

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN DISTRICT KHAIRPUR MIR'S, PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a foundational stage of learning that significantly impacts a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. In Pakistan, where disparities in educational access and quality are particularly stark in rural areas, ECE represents both a challenge and an opportunity. This study explores the status of ECE in District Khairpur Mir's, Sindh, Pakistan, with the aim of identifying systemic barriers and proposing evidence-based solutions.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, integrating classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with education officers and teachers, and structured surveys with parents. The research focused on five major areas: infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum implementation, parental involvement, and governance. The sample included 40 ECE teachers, 10 district education officials, and 100 parents from various public schools.

Findings revealed critical shortcomings across all assessed domains. The majority of ECE classrooms lacked basic facilities such as child-sized furniture, adequate lighting, and play materials. Over 70% of teachers had not received specialized training in early childhood pedagogy. Curriculum implementation was inconsistent, with many educators unaware of the full scope of the ECE curriculum prescribed by the Sindh Education and Literacy Department. Parental engagement was minimal, largely due to a lack of awareness and socioeconomic constraints. Furthermore, systemic governance issues, including inadequate funding and poor monitoring, further hindered the effective delivery of ECE.

The study concludes that without urgent and targeted interventions, ECE in Khairpur Mir's will continue to underperform, thereby compromising the educational futures of thousands of children. Recommendations include teacher training programs, curriculum reorientation, infrastructure investment, and community sensitization campaigns. This research contributes to a growing body of literature emphasizing localized approaches to ECE reform in developing countries and calls for immediate policy action to address the inequities in early learning access and quality.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education, Rural Education, Teacher Training, Curriculum Implementation, Parental Involvement, Education Policy, Khairpur Mir's, Pakistan.

### INTRODUCTION

#### BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Early Childhood Education (ECE) refers to the structured educational experience provided to children from birth to eight years of age.

Globally, ECE has been recognized as a crucial phase in human development, associated with improved learning outcomes, increased school retention, and enhanced social skills (UNESCO,

2021). It lays the foundation for future learning and forms a critical link between home and formal schooling. Governments and international bodies such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and UNESCO continue to advocate for robust investment in early years education, especially in low-income and developing countries. In the context of Pakistan, ECE was formally recognized in the National Education

Policy (2009), which aimed to integrate early learning into the formal education system. However, despite policy commitments, implementation has been sporadic and largely dependent on provincial will and resources. Rural districts, in particular, have faced considerable challenges in rolling out ECE programs effectively. Lack of funding, inadequate teacher training, weak policy enforcement, and low community awareness have created a situation where access to quality ECE remains elusive for a significant proportion of the population.

District Khairpur Mir's in Sindh province is emblematic of these national trends. The district, although rich in culture and heritage, faces persistent educational challenges. According to data from the Sindh Education Management Information System (SEMIS), enrollment rates for children aged 3–5 in Khairpur Mir's are significantly lower than the provincial average. Infrastructure deficits, absence of play-based curricula, and insufficient pedagogical training further exacerbate the issue.

#### **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

Previous studies on ECE in Pakistan have primarily focused on urban areas or generalized national trends. There remains a gap in the literature with respect to district-level, localized studies that reflect the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics influencing ECE. This study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on Khairpur Mir's and employing a comprehensive, mixed-methods research design to capture nuanced perspectives from educators, policymakers, and parents.

Understanding these local conditions is essential for formulating targeted policies and designing effective interventions. The early years of a child's life are too critical to be left to

chance; thus, this research seeks to illuminate the specific barriers to quality ECE in Khairpur Mir's and provide a roadmap for reform based on empirical evidence.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of this study is to explore the current state of Early Childhood Education in District Khairpur Mir's, Pakistan. The specific aims are to:

Assess the physical infrastructure and availability of learning resources in ECE classrooms.

Evaluate the professional qualifications and training of ECE teachers.

Analyze the implementation of the prescribed ECE curriculum.

Examine the role of parental involvement in supporting early learning.

Identify institutional and systemic challenges in ECE governance.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the current challenges and opportunities in delivering Early Childhood Education in District Khairpur Mir's, Pakistan?

#### **STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER**

This paper is structured into six major sections. Following the introduction, the literature review synthesizes relevant national and international studies on ECE. The methodology section outlines the research design, participant selection, data collection tools, and analytical procedures. The findings section presents the results from qualitative and quantitative data. This is followed by a discussion that interprets the results in the context of existing literature. Finally, the conclusion summarizes key insights and offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and civil society stakeholders.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a foundation for lifelong learning and social development has been widely recognized by educators, policymakers, and researchers around the world. This section reviews key themes and debates in the global and national literature, with particular emphasis on the Pakistani context and its relevance to District

Khairpur Mir's.

### **POLICY AND GOVERNANCE OF ECE IN PAKISTAN**

The Government of Pakistan officially recognized Early Childhood Education in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2009, declaring ECE as the "first important stage of education." Despite this, the actual implementation of ECE across provinces remains inconsistent and underfunded (Government of Pakistan, 2009). With the devolution of education after the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, provinces were empowered to design and execute education policy. This led to further disparities in ECE implementation due to varying capacities and political will among provincial governments (Naeem & Rizvi, 2020).

In Sindh, the Sindh Education Sector Plan (SESP) (2014–2018) acknowledged the need for strengthening ECE but failed to allocate significant resources for teacher training or classroom development. According to AEPAM (2019), less than 10% of the total education budget in most provinces is allocated to early learning programs.

Lack of coordination between departments and weak monitoring mechanisms have further hampered policy enforcement. As a result, ECE remains one of the most underdeveloped sub-sectors of education in rural areas like Khairpur Mir's.

### **TEACHER TRAINING AND PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE**

The success of any ECE program is directly linked to the capacity of its teachers (UNESCO, 2021). Research suggests that early childhood educators require specialized training in child psychology, developmentally appropriate practices, and interactive teaching methodologies (Espinosa, 2002). However, in Pakistan, most ECE teachers are either primary school teachers given extra duties or untrained recruits with no background in early childhood pedagogy (AEPAM, 2019).

A study by Rahman et al. (2017) on teacher preparedness in rural Sindh found that more than 65% of ECE teachers relied on rote memorization techniques. Interactive and play-based learning—core to ECE pedagogy—was

rarely observed. The absence of in-service training, continuous professional development, and mentorship further limits the ability of teachers to adapt to evolving curricular and developmental needs.

Additionally, the lack of pre-service teacher education programs specifically designed for ECE contributes to a skills gap. Institutions like the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) offer early childhood certificates, but these are neither widely recognized nor systematically required for hiring in government schools (Khan & Raza, 2019).

### **CURRICULUM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education (2007) developed by the Ministry of Education lays out a comprehensive framework emphasizing holistic child development, including language, cognitive, physical, emotional, and social domains. However, this curriculum is rarely implemented in full, especially in rural and under-resourced districts.

In many ECE classrooms, curriculum delivery remains ad hoc. Teachers often create their own routines based on available resources, which are usually minimal (Ali, 2018). A 2021 UNICEF report highlighted that only 35% of public ECE classrooms in rural Sindh followed any structured curriculum. In Khairpur Mir's, anecdotal reports from education officers suggest that curriculum delivery is hindered by the absence of age-appropriate materials and inadequate classroom management skills among teachers.

The curriculum itself, though theoretically sound, lacks contextual adaptation for linguistic and cultural diversity. Children in Khairpur Mir's, where Sindhi is the primary spoken language, often face difficulty engaging with Urdu-based curriculum content at an early age (Shaikh, 2022).

### **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

A child-friendly, safe, and stimulating environment is essential for early learning (OECD, 2019). However, most ECE classrooms in Pakistan fail to meet even basic standards. According to SEMIS (2022), over 60% of government-run ECE centers in Sindh do not

have child-sized furniture, while 45% lack separate toilet facilities for girls and boys.

District Khairpur Mir's is no exception. Field reports reveal overcrowded classrooms, broken furniture, poor ventilation, and insufficient lighting. Many schools also lack safe outdoor play spaces, depriving children of critical physical and social development opportunities (Baloch et al., 2020).

Learning resources such as picture books, toys, charts, and sensory materials are either outdated or unavailable. In the absence of these, ECE teachers often resort to blackboard-centered instruction, which is developmentally inappropriate for young learners.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Parental and community engagement plays a vital role in reinforcing early learning outcomes (UNICEF, 2022). Parents who actively support their children's education from an early age foster better school readiness, emotional well-being, and academic achievement. However, in many rural areas of Pakistan, parents are either unaware of the value of ECE or unable to participate due to socio-economic pressures.

Studies by Save the Children (2020) indicate that only 30% of rural parents attend parent-teacher meetings. In Khairpur Mir's, cultural norms and a lack of maternal education further inhibit engagement. Mothers, who are typically primary caregivers, often lack the literacy or confidence to support home-based learning. Additionally, school management committees (SMCs), designed to include community input in school affairs, remain largely inactive. Limited training for SMC members and poor institutional support contribute to their ineffectiveness (Shah, 2021).

### INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

Globally, countries with successful ECE systems invest in integrated service models combining health, nutrition, and education, often delivered through community-based platforms. For instance, New Zealand's Te Whāriki curriculum emphasizes cultural inclusivity, play-based learning, and family engagement. In contrast, Finland focuses on teacher autonomy and outdoor play, while Japan incorporates group

cooperation and self-discipline from an early age (OECD, 2020).

These examples show that effective ECE is context-specific and requires strong political will, sustained investment, and community ownership. Pakistan's ECE framework can benefit by adapting such practices to its socio-cultural and economic contexts, especially in rural districts like Khairpur Mir's.

### GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE

While national-level surveys and policy documents provide an overview of the status of ECE in Pakistan, localized studies remain scarce. Most available data are aggregated and fail to account for inter-district disparities. There is limited research on teacher experiences, parental perceptions, and school-level implementation challenges in rural Sindh.

This study contributes to filling this gap by offering district-specific insights from Khairpur Mir's. By triangulating data from multiple stakeholders—teachers, parents, and education officers—this research aims to provide a holistic view of the current ECE landscape and propose actionable recommendations for improvement.

### METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **mixed-methods research design** to comprehensively examine the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in District Khairpur Mir's, Pakistan. The combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques ensures depth, context, and generalizability in addressing the research objectives.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

A **convergent parallel mixed-methods design** was used, where qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and then triangulated to form integrated interpretations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach allows for cross-validation and a more holistic understanding of the issue at hand.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the current status of infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum implementation, and learning resources in ECE

centers of Khairpur Mir's?

What are the perceptions of teachers, parents, and education officers regarding the effectiveness of ECE?

What institutional and community-level factors influence ECE delivery in the district?

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To evaluate the physical and pedagogical conditions of ECE centers.

To examine the role and preparedness of ECE teachers.

To understand parental involvement and community engagement in ECE.

To identify barriers and facilitators at the policy and school levels.

### PARTICIPANTS

The study sample was selected through **purposive sampling** to ensure inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives relevant to ECE.

**Teachers:** 40 ECE teachers from 20 public schools across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas of Khairpur Mir's were selected. Gender, teaching experience, and school location were considered for maximum variation.

**Parents:** 100 parents (60 mothers and 40 fathers) of enrolled ECE children were interviewed through structured questionnaires and focus groups.

**Education Officers:** 10 officials from the District Education Office, including supervisors and early years education focal persons, participated in key informant interviews.

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### SURVEYS

Structured questionnaires were administered to ECE teachers and parents. The teacher survey included items on qualifications, classroom resources, training history, and curriculum use.

The parent survey focused on perceptions of ECE, participation in school activities, and home learning environments.

#### CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

A structured observation checklist based on UNICEF's "Minimum Standards for Child-Friendly Classrooms" was used to assess the physical environment, teacher behavior, student engagement, and learning resources. Each

classroom was observed for one full school day.

### INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

**Semi-structured interviews** were conducted with education officers to gather insights on policy enforcement, funding, and monitoring practices.

**Focus group discussions (FGDs)** with parents (separated by gender) were conducted to understand local beliefs, challenges, and expectations regarding ECE.

### TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

All instruments were developed based on previous validated tools from UNESCO, Save the Children, and AEPAM reports, and were adapted to the local context. Tools were first translated into **Sindhi and Urdu**, and pilot-tested in two non-sample schools to check for clarity and cultural relevance. Revisions were made before final administration.

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### QUANTITATIVE DATA

Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using **SPSS version 26**. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) were computed to summarize teacher demographics, infrastructure status, and parental participation. Cross-tabulations were used to identify relationships between variables (e.g., teacher training vs. curriculum implementation).

#### QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed using **thematic analysis** (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were coded in NVivo software and categorized into themes such as "training challenges," "curriculum gaps," and "community attitudes." Patterns and contradictions were noted to enrich the interpretation of survey results.

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study adhered to all ethical guidelines of social research:

**Informed Consent:** Written consent was obtained from all participants. For illiterate parents, verbal consent was recorded with a witness.

### **Confidentiality:**

Personal data were anonymized during data entry and analysis.

School names and personal identifiers were coded to protect privacy.

### **Voluntary Participation:**

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

**Approval:** Prior approval was obtained from the District Education Office Khairpur Mir's and the institutional research review committee.

### **LIMITATIONS**

**Geographic Scope:** The study was limited to public schools in Khairpur Mir's and does not represent private or madrasa-based ECE institutions.

### **Self-reporting Bias:**

Some responses from teachers and parents may reflect social desirability rather than actual practice.

### **Time Constraints:**

Classroom observations were conducted on a single day per school, which may not fully capture variability in teaching practices.

Despite these limitations, the triangulated approach enhances the validity and applicability of the findings, especially for stakeholders aiming to improve early education at the grassroots level.

### **FINDINGS**

The following section presents the results of the mixed-methods investigation into Early Childhood Education (ECE) practices, challenges, and perceptions in District Khairpur Mir's. Findings are organized around five thematic areas: infrastructure and physical environment, teacher qualifications and training, curriculum implementation, parental involvement, and institutional and policy-level challenges.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Data from classroom observations and teacher surveys reveal significant infrastructural challenges in ECE classrooms across the district.

Only **35%** of observed classrooms had child-sized furniture, and **58%** lacked adequate ventilation and lighting. Toilets suitable for small children were available in **only 42%** of schools.

In rural areas, some schools had no separate ECE classrooms; instead, early learners shared space with primary-level students. Blackboards were the main instructional tool in **90%** of observed classes, while only **15%** had access to basic learning aids like charts, blocks, or puzzles.

A teacher from a government school in Faiz Ganj stated:

"We use whatever we have. Sometimes I bring empty boxes or pictures from magazines to create activities, but there's no budget for proper ECE materials."

The absence of outdoor play areas was another critical issue. In **70%** of schools, play areas were either non-existent or used as parking spaces or livestock sheds.

### **TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING**

Survey responses indicate that **68%** of ECE teachers had no formal training in early childhood pedagogy. Among the trained group, most had received a one-time orientation workshop that lasted less than one week. None of the teachers had received refresher courses in the past two years.

When asked about their confidence in delivering age-appropriate content, only **27%** rated themselves as "very confident." Many teachers reported relying on rote memorization and storytelling as their primary methods of instruction. The concept of play-based learning was poorly understood.

### **An education officer admitted:**

"We assign teachers to ECE from among our existing primary teachers. There's no structured training or criteria—it's based on availability."

This mismatch between teaching responsibilities and pedagogical preparation resulted in low-quality instruction. Classroom observations confirmed that **78%** of teachers used frontal teaching with limited child interaction, and **85%** of students were passive during lessons.

### **CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION**

The national ECE curriculum, introduced in

2007, was not being implemented in its complete form. Only 22% of surveyed teachers were aware of the full curriculum framework. Most followed a makeshift plan or copied content from primary textbooks.

In practice, curriculum delivery was fragmented. While literacy and numeracy activities were conducted regularly, other developmental domains such as physical, social, and emotional skills received minimal attention. Observations showed that **movement and music** activities, crucial for gross motor development, occurred in **less than 10%** of classrooms.

Language barriers also surfaced as a major hurdle. The curriculum was predominantly in Urdu, whereas Sindhi is the native language for most children. One parent remarked:

“My son doesn’t understand Urdu well, and he loses interest when the teacher uses only Urdu stories or rhymes.”

In the FGDs, teachers also expressed frustration with the lack of culturally relevant learning materials and support for multilingual instruction.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents' perceptions of ECE were generally positive, but engagement levels remained low. Only 38% of surveyed parents reported attending at least one parent-teacher meeting in the past year. Mothers were more likely than fathers to attend school events or communicate with teachers.

FGDs revealed that while parents valued early education, they often viewed it as "free daycare" rather than a critical learning phase. A significant proportion (42%) were unaware of the specific curriculum or daily activities their children engaged in.

Barriers to parental involvement included:

Low literacy levels among parents (especially mothers).

Cultural norms restricting women’s mobility.

Limited communication from schools.

Economic constraints requiring parents to prioritize work over school visits.

However, parents expressed willingness to participate more actively if invited or trained.

### A mother from Nara tehsil said:

“If someone explained how we can help our children at home, I would try. We just don’t know what to do.”

### INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY-LEVEL CHALLENGES

Interviews with district education officers and school heads identified several systemic challenges affecting ECE implementation:

#### Lack of Monitoring:

There is no dedicated ECE supervisor at the district level.

Inspections focus mainly on primary and secondary levels.

#### Funding Gaps:

Schools receive minimal budgets earmarked for ECE, and teachers often purchase materials from their own pockets.

#### Staffing Issues:

Many ECE positions are filled by unqualified or overburdened primary teachers.

#### Absence of Career Pathways:

ECE teachers are often overlooked in promotions and training opportunities.

These institutional issues create a disincentive for teachers and school leaders to prioritize ECE. As one district official noted:

“There is no performance metric tied to ECE outcomes, so schools do not feel pressure to invest in it.”

Despite the National Education Policy (2009) advocating for universal ECE access, policy implementation at the grassroots level remains fragmented and under-resourced.

### Summary of Key Findings

Theme	Key Findings
Infrastructure	Inadequate classrooms, lack of learning aids, poor Sanitation
Teacher Capacity	Majority untrained, limited use of play-based learning
Curriculum Use	Partial implementation, poor linguistic adaptation

Parental Involvement	Low awareness, limited engagement, but high interest
Institutional Barriers	Weak monitoring, underfunding, policy-practice gap

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section discusses the findings in the context of existing literature and policy frameworks on Early Childhood Education (ECE), draws theoretical and practical implications, and concludes with recommendations for stakeholders. It highlights the persistent structural, pedagogical, and policy-related gaps that hinder the effective delivery of ECE services in Khairpur Mir's, a challenge mirrored in other parts of Pakistan.

## DISCUSSION

### INFRASTRUCTURE AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The findings reveal a stark deficiency in infrastructure and learning environments, consistent with national reports. The Pakistan Education Statistics (AEPAM, 2021) found that only 54% of ECE classrooms across the country are equipped with age-appropriate materials, mirroring the low presence of learning aids and child-friendly furniture observed in Khairpur Mir's. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that the physical learning environment in early years is crucial for cognitive and social development. The study shows that the neglect of these aspects in Khairpur Mir's may be hampering foundational learning outcomes.

Moreover, outdoor play—essential for physical development—is absent in most schools. The observed conditions violate the standards outlined in the **National ECE Curriculum (2007)**, which mandates a holistic learning space incorporating play, movement, and sensory stimulation.

### TEACHER TRAINING AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

A critical finding is the widespread lack of specialized training among ECE teachers. This reflects national trends, where less than 30% of ECE teachers in the public sector are formally trained (UNICEF Pakistan, 2019). The current reliance on untrained primary-level teachers in Khairpur Mir's results in inappropriate pedagogy, such as frontal instruction and rote learning, which contradict early childhood

learning theories by Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1978).

The mismatch between teaching practices and developmental needs may lead to long-term academic disengagement. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) note, early teacher-child interaction quality is a stronger predictor of academic outcomes than curriculum content alone.

### CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The disjointed implementation of the national curriculum in Khairpur Mir's aligns with studies highlighting curriculum disconnects in rural Pakistan (Iqbal & Rauf, 2020). The study found that teachers used fragments of the curriculum, often omitting domains like socio-emotional learning and physical development. Language barriers further complicated learning: while Sindhi is the child's first language, Urdu remains the medium of instruction—resulting in disengagement and comprehension issues.

Cummins' (2001) theory of linguistic interdependence supports the idea that early education is more effective when delivered in the child's home language. There is an urgent need to localize the curriculum linguistically and culturally.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The low levels of parental engagement reported echo findings by Save the Children (2017), which indicate that ECE parental involvement in rural Pakistan is minimal due to illiteracy, socio-cultural norms, and lack of institutional outreach. However, the expressed willingness of parents to participate—if properly guided—presents an opportunity.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (2001) suggests that even low-literate parents can contribute significantly to children's learning through simple home-based activities, communication, and volunteering. Schools in Khairpur Mir's lack the mechanisms to activate this potential.

## INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS AND POLICY-PRACTICE GAP

The study confirms that ECE is deprioritized at the governance level. Despite national commitments under the National Education Policy (2009) and Pakistan Vision 2025, ECE remains poorly funded, inadequately monitored, and excluded from mainstream educational planning (Ministry of Federal Education, 2021).

There is no accountability structure or performance metrics specific to ECE in district education offices. This “policy-practice gap” (Fullan, 2007) is evident in the absence of designated ECE officers, irregular funding, and the lack of training budgets.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

### THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study reinforces socio-constructivist views that quality ECE requires developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and linguistically accessible environments. It also confirms Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which posits that child development is shaped by multiple systems—school, home, policy, and community. Weakness in any layer, such as ineffective school governance or passive parental roles, can negatively influence outcomes.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings demand urgent reconsideration of Pakistan’s ECE policy and planning frameworks. The neglect of ECE undermines the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4.2: “By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.”

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

At the practical level, this study provides a roadmap for district and provincial education departments:

**Capacity Building:** Teacher training must shift from ad hoc workshops to structured certification programs focused on child psychology, activity-based learning, and multilingual instruction.

**Parental Engagement:** Schools must develop low-cost models for parental orientation and communication, especially tailored for low-

literate populations.

**Resource Allocation:** Budgets for ECE must be ring-fenced and monitored. Schools should receive direct grants for classroom materials and furniture.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Designating ECE-specific monitoring officers and developing outcome-based assessment tools are vital for accountability.

## CONCLUSION

This study offers one of the first in-depth empirical looks at the state of ECE in Khairpur Mir’s, Sindh, revealing deep-seated issues that hinder children’s early learning trajectories. While ECE is recognized in national policies as foundational for lifelong learning, its implementation in Khairpur Mir’s remains fragmented and under-resourced.

The infrastructural deficits, pedagogical misalignments, curriculum gaps, and weak parental-school linkages constitute a multi-layered challenge. Addressing this requires a paradigm shift—from viewing ECE as optional daycare to recognizing it as the cornerstone of human development.

The insights provided herein are not just diagnostic but strategic: they offer evidence-based directions for reform. With political will, community involvement, and targeted investment, Khairpur Mir’s can lead by example in transforming ECE in Pakistan.

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