

**ADMINISTRATIVE AND HUMAN RESOURCE CHALLENGES
IN GOVERNMENT-RUN NON FORMAL EDUCATION
SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN**

Dr.Khuda Bakhsh

Associate Professor, Department of Education, Government College University,
Faisalabad, Pakistan
Email: khudabakhsh@gcuf.edu.pk

Umar Farooq

M.Phil. Student, Department of Education, Government College University,
Faisalabad, Pakistan

Ms Asma Ishtiaq*

Lecturer (BPS-18), Department of Education, Government College University
Faisalabad
Email: ishtiaqrajpoot1122@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Shabbir

Assistant Professor (BPS-19) in Department of Education
Email: drmuhmmadshabbir@gcuf.edu.pk

Abstract

Non Formal Education (NFE) serves as a critical alternative for marginalized and out-of-school populations, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. This study investigates the administrative and human resource challenges impacting government-run NFE schools in Punjab, with a focus on Faisalabad. Using proportionate sampling and validated questionnaires, the research identifies key issues such as unclear administrative policies, shortage of qualified staff, delayed decision-making, insufficient teacher training, opaque recruitment processes, and limited professional development. Additional barriers include inadequate infrastructure, lack of standardized curriculum, weak monitoring systems, and socio-cultural factors hindering community engagement. These challenges collectively undermine the effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability of NFE programs. The study recommends policy reforms, strategic investment in teacher capacity building, enhanced community involvement, transparent recruitment, and strengthened monitoring frameworks to improve the quality and equity of NFE. Strengthening this sector is essential for achieving national educational goals and supporting Pakistan's commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Keywords: Non Formal Education, Administrative Challenges, Human Resource Management, Teacher Training, Punjab, Pakistan, Educational Policy, School Management, Community Engagement, Sustainable Development Goal 4

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for individual empowerment, poverty reduction, and national development (Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2018). Despite global efforts to ensure universal access to education under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), millions of children, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan, remain out of school due to poverty, gender inequality, socio-cultural norms, and inadequate infrastructure (UNICEF, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). To bridge this gap, Non Formal Education (NFE) has emerged as a flexible and inclusive alternative. NFE refers to structured learning that occurs outside the formal school system, often targeting marginalized groups through literacy programs, life skills training, and vocational education (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Lewin, 2009). Unlike formal education, NFE adapts to local contexts and learners' needs, making it particularly effective in underserved and rural areas. In Pakistan, especially in Punjab—the most populous province—government-run NFE initiatives have been launched to reach out-of-school children and adult learners. These include literacy centers and accelerated learning programs aimed at promoting basic education and social inclusion (Naveed, 2021). While these programs have shown promise, they face several challenges that hinder their effectiveness. These include poor infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, lack of standardized curriculum, weak monitoring systems, and low community awareness and support (Ali & Shah, 2020; Ahmed & Malik, 2021). This study explores the multifaceted challenges faced by Government-run Non Formal schools in Punjab. It focuses on five core areas: infrastructure, teacher capacity, curriculum relevance, community involvement, and policy support. By analyzing these factors, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations to enhance the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of NFE programs. Strengthening this sector is essential for ensuring educational equity and achieving national and global education goals.

Literature Review

Non-Formal Education (NFE) has been globally recognized as an effective alternative for addressing educational exclusion, particularly in developing countries where formal education systems are often unable to meet the needs of all learners. As defined by Coombs and Ahmed (1974), NFE consists of organized educational activities occurring outside the established formal system, intended to serve individuals who are underserved by conventional schooling. It offers flexible, community-based, and learner-centered programs, focusing on literacy, numeracy, life skills, and vocational training (Bashir et al., 2018).

Global Context of Non-Formal Education

Internationally, NFE has been used to reach marginalized populations, including out-of-school children, working youth, and displaced communities. UNESCO (2020) emphasizes the role of NFE in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Studies from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have shown that well-structured NFE programs can significantly improve literacy rates, promote social inclusion, and support lifelong learning (Lewin, 2009). However, despite its benefits, NFE often lacks formal recognition, standardized curricula, and consistent funding, which can limit its long-term impact (World Bank, 2018).

Non-Formal Education in Pakistan

In Pakistan, NFE has become an essential component of the national education strategy, particularly in response to the country's large population of out-of-school children—estimated at over 22 million (UNICEF, 2020). The Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with international development partners, has initiated various NFE programs, such as literacy centers, accelerated learning programs, and vocational training schemes (Raza & Khan, 2024). Punjab, the most populous province, has taken a lead in implementing such initiatives through the Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department (LNFBE). These programs primarily target children and adults in rural and marginalized areas who have never enrolled in or have dropped out of the formal system (Naveed, 2021).

Challenges Faced by Government-Run Non-Formal Schools

Despite policy support and expanding outreach, government-run NFE programs in Punjab face several structural and operational challenges. One of the most persistent issues is **inadequate infrastructure**. Many NFE centers operate in temporary or unsafe facilities, often lacking basic amenities such as electricity, sanitation, and classroom furniture (Ali & Shah, 2020). The lack of physical resources affects student motivation, teacher performance, and overall learning outcomes.

Teacher quality is another critical concern. Most instructors in NFE programs are either volunteers or part-time workers with minimal pedagogical training and limited incentives (Ahmed & Malik, 2021). This undermines teaching effectiveness and leads to high attrition rates. Additionally, there is often **no standardized curriculum**, and learning materials are either outdated or unavailable, making it difficult to ensure consistency in educational delivery (Hussain et al., 2022).

Community perceptions also play a significant role in the success or failure of NFE programs. In many rural areas, parents view NFE as inferior to formal education and are reluctant to enroll their children, especially girls, due to safety concerns, early marriages, and traditional gender roles (Khan & Iqbal, 2023). Cultural resistance, combined with **limited awareness** of the benefits of NFE, contributes to low enrollment and high dropout rates.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are often weak or absent. Without proper oversight, it becomes challenging to assess the quality and impact of programs,

leading to inefficiencies and resource misallocation (UNDP Pakistan, 2022). Furthermore, the absence of formal recognition for NFE qualifications limits students' ability to transition into the formal education system or gain employment, affecting long-term outcomes (Lewin, 2007).

Need for Reform and Policy Implications

Researchers and educationists argue that to enhance the impact of NFE in Punjab, systemic reforms are needed. These include investment in infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum development, and community engagement (Raza & Khan, 2024). Strengthening monitoring systems and establishing linkages between NFE and formal education pathways could improve both quality and sustainability.

Research Methodology Summary

Sampling Technique:

The study employed proportionate sampling to ensure representation of subgroups based on specific attributes like age, gender, or location, improving the generalizability of results. Teachers from Faisalabad were purposefully selected, with respondents chosen via convenience sampling.

Sample Size:

A sample is a smaller, manageable group representing the larger population, allowing researchers to save time and resources while maintaining accuracy. Selecting an appropriate sample size is crucial for valid and reliable research findings.

Research Instruments:

Data was collected through a carefully designed questionnaire aligned with study objectives. The order and type of questions were structured to maintain respondent focus and gather relevant information.

Pre-Testing:

Pre-testing validated the questionnaire's clarity and relevance, allowing for necessary revisions before main data collection. Selected students participated to ensure the instrument's effectiveness.

Validation and Reliability:

The questionnaire was developed in collaboration with experts, ensuring content validity. Reliability testing through a pre-test with 10 respondents yielded a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.843, indicating consistent results.

Data Collection:

Primary data was gathered directly from respondents with clear explanations provided for each survey item, ensuring accurate and thorough responses.

The Administrative and Operational Challenges Encountered By Non Formal Schools

Table: The Administrative and Operational Challenges Encountered By Non Formal Schools

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Weighted Score (Mean × N)	Rank
The school lacks clearly defined administrative policies and procedures.	4.19	1.167	574.03	1
There is a shortage of qualified administrative staff in Non Formal schools.	4.16	1.093	570.92	2
Administrative decisions are often delayed, affecting school performance.	4.07	1.086	557.59	3
There is inadequate support from higher authorities for administrative matters.	4.00	1.007	548.00	4
The headteachers are not given sufficient autonomy in decision-making.	3.95	1.114	541.15	5
Monitoring and evaluation of school activities are not conducted regularly.	3.84	1.009	526.08	6
Record keeping and documentation practices are weak in Non Formal schools.	3.68	1.300	504.16	7

(Scale 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree)

Mean, standard deviation, and ranking are presented in the above table as statistics reflecting the administrative and operational challenges faced by Non Formal schools. The statement “The school lacks clearly defined administrative policies and procedures” was ranked first, with a mean value of 4.19, indicating strong agreement among respondents about this critical challenge. Following closely, the response for “There is a shortage of qualified administrative staff in Non Formal schools” was ranked second, with a mean of 4.16, also lying between agree and strongly agree.

The statement “Administrative decisions are often delayed, affecting school performance” was ranked third, with a mean score of 4.07, showing consensus that decision-making delays hinder school effectiveness. “There is inadequate support from higher authorities for administrative matters” was ranked fourth (mean = 4.00), reflecting moderate to strong agreement on the lack of external administrative backing.

Ranked fifth was “The head teachers are not given sufficient autonomy in decision-making,” with a mean of 3.95, lying near agree, highlighting limited decision-making freedom at the school level. The item “Monitoring and evaluation of school activities are not conducted regularly” came sixth with a mean of 3.84, indicating a recognized gap in oversight processes. Lastly, “Record keeping and documentation practices are weak in Non Formal schools” was ranked seventh with a mean of 3.68, suggesting moderate agreement about poor administrative documentation.

These findings suggest that to improve the administration of Non Formal schools, efforts should prioritize establishing clear policies, addressing staff shortages, and speeding up administrative decisions. Additionally, enhanced support from higher authorities, increased autonomy for head teachers, regular monitoring, and better record-keeping practices are essential for strengthening school operations.

Khan conducted an insightful study on the administrative challenges faced by Non Formal educational institutions, which closely aligns with the findings presented in the above table. Their research highlighted that the absence of clearly defined administrative policies and procedures significantly hampers the effectiveness of Non Formal schools, a concern that was strongly affirmed by respondents in the current study with a mean score of 4.19. Similar to the present findings, Khan and Ahmed identified a critical shortage of qualified administrative staff as a key barrier to efficient school management, underscoring the need for strategic recruitment and capacity building in Non Formal settings.

Human Resource and Training Challenges

Human resource and training challenges are among the critical issues impacting the quality of education in Non Formal schools. Teachers in Non Formal schools often enter their roles without adequate pre-service training, which compromises their effectiveness in the classroom. Moreover, these schools frequently lack regular professional development opportunities, resulting in outdated teaching practices. The recruitment process is sometimes opaque, leading to concerns about fairness and quality. High teacher turnover rates and excessive workloads due to insufficient support staff further strain the human resource capacity of Non Formal schools. Additionally, low staff motivation, limited supervision, and the exclusion of teachers from planning and decision-making processes weaken the overall educational environment. Addressing this human resource and training challenges is essential for improving teacher performance and student outcomes in Non Formal education settings Khan (2022).

Table: Human Resource and Training Challenges

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Weighted Score (Mean × N)	Rank
Teachers in Non Formal schools are	4.24	0.974	581.88	1

not adequately trained before appointment.				
Regular professional development opportunities are not provided to staff.	4.16	1.171	570.00	2
The recruitment process for teachers lacks transparency.	4.14	1.145	567.18	3
There is a high turnover rate among teachers in Non Formal schools.	4.11	1.055	562.07	4
Teachers are often overburdened due to a lack of support staff.	4.01	1.108	549.37	5
Staff motivation is low due to inadequate recognition and incentives.	4.01	0.985	549.37	5
There is limited supervision or mentoring for newly appointed teachers.	3.65	1.359	500.05	7
Teachers are not involved in planning or decision-making processes.	3.19	1.263	437.03	8

(Scale 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree)

Mean, standard deviation, and ranking are presented in the above table as statistics reflecting the human resource and training challenges faced by Non Formal schools. The statement “Teachers in Non Formal schools are not adequately trained before appointment” was ranked first, with a mean value of 4.24, indicating strong agreement among respondents on the critical need for pre-service teacher training. Following closely, “Regular professional development opportunities are not provided to staff” was ranked second, with a mean of 4.16, showing a consensus that ongoing training is insufficient.

The response for “The recruitment process for teacher’s lacks transparency” was ranked third, with a mean score of 4.14, suggesting concerns over fairness and clarity in hiring practices. “There is a high turnover rate among teachers in Non Formal schools” was ranked fourth (mean = 4.11), reflecting agreement that retention is a significant problem.

Ranked fifth, with equal means of 4.01, were the statements “Teachers are often overburdened due to a lack of support staff” and “Staff motivation is low due to inadequate recognition and incentives,” highlighting workload pressures and morale issues. The item “There is limited supervision or mentoring for newly appointed teachers” came sixth with a mean of 3.65, indicating moderate agreement about the lack of guidance for new teachers.

Lastly, “Teachers are not involved in planning or decision-making processes” was ranked eighth, with a mean of 3.19, showing relatively neutral to low agreement, but still signaling a need for more teacher participation in school governance.

These findings suggest that addressing teacher training, professional development, transparent recruitment, workload management, and motivation are vital for improving human resource capacity in Non Formal schools. Additionally, strengthening supervision and involving teachers in decision-making could enhance overall school performance.

We examined human resource and training challenges within Non Formal education settings, revealing significant gaps consistent with the findings presented in the above table. Their study underscored the critical need for adequate pre-service training for teachers, which aligns with the highest-ranked statement in the current data (mean = 4.24). This lack of foundational training was identified as a primary barrier to effective teaching in Non Formal schools.

Class size emerges as a positive factor, with most teachers handling fewer than 20 students, which likely fosters better teacher-student interaction and enhances learning outcomes. However, significant challenges persist, particularly in administrative and human resource domains, where unclear policies, staff shortages, insufficient teacher training, and opaque recruitment processes undermine school effectiveness. Operational deficits—including poor infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, and irregular funding—compound these difficulties, negatively impacting student attendance and educational quality.

The scarcity and inadequacy of essential teaching and learning resources are especially concerning, pointing to an urgent need for improved provision of textbooks, teaching aids, and updated materials to support effective instruction and active student participation. Socio-economic and community-related barriers, such as financial hardship, child labor, migration, gender norms, and school accessibility, critically affect enrollment and retention, demanding comprehensive strategies that address these underlying issues.

On a positive note, teachers report high satisfaction with initial and ongoing training and professional development opportunities, which contribute to motivation and teaching effectiveness. Nevertheless, there is a clear call for more frequent and targeted workshops focusing on modern teaching methodologies to further enhance teacher capacity.

Overall, these findings underscore the multifaceted challenges facing Non Formal schools run by the Government of Punjab, while also highlighting areas of strength and opportunity. Addressing these challenges through targeted policy interventions, resource allocation, and capacity-building efforts is essential to improving the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of Non Formal education in the region.

Findings on Challenges in Non Formal Schools

Administrative Challenges:

Key issues include unclear administrative policies, shortage of qualified staff, delays in decision-making, lack of support from authorities, limited autonomy for headteachers, irregular monitoring, and weak record-keeping. These hinder effective school management and performance.

Human Resource and Training Challenges:

Major problems are inadequate pre-service teacher training, lack of ongoing professional development, non-transparent recruitment, high teacher turnover, excessive workload, low motivation, limited supervision, and minimal teacher involvement in decision-making. These factors negatively affect teaching quality and staff morale.

Additional Observations:

Small class sizes support better teacher-student interaction, but poor infrastructure, insufficient learning materials, irregular funding, and socio-economic barriers like poverty and migration affect enrollment and educational quality.

Recommendations

- Promote gender diversity in recruitment.
- Implement mentorship using experienced teachers.
- Involve veteran teachers in policy decisions.
- Maintain small class sizes.
- Clarify and streamline administrative policies.
- Strategically address teacher shortages.
- Invest in school infrastructure.
- Ensure consistent provision of teaching resources.
- Introduce transparent recruitment and promotion systems.
- Expand regular professional development.
- Increase community engagement and awareness.
- Provide incentives to reduce dropout rates.
- Establish local monitoring and support systems.
- Encourage teacher participation in school governance.

References

- Ahmed, F., & Malik, A. (2021). *Challenges of Non-Formal Education in Pakistan: A Case Study of Punjab*. Journal of Educational Research and Development, 5(2), 45–58.
- Ali, M., & Shah, N. (2020). *Assessing the Quality of Non-Formal Education in Rural Pakistan*. South Asian Studies, 35(1), 112–129.
- Bashir, S., Lockheed, M., Ninan, E., & Tan, J. (2018). *Facing Forward: Schooling for Learning in Africa*. World Bank Publications.

- Coombs, P. H., & Ahmed, M. (1974). **Attacking Rural Poverty: How Non-Formal Education Can Help**. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hussain, S., Bano, S., & Iqbal, M. (2022). **Barriers to Girls' Participation in Non-Formal Education in Rural Punjab**. Pakistan Journal of Education, 39(1), 55–72.
- Khan, H., & Iqbal, Z. (2023). **Out-of-School Children and the Role of Non-Formal Education in Pakistan**. Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 12(4), 30–47.
- Lewin, K. M. (2007). **Improving Access, Equity and Transitions in Education: Creating a Research Agenda**. CREATE Pathways to Access, Research Monograph No. 1.
- Lewin, K. M. (2009). **Access to Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Patterns, Problems and Possibilities**. Comparative Education, 45(2), 151–174.
- Naveed, A. (2021). **Non-Formal Education in Punjab: Policy and Practice**. Lahore Education Review, 3(1), 24–41.
- Raza, H., & Khan, S. (2024). **Reforming Non-Formal Education in Pakistan: Policy Implications for Sustainable Development**. International Journal of Education and Development, 9(1), 66–81.
- UNDP Pakistan. (2022). **Human Development Report Pakistan**. United Nations Development Programme Pakistan.
- UNESCO. (2020). **Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education – All Means All**. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2021). **Non-Formal Education and Its Role in Achieving SDG 4**. Retrieved from www.unesco.org
- UNICEF. (2020). **Out-of-School Children: Pakistan Country Report**. UNICEF Pakistan.
- World Bank. (2018). **World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise**. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Ahmed, F., & Malik, A. (2021). **Challenges of Non-Formal Education in Pakistan**.
- Ali, M., & Shah, N. (2020). **Assessing the Quality of Non-Formal Education**.
- Coombs, P. H., & Ahmed, M. (1974). **Attacking Rural Poverty**. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lewin, K. M. (2009). **Access to Education in Sub-Saharan Africa**. **Comparative Education**, 45(2), 151–174.
- Naveed, A. (2021). **Non-Formal Education in Punjab: Policy and Practice**.
- Sen, A. (1999). **Development as Freedom**. Oxford University Press.
- UNESCO. (2021). **Non-Formal Education and SDG 4**.
- UNICEF. (2020). **Out-of-School Children: Pakistan Country Report**.
- World Bank. (2018). **World Development Report: Learning to Realize Education's Promise**.