participation in the programme could enhance their teaching, communication, and leadership skills, positively impacting their academic and professional careers.

Despite its potential benefits, the effective implementation of the EOTO policy may face various challenges. For instance, students may lack commitment, perceiving it as an additional burden rather than a social responsibility. Due to social and cultural barriers, students may face resistance from families when they try to teach illiterate individuals, particularly women in remote areas. Finally, monitoring and verification is also pose challenges for the institutions to ensure the authenticity of students teaching efforts.

Considering these challenges, PIDE has developed a robust implementation strategy for EOTO, set to begin in Spring 2025. In order to effectively implement the programme, the institute has made it a mandatory part of graduation. With clearly defined responsibilities for students and the institute's administration. PIDE students are required

to identify and teach basic literacy and numeracy to one illiterate individual in their community.

They will also submit regular progress reports and a completion certificate verified by the local authority (headmaster and union council secretary) to their respective department. Simultaneously, departments must inform students about the EOTO policy and requirements, review and monitor the progress of the initiative in line with the guidelines and to coordinate with controller examination to ensure that students meet completion requirement.

The academic section shall provide guidance and necessary resources to effectively participate in the initiative and to integrate as a mandatory requirement of student's academic experience. And the examination section will maintain and cross-check the official record of completion certificates, and ensure that no student receives a degree until they have successfully completed the EOTO initiative.

For monitoring and accountability PIDE will implement regular and random checks to ensure that students are complying with EOTO policy guidelines and will review the submitted certificates. It will also hold students accountable for failure to complete the initiative by restricting the graduation until the requirement is filed. And, as an incentive for the students, upon the successful completion of the initiative the students will be awarded with official EOTO certificate issued by PIDE.

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