The Lighthouse Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 05, Issue 1, Summer 2026, pp. 91-109

A Critical Review of Basic Education Governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Post-18th Constitutional Amendment: A Change Management Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This review critically analyzes the basic education governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from 2010 to 2025 through the theoretical lens of Change Management. Based on 9 peer-reviewed articles, government audits, donor reports, and policy documents, the study examines how Khyber Pakhtunkhwa transitioned from centralized control to provincial autonomy. A key "change dilemma" emerges where thorough legislative initiatives such as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa "Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act 2017" and the" Education Monitoring Authority" (EMA) confronted institutional resistance. Findings indicate that while Deliverology-driven strategies (top-down accountability system) improved measureable metrics such as teacher attendance and infrastructure monitoring, the human dimension of change was frequently overlooked, constructing recurring policy reversals, including the regularization of ad-hoc teachers following the 2024-2025 protests and persistent struggles to implement the Teacher Induction Policy 2017. The review concludes that sustainable governance requires replacing disciplinary accountability with a supportive professionalization model, institutionalizing change management skills within the bureaucracy to ensure reform continuity across political regimes.

Keywords: *Education Governance, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Change Management, Deliverology, Teacher Recruitment, Policy Implementation, Decentralization.*

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, education in Pakistan was centrally administered though it was discovered to be very far apart with the reality of most of its ethno-linguistic groups. This legal inflexibility was formally eliminated by the promulgation of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in April 2010 in substituting the Concurrent Legislative List by the devolution of the subject of education to the provinces alone. This constitutional restructuring was not merely a mere administrative restructuring venture, but an inclusive decree of provincial autonomy, where federating units like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were endowed with the mandate of adopting their own policies, curriculum and standards, which were most suitable to their local socio-cultural and economic contexts. Another amendment, Article 25-A, was also added which declared education as a fundamental right and made it the responsibility of the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children between two ages of five to sixteen.

However, the change management issue of the new system was monumental because federal control was transferred to provincial independence. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is one of the provinces

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Manuscript Submitted: April 13, 2026
Manuscript Accepted: June 04, 2026

that had been previously ravaged with militancy, natural calamities and poor development situation and ended up in the new acquired authority but arguably without an institutional capacity to administer a complex education system which must support millions of children. The period was marked by significant political transformation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since 2010, and the most significant transformation was the arrival of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, which declared an Education Emergency and initiated a radical agenda of reform. These reforms entailed grandiose constructions and computerization of surveillance systems and controversial reforms of teaching staffing and curriculum.

The organizational transformation case study in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the post-18th Amendment period may be considered as a rich subject matter as far as Change Management is concerned. Theories of change management such as that formulated by Kurt Lewin (1947) and John Kotter (1996) presuppose that successful change can only be attained when the structure is altered but may also be attained by aligning the behavior of the humans, culture and processes. In the case of the education sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the change agents who are mostly political leaders and international donors attempted to transpose the performance with assistance of the high-stakes accountability and technological interventions. Nevertheless, all of this was usually stifled by the forces of bureaucratic inertia, political good will and opposition by the teacher unions.

These dynamics will be deconstructed using the given systematic literature review. It does not just give the descriptive account of the policy changes but also critically examines the process of change. Applying the framework of the paradigms of change management to consider the change in the governance environment, the paper is directed towards acquiring answers to the question of why certain reforms (including the IMU) proceeded rapidly, and some reforms (including the Teacher Induction Policy of 2017 or sustainable regularization) took a long and difficult path of resistance and rejection. It also looks at how the external players particularly the international donor agencies shape the reform agenda, which makes the sustainability of these changes to be indigenous since the donor funds are pulling out. The main question the paper is trying to answer is this: Has the governance of basic education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa changed actually to meet the constitutional promise of the 18th Amendment or has it simply assumed new forms of centralized control by the provinces?

Such a review is required because of the so-called implementation gap which is common to the Pakistani literature on the policy. Despite the strengths of the policy documents, they are not governed and this makes their implementation a challenge. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a unique scenario since it works on an "Education Emergency" story and with excessive number of foreign funders like FCDO (once DFID) drafting reform Roadmaps. The issue is to realize how such technocratic solutions come in conflict with the political economy of the province so that one can be able to plan in the future. This review will cover the period between 2010- early 2025, which is the full term of the implementation of the 18th Amendment, the unification of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the recent problems with the administrative regularization of teachers. The primary objective of the proposed systematic literature review is to critically evaluate how basic education is governed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the context of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, i.e. the analysis of the process of implementing the reforms in the context of the Change Management approach. The study will address the gap between the organizational change theory and education policy analysis.

The review is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the key governance issues and systemic barriers the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED) has faced since the 18th Amendment, particularly regarding financial usage and policy drafting?
2. Have major reforms (Independent Monitoring Unit, NTS-based hiring, Single National Curriculum) been implemented, and how do they align with existing theories of Change Management (e.g., Lewin, Kotter)?
3. How have key stakeholders (teachers, unions, bureaucracy) protested these reforms, and what methods has the government used to address these protests?
4. How sustainable and institutionalized are current governance reforms beyond donor funding and individual political terms?

RSEARCH METHODOLOGY

Search Strategy and Data Sources

To have a thorough and rigorous examination, a systematic research approach was used in various academic and grey literature databases. The search targeted peer-reviewed research articles, governmental documents, donor reports, and policy documents that were published between 2010 (the year of the 18th Amendment) and early 2025.

Keywords and Search Terms:

The search utilized boolean operators with combinations of the following keywords:

Primary Keywords: "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa", "Education Governance", "18th Amendment", "Education Reforms", "Change Management".

Secondary Keywords: "Teacher Recruitment Policy", "Independent Monitoring Unit (IMU)", "Single National Curriculum (SNC)", "Decentralization", "Political Economy of Education", "Teacher Unions", "Donor Agencies", "School Leaders", "Parent Teacher Councils (PTC)".

Theoretical Keywords: "Kurt Lewin", "Kotter's 8 Steps", "ADKAR", "Deliverology", "Institutional Isomorphism".

Databases Searched

Academic Databases: Google scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, Springer, Taylor and Francis Online, ProQuest.

Institutional Repositories: FCDO (formerly DFID) DevTracker World Bank Open Knowledge Repository, RISE Programme (Research on Improving Systems of Education).

Government & Local Sources: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED) Web Site, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Acts, Auditor General of Pakistan(AGP) reports, and the well-known Pakistani newspapers (Dawn, The News, Tribune) to provide contemporary reports of protests and announcements.

PRISMA Flow Diagram

The study selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure transparency:

1. Identification: Database search and snowballing references identified 545 records.

2. Screening: 435 records that were screened after the elimination of duplicates were related to the title and abstract. They had to narrow down the number of records to about 350 because the records dwelled on purely pedagogical techniques (e.g., classroom teaching methods) and not governance, policy or change management.

3. Eligibility: There were 85 documents with full-text articles that were evaluated to determine whether to be included or not. Articles that were published before 2010 or those that did not contain explicit empirical data about Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were filtered out (n=76).

4. Included: There was a final set of 9 documents to be included in the qualitative synthesis with 7 research papers and 2 reports.

The PRISMA flow diagram showing the deviation of selected studies as presented below;

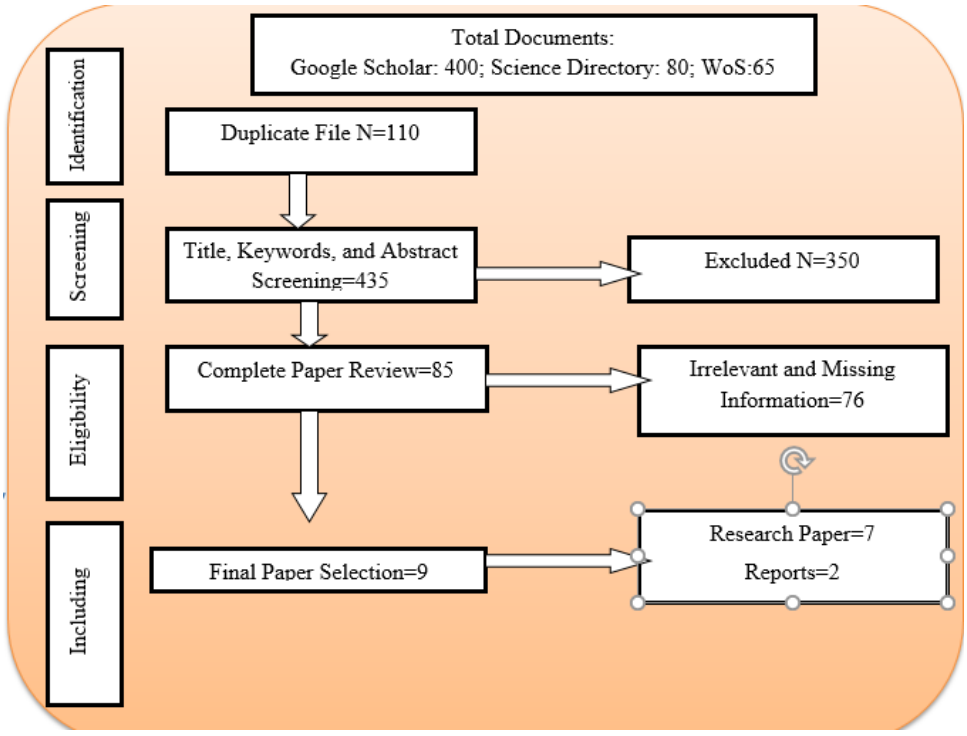


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

A well-organized and clear study selection process is represented in the PRISMA framework Figure 1. In the first step, 545 documents were located in the databases, such as Google Scholar (n = 400), Science-Direct (n = 80), and Web of Science (n = 65). The identification stage eliminated 110 duplicate records and took 435 unique documents to screen. During the screening stage, titles, keywords and abstracts of these 435 records were screened and 350 documents that failed to meet

the relevancy criteria were eliminated. As a result, 85 full-text articles were evaluated against eligibility criteria and 76 of them were excluded on the basis of irrelevance or lack of information. This intensive filtering translates to the inclusion phase where 9 studies were eventually included into the review process and they include 7 research articles and 2 reports that will be used to build the evidence base that will underpin the final synthesis.

Exclusion Criteria

- Geographic & Jurisdictional Mismatch: Studies focusing on basic education reforms in other provinces (e.g., Punjab, Sindh) or post-18th Amendment higher education/health divisions lacking specific pragmatic or structural analysis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Temporal Out-of-Scope: Policy documents or historical analyses published erstwhile to the 18th Constitutional Amendment (pre-2010) or prior to key target interventions (e.g., pre-dating the 2013/2014 launch of IMU and NTS policies).
- Out-of-Scope Sectorial Focus: Articles assessing higher education, technical and vocational training (TVET), or private-school commercial models rather than public basic education governance.
- Lacking Methodological Substance / Peer-Review Rigor: Journal articles, brief blog posts, or conference abstracts that lacked primary empirical data, clear analytical frameworks, or verifiable citation sources.
- General Pedagogical Studies: Studies focusing purely on classroom micro-pedagogy (e.g., specific English grammar teaching methods) without engaging with governance, policy implementation, monitoring, or institutional structures.

Data Extraction & Quality Assessment

Below table provide a summary overview to key selected research items for final synthesis.

Table 1: Key Studies on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Governance (2010-2025)

Author & Year	Methodology	Focus Area	Key Findings	Limitations
Siddiqi & Ali (2023)	Ethnographic Study	Teacher Politics & Governance	"Patronage" politics persists despite reforms; lived experience of teachers differs from official policy; reforms are often viewed as external impositions.	Sample limited to specific districts; qualitative nature limits generalizability.
Assad (2020)	Quantitative Survey & Analysis	Independent Monitoring Unit (IMU)	IMU significantly improved teacher attendance and facilities but had a limited immediate impact on student academic achievements initially.	Relied heavily on perception data from questionnaires.
Khan & Ahmad (2018)	Policy Analysis (Qualitative)	Recruitment Policy (2017)	The 2017 induction policy removing professional degree requirements was widely resisted by academia as "de-professionalization."	Focused on policy text rather than long-term outcome data.

Author & Year	Methodology	Focus Area	Key Findings	Limitations
Ullah et al. (2018)	Qualitative Interviews	Teacher Perspectives	Teachers appreciated NTS for merit but viewed other reforms as "political agendas" imposed without consultation; highlighted change fatigue.	Restricted to male teachers in one district (Upper Dir).
Inayat (2023)	Quantitative (Difference-in-Difference)	Tech-based Monitoring	Monitoring increased teacher attendance by ~8% and had a positive causal effect on student learning outcomes (test scores).	Data relied on ASER surveys which have their own sampling limitations.
Shirsha et al. (2024)	Descriptive Survey	Parent Teacher Councils (PTC)	PTC training significantly improved financial management and school facility improvements at the grassroots level; empowered communities.	Focused on perceptions of effectiveness rather than audit of funds.
Barber (2013)	Case Study / Report	"Deliverology" Reform	The roadmap approach driven by stock takes created urgency and improved data visibility but relied heavily on top-down pressure.	Written by the architect of the reform, potentially biased.
Ecorys (2021)	Contribution Analysis	Donor Impact (KESP)	Reforms like IMU and merit recruitment were successful outputs, but cultural institutionalization remains a challenge; high donor dependency.	Evaluator contracted by the donor agency (FCDO).
Hafeez et al. (2024)	Qualitative Interviews	Policy Formulation	KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA struggles with a shortage of policy experts; 18th Amendment autonomy is hampered by capacity gaps and political interference.	Small sample size of key stakeholders.

DATA SYNTHESIS AND KEY FINDINGS

The results of this systematic review are presented in a thematic way and discuss the multifaceted environment of education governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The discussion shows that there is a complicated interaction between high policy ambitions and the legacy system inertia.

The Post-18th Amendment Governance Landscape: Autonomy vs. Capacity

The 18th Constitutional Amendment was supposed to be a trigger to provincial empowerment. Nevertheless, the literature repeatedly mentions that there is a large disjunction between the authority de jure and the de facto capacity.

Inadequate Policy Formulation Capacity:

Despite gaining full legislative and executive authority in education by 2010, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa failed to develop a comprehensive, indigenous education policy within ten years. Researchers confirm the province lacked a unified policy, remaining reliant on old structures or

fragmented sector plans (Hafeez et al., 2024). The end of the Concurrent Legislative List necessitated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa taking on curriculum development, standards, and policy planning—functions for which the provincial bureaucracy was unprepared (Jamal & Iqbal, 2021). The Provincial Higher Education Commission (PHEC) was also delayed due to a lack of political will and federal-provincial conflict, creating a governance gap in higher education (Ali & Rid, 2021). At the school level, the Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act 2017 (Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2017) was a breakthrough, but the provincial bureaucracy lacked specialists for policy and financial planning (Hafeez et al., 2024). This capacity gap is further evident in the delayed formulation of the Act's rules of business, leaving the constitutional right to education largely unfulfilled for years.

Financial Governance and Budget Utilization:

A recurring issue in the literature is the paradox of increased budgetary allocation and sub-optimal utilization. Despite strong political commitment from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, which consistently allocated over 20% of its budget to education (I-SAPS, 2018), chronic difficulties in spending these funds, especially the development budget, are evident in audit reports and fiscal analyses. For instance, during fiscal year 2017-18, the department spent only 33% of its development funds by mid-year (Tribune, 2018). This inefficiency stems from centralized, burdensome approval processes, where projects exceeding a certain limit face extensive delays across various departments, often resulting in unspent funds at year-end (I-SAPS, 2022).

The 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) award significantly increased fiscal transfers to provinces, theoretically providing resources for reform (Jamal & Iqbal, 2021). However, the province's absorptive capacity remained low. To address this, recent changes include attempts to devolve financial powers to the facility level (schools and PTCs) through the Facility Level Budget and Expenditure Management Policy 2024 (Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2024). This policy allows Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) to use funds for urgent school needs, bypassing bureaucratic hurdles. Nevertheless, systemic capacity to control such funds at the grassroots level is a concern, with audit reports frequently highlighting anomalies in fund usage (AGP, 2020).

Structural Fragmentation and the Merger Challenge:

The system of governance after the devolution was fractured. According to the literature, there is a disconnect between different directorates, namely Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education (DCTE), Provincial Institute for Teacher Education (PITE), and the Directorate of E&SE (I-SAPS, 2023). Information silos did not allow making informed decisions, e.g. teacher training information on PITE was not used effectively to connect with school performance information on IMU to make specific interventions (I-SAPS, 2023). The absence of system coherence hampered the whole system reform as envisaged by the change agents.

Moreover, the assimilation of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) in 2018 has caused a colossal governance problem. The NMDs had critical shortages in infrastructure and more than 55 percent of their schools had no power, and 51 percent had no water (Khattak, 2019). It has proven to be a challenging and lengthy task to extend the provincial governance apparatus, such as the IMU and biometric systems, to such volatile areas, which are often faced with security concerns and opposition by already established local elites (UNDP, 2020).

Attempting to rapidly extended provincial civilian governance, encompass the legal framework, and deploy tech-driven initiatives (such as biometric monitoring and IMU field staff) to these volatile, former frontier regions created severe institutional abrasion. The provincial administration faced capacity discrepancies, delayed fund pay-outs, security impulsiveness, and local resistance from engrained traditional power structures (Jirgas and local elites), turning post-merger educational incorporating into one of the most complex change management challenges in the province's history (UNDP, 2020; Khan et al., 2025).

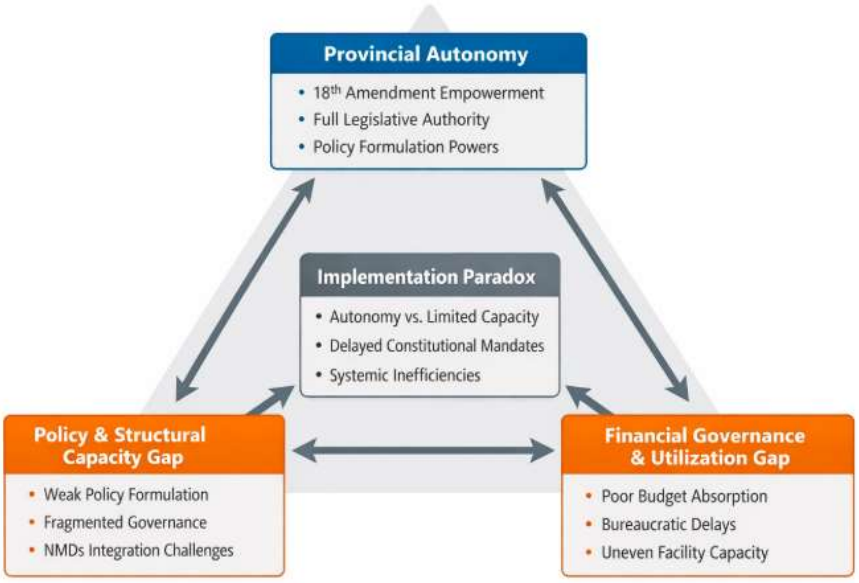


Figure 2: The Post-18th Amendment Governance Landscape: Autonomy vs. Capacity

The "Deliverology" Approach: The Independent Monitoring Unit (IMU)

The most widely reported reform in the literature reviewed is the formation of the Independent Monitoring Unit (IMU) which currently stands as the Education Monitoring Authority (EMA). This project is the typical example of the so-called Deliverology, the change management style that is promoted by Sir Michael Barber and implemented by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to enable the results via data and targets (Barber, 2013).

Data-Driven Accountability:

Before the IMU, education department did not have credible information of the schools that were open and the presence of teachers. It was an internal monitoring mechanism hence resulting in collusion among district education officers and teachers. The IMU interfered with this by sending hundreds of data collection monitors who visit schools monthly, but the monitors are independent and are armed with smartphones (Assad, 2020). According to the literature, there is strong evidence that the effect of this unfreezing of the monitoring system was immediate. In difference-in-difference-based studies, the difference-in-difference methodology showed that the monitoring program had an effect of almost 8 percentage points of increasing the teacher attendance in the first year (Inayat, 2023). This is supported by descriptive research, where the stakeholders describe high

levels of teacher absenteeism reduction and the general improvement of basic facilities under the pressure created by frequent data reporting (Akhtar, 2020).

Resistance and Cultural Friction:

But the IMU was also met with resistance because it was more of a policing characteristic. In the literature, it is stated that although the attendance improved, the quality of teaching did not necessarily have the same effect in the near run - a process outlined as isomorphic mimicry, when the system appears to be running well (teachers are present) but the main purpose (learning) stays the same (Naviwala, 2016). The teachers viewed the monitoring as punitive and not supportive (Khan, 2022). The dependency on biometric attendance systems was met with criticism because of technical failures and a sense of distrust, which brought about a sense of hygiene factor dissatisfaction among the employees in the workforce based on Herzberg theory (Jabeen et al., 2024).

Institutionalization:

Regardless of these issues, the IMU is mentioned as a unique example of a project funded by donors (which was initially financed by DFID) that migrated into a permanent government authority (EMA) through the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Monitoring Authority Act 2019 (Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2019). It was this piece of legislative cover that gave the unit the stability to withstand political changes, which is one of the foundation blocks of sustainable change management. The EMA has also successfully gone through an effective Refreezing process of a new organizational norm by becoming a statutory body that is tasked with the responsibility of monitoring indicators and providing improvements.

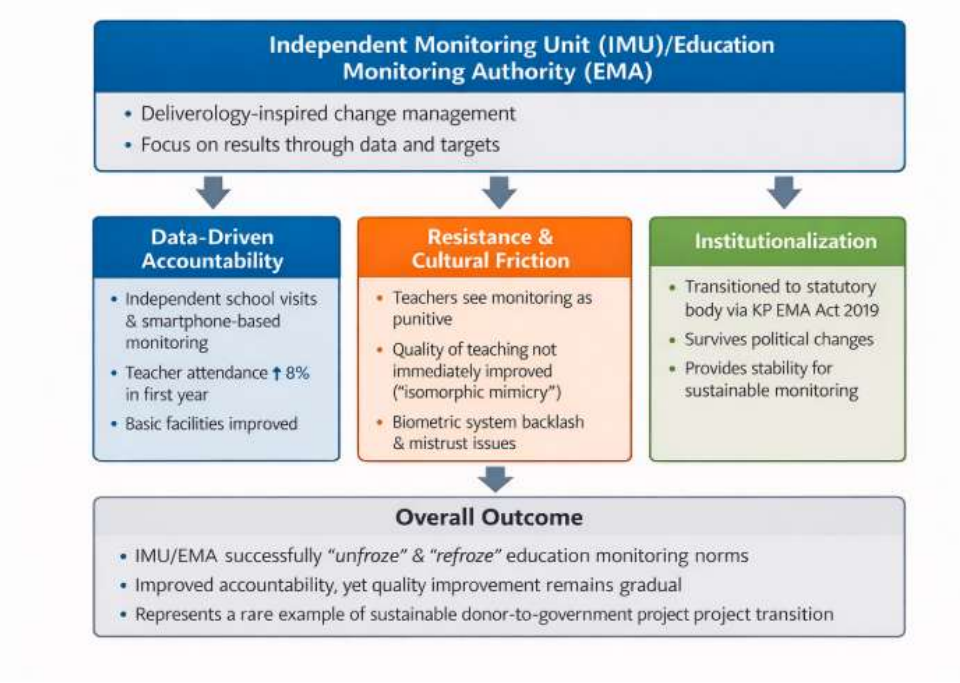


Figure 3: The Independent Monitoring Unit

Teacher Recruitment and Management: The Merit vs. Patronage Battle

A change in the teacher recruitment and management of the teacher is one of the main themes of the literature, which can be characterized as a fierce struggle between the reformist change agents and the restraining forces of political patronage and union power.

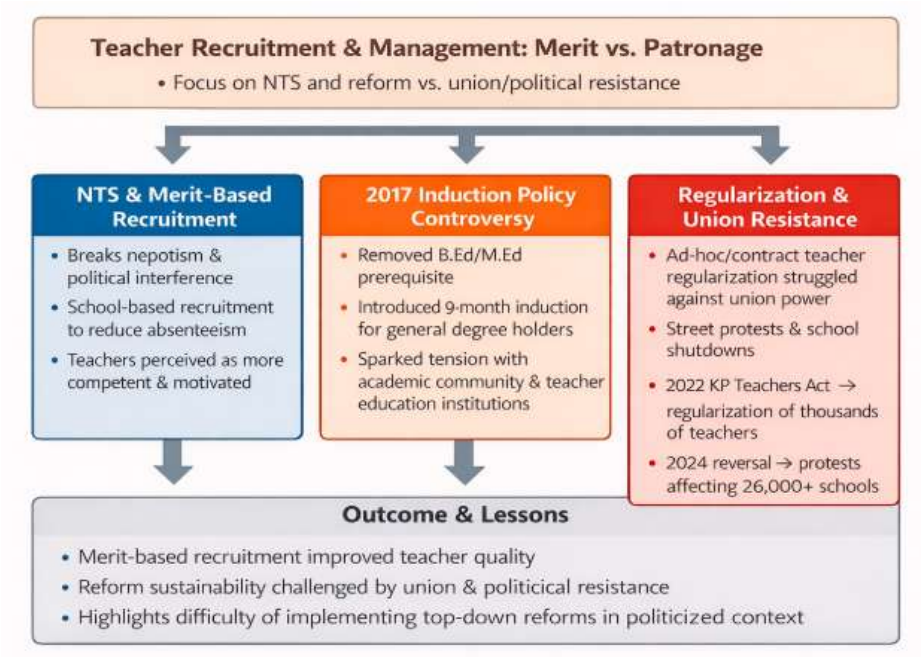


Figure 4: Teacher Recruitment and Management

Each of the component is presented in the below sections;

NTS and Merit-Based Recruitment:

In the past, the appointments of teachers in Pakistan were supposed to be full of nepotism and political manipulation. One of the significant change efforts aimed at stopping this cycle was the introduction of a change initiative known as the National Testing Service (NTS) that employs the service to recruit teachers. The data confirm that the NTS-recruited teachers are believed to be more qualified and motivated, and competent than their predecessors (Ullah et al., 2018). Both teachers and students had a higher rapport and improved pedagogical skills among NTS inductees (Zulfiqar, 2021). It also changed to school-based recruitment, in which teachers are recruited to work in a particular school and can no longer be transferred, which was a deliberate decision to address the problem of teacher absenteeism in remote locations and break the transfer-posting industry that were made through political approaches (Ecorys, 2021).

The 2017 Induction Policy Controversy:

One of the major flashpoints that were determined during the review was the Teacher Induction Policy 2017. This policy did away with the requirement of a professional teaching degree (B.Ed/M.Ed) to be employed in the field, which resulted in the field being opened to those with general degrees that would subsequently receive a 9-month-induction training (Khan and Ahmad, 2018). Although the argument by the government was that this would bring in better-qualified subject specialists (e.g. engineers, scientists) the academic community and teacher education institutions perceived it as a de-professionalization of the teaching profession. Such critics claimed

that it went against the National Education Policy 2009 and undermined the pre-service teacher education programs, instilling fear among B.Ed graduates (Khan and Ahmad, 2018). This policy shift is a classic example of a top-down reform which was unsuccessful in establishing a guiding coalition among the educational experts resulting in a prolonged friction.

Regularization and Union Power:

The literature lays stress on the enormous influence of teacher unions (e.g., All Primary Teachers Association - APTA) as the restraining force to reforms. The battle of the normalization of ad-hoc and contract teachers (through recruiting NTS) turned out to be a usual drama of protests and bargaining. Even though the original reform agenda was to retain the teachers in performance-based contracts so that they could be held accountable, the huge scale demonstrations and school closures continued to press the government into submission.

> *The 2022 Act: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Teachers (Appointment and Regularization of Services) Act, 2022 was enacted in a bid to regularize thousands of the teachers who had been appointed since 2017 (Govt of* Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, *2022).*
>
> *The 2024 Reversal: In an unexpected twist, the provincial cabinet in August 2024 overturned a decision to upgrade 130,000 teacher jobs because of fiscal considerations referring to legal and administrative anomalies (Dawn, 2024).*
>
> *The 2024/2025 Protests: This overturn caused APTA to make province-wide demonstrations in November of 2024 and to shut down more than 26,000 primary schools (The News, 2024). The government had threatened disciplinary measures at first, but eventually engaged in negotiation, indicating how hard it is to hold on to disciplinary changes in case of organized collective action.*

Curriculum and Standardization: The Single National Curriculum (SNC)

The literature examines the introduction of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) as an enormous, ideologically-oriented change process that is supposed to bring social unity and equality (Zaman & Saleem, 2021). It sought to unify the public schools, the private schools and the religion seminaries (madrassas).

Implementation Challenges:

The studies show that though the SNC vision was to abolish the class-based division, the implementation was plagued by logistical nightmare. The new student learning outcomes (SLOs) were not well prepared and resources (textbooks, guides) also were delayed or inadequate (Khan & Malik, 2019). The change demanded an overhaul of pedagogy of rote learning to activity learning, which could not be offered by the current staff of teachers despite the short-term training programs. The literature outlines that there was a communication gap wherein teachers on the ground level did not comprehend the philosophy of the SNC as an initial change in the syllabus, but instead, it was a syllabus change and not a pedagogical one (Dayan, 2025).

Stakeholder Resistance:

The reaction to the SNC in the teaching fraternity of the public sector was mostly positive in the sense that this was a means of promoting national cohesiveness, whereas the stakeholders of the private sector opposed it on the basis that it threatened their autonomy and quality (Zaman & Saleem, 2021). There was also the complication in the madrassa integration aspect of the SNC. Although the

government tried to have the madrassas registered under the Ministry of Education in order to impart modern subjects, this would be resisted by the religious boards, and compromised settlements were reached on most occasions, which weakened the control mechanisms.

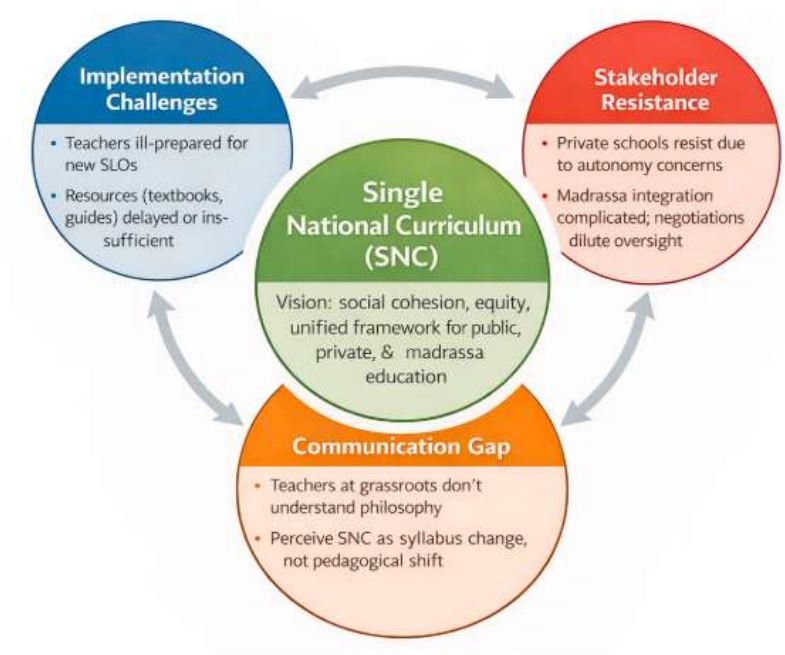


Figure 5: Single National Curriculum

Decentralization and Community Engagement: Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs)

One such positive change in the story of governance is the empowerment of Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs). The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has spent a significant amount of money on re-establishing the vitality of such bodies, making them financially empowered to use budgets in providing facilities missing in schools (Shirsha et al., 2024).

Effectiveness and Empowerment:

The research has revealed that the training of PTC members resulted in a substantial increase in their financial management capabilities and the control of school conditions (Shirsha et al., 2024). Improvement of infrastructure (building boundary walls, toilets) was faster through the conditional grant mechanism than through the centralized Communication and Works Department. This reformation is also in line with the principle of change management of empowerment which offers the stakeholders a sense of ownership. Nevertheless, there exist difficulties in terms of the level of literacy of parents and the predominance of head teachers in the decision making process which may occasionally turn the council into a rubber stamp organization.

The "School Leaders" Initiative

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government came up with the program of School Leaders to bridge the gap in between the district administration and schools. Unlike head teachers, they were hired to do academic mentoring and monitoring. The program was meant to enhance the quality of instruction through the visits of special mentors to schools. Yet, as implied in the literature, there is

ambiguity in their definition of roles as compared to the traditional Assistant Sub-Divisional Education Officers (ASDEOs). Although they should help teachers, under certain circumstances, they were perceived as an additional surveillance measure (British Council, 2017). The fact that they are under contract and have just been given notifications of re-engagement (Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2025) shows that they are still trying to fix this new cadres in the system.

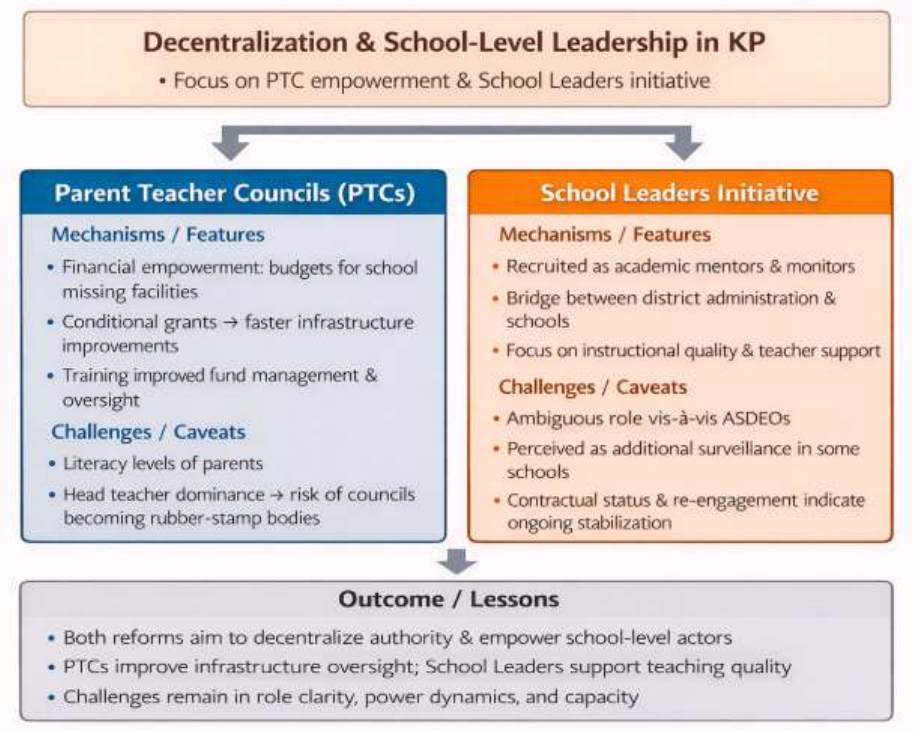


Figure 6: The School Leader's Initiatives

DISCUSSION

The history of education governance in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the 18th Amendment can be well studied using the proven theoretical models of Change Management. This section integrates the conclusions to give the reasons and manner in which the consequences of the reforms took place.

Applying Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Model

Unfreezing (2010-2013):

Under the "Deliverology" model, both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa initiated higher level digital monitoring and data tracking systems to diminish teacher nonappearance and track school inputs (Bari et al., 2015; Tabadlab, 2023). Conversely, in Punjab, the central dependence on top-down "Stocktake" meetings headed by the Chief Minister resulted in counterproductive outcomes; district managers concentrated on short-term input compliance insted of long-term administrative capacity building (Tabadlab, 2023). When political priorities transitioned post-2018, reform drive gruffly deteriorated in both provinces, exemplifying how centralized surveillance without local institutional possession disqualifies to ***refreeze*** behavioral change (Tabadlab, 2023).

The Unfreezing mechanism was the 18th Amendment and the following statement of an Emergency in Education by the PTI government. The de facto publicity of pathetic statistics (ghost

schools, absenteeism, and shattered infrastructure) formed the burning ground or sense of urgency that was needed to disturb the status quo (Lewin, 1947). The system was already volatile to change as the 2010 floods were disruptive, and the militancy crisis only added more instability to it.

Moving/Changing (2013-2018):

It was at this stage that radical interventions, such as the IMU, NTS recruitment, and the biometric systems were implemented. These were the new behaviors that were brought into the system. It was a Power-Coercive strategy (Chin and Benne) that the government used whereby strict monitoring and penalties were used to coerce compliance. Although it was already effective within the short-run (there was higher attendance), it did not capture the hearts and minds of the workforce. School Leaders program and SNC were efforts to go beyond administrative compliance to pedagogical change but these were met with strong resistance owing to the capacity limitations.

Refreezing (2018-Present):

The most challenging stage has been the "Refreezing" stage or making the change stick. The fact that there is a constant movement of teachers towards regularization under the influence of politics means that the new performance-based culture has yet to take root. The driving forces (reform units, donors) were usually crushed by the restraining ones (unions, political expediency). But the legislative umbrella that the EMA has and institutionalization of school-based recruitment provide indicates that the changes to some structures to make a re-freeze to the new normal have been achieved and as such it is premature to roll-back.

Kotter's 8-Step Process and Failure Modes

Analyzing the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reforms against Kotter's 8 steps reveals specific strengths and weaknesses:

Create Urgency (Step 1): High success. The stories about education crisis and Naya Pakistan were successfully marketed to masses.

Form a Guiding Coalition (Step 2): Part success. There was a close alliance between the political leadership (Imran Khan, Atif Khan) and the donor agencies (DFID, Adam Smith International). Yet, this coalition did not include the bureaucracy and teachers by a large, considering reforms as external imposition (Ecorys, 2021).

Create a Vision (Step 3): Coherent vision of Uniform Quality Education was developed in Sector Plans.

Communicate the Vision (Step 4): The communication gap, discovered in the literature (Ali, 2022), implied that frontline teachers did not always find the logic behind such reforms as the SNC or the policy of induction confusing and perceived them as arbitrary.

Empower Action (Step 5): PTC initiative was effective in empowering communities but bureaucracy was still disempowering district managers on the use of the budget.

Create Short-term Wins (Step 6): The quick fix of infrastructure (boundary walls, toilets) and attendance data presented visible short-term wins perpetuating political capital.

Build on the Change (Step 7): The development of IMU to merged districts and transformation of CPD programs demonstrate an attempt to build on the change.

Anchor in Culture (Step 8): This is again the gap of criticality. The patronage culture and this culture of entitlement (regularization without responsibility) continue. The 2025 protests

that happened recently demonstrate that a new way has not yet succeeded the old cultural demands of serving the government.

The Role of "Change Agents" and Donor Dependency

In the review, the critical role of external change agents (DFID/FCDO, World Bank) in the form of international donors is pointed out. They were the technical support, sources of funds and the process of delivering (Deliverology) that made the engine of reform run (Barber, 2013). Consultants funded by donors used to work in units such as the Change Management Unit (CMU) and the Reform Implementation Cell. This formed a parallel bureaucracy. The literature is concerned with the fact that the indigenous civil service has not acquired the ability to carry these intensive management practices after the donor pressure has disappeared (Zafar, 2015). Another risk factor that has been discovered in the political economy analysis is the phenomenon of the isomorphic mimicry of institutions resembling modern organizations (gathering data, generating reports) but deprived of the internal functionality to enhance the learning outcomes (Siddiquei, Ali, 2023).

Resistance: The Human Factor (ADKAR Model)

The strong opposition of the teacher unions (APTA) is an indication that the model is not employing the people side of change which is ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement).

Desire: The Desire to change did not always exist in teachers since reforms were viewed as a threat to the job security of the teachers (punitive monitoring, contract/adhoc status) instead of an opportunity.

Ability: Training of SNC demanded new pedagogical skills, although this training was usually brief and cascaded, and the teachers were not given the Ability to actually apply it.

Reinforcement: Upgradation decision reversal gave the wrong signal that did not reinforce the association between performance and reward. It, instead, made the protest attitude stronger, as performance does not bring about results.

CONCLUSION

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa administration of basic education since the 18th Amendment is a dynamic and sometimes a stormy process of change. In the prism of Change Management, one can note that the province has already made some meaningful structural successes: the constitutional devolution has been put into effect in law; the strong data monitoring system (EMA) has been established; and the principle of recruitment based on merit has been introduced instead of the blatant political nepotism in hiring. They are not just frivolous accomplishments within a sphere of frailty and resource depletions.

Nevertheless, even the cultural change is not fully accomplished. The process of reform has been very top-down, technocratic and donor funded and in many ways has avoided the gutter but necessary task of establishing consensus with the front line workers-the teachers. The repeating pattern of union protests and government concessions on the rules of service demonstrates that the Refreezing stage of a performance-based culture has not taken place yet. The system is at the stage of flux, at which modern instruments of governance (biometrics, tablets, GIS) are in parallel with traditional power structures (patronage, resistance).

The high pressure environment that was formed by the use of the concept of Deliverology provided the government with numbers (attendance, facilities) but failed to provide complex behavioral changes (pedagogy, learning outcomes). To make the switch between KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA as an isomorphic mimicry and the actual transformation, the subsequent stage of reformation will be based on the human factor.

Recommendations for Future Governance

1. Institutionalize Change Management: E&SED should stop relying on the ad-hoc Change Management Unit and integrate change management capabilities into its typical levels of bureaucracy and district management. This also involves training District Education Officers (DEOs) not only on the administration but also in leading change.

2. From Policing to Support: The monitoring regime (EMA) should become a diagnostic and supportive system instead of being a purely punitive one. The need should be identified with the use of data and not to penalize absenteeism only, which also raises the Desire aspect of the ADKAR model in teachers.

3. Sustainable Stakeholder Engagement: The policy making process should shift to donor boardroom to consultation with the teachers and parents. The teacher representatives should also be incorporated into the guiding coalition in order to close the communication gap and establish authentic ownership.

4. Fiscal Decentralization: Financial freedom given to PTCs should be made more robust and increased. It is essential that capacity building of PTC members is carried out to make things transparent and address the paradox of budget utilization.

5. Focus on Learning Outcomes: The definition of the word success should also change and it should be the output measure (Student Learning Outcomes) rather than the input measure (attendance, boundary walls). This involves a long-term investment in pedagogical reform which cuts across political regimes.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands at a crossroads. To consolidate the proceeds of the previous decade, it would have to shift its approach, whereby it has been pursuing a strategy of enforcing change to the strategy of leading change, where the human aspect would be prioritized within its governance model.

Gaps in Literature

Longitudinal Impact on Learning: Although there is a lot of literature available on access and attendance measures, there are limited longitudinal studies on how governance reforms (such as IMU or NTS) are directly related to student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the long-run. The majority of assessments are concerned with intermediate outputs.

Post-Merger Governance: The overwhelming majority of researches pay attention to the policy at the provincial level. Minor amount of research is available on the micro-politics of education governance in the district and tehsil level, especially in the manner the local elites capture or resist the decentralized resources.

Post-Merger Governance: The governance issues that were particular to the Newly Merged Districts (ex-FATA) are a poorly studied subject. The manner in which the inflexible provincial

structures are engaging with the socio-political peculiarities of the tribal belt needs to be researched further.

Qualitative Teacher Narratives: More ethnographic studies are required which reflect the lived experience of teachers who are going through these reforms, as opposed to survey-based perception studies. It is important to understand the emotions and mental strains of change fatigue among teachers by provincial-level policy. There is limited research on the micro-politics of education governance at the district and tehsil levels, particularly how local elites capture or resist decentralized resources.

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