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## **Transforming Vocational and Madrassa Education: An Analysis of PML-N's Reforms in Punjab (2008-2018)**

**Usman Ali,**

PhD Scholar, Department of History, Government College University Faisalabad.

*Email: [mwcking@gmail.com](mailto:mwcking@gmail.com)*

**Dr. Muhammad Dilshad Mohabbat,**

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Government College University. Faisalabad, *Email:*

*[mdilshadmohabbat@gmail.com](mailto:mdilshadmohabbat@gmail.com)*

**Dr. Hamid Iqbal,**

Visiting Lecturer, Department of History, Government College University Faisalabad, *Email:*

*[historianhami@gmail.com](mailto:historianhami@gmail.com)*

### **Abstract**

This study presents a thorough examination of the vocational and madrassa education reforms made by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) during 2008-2018. This paper analyses the strategic approach of PML-N in tackling issues in vocational education by promulgation the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) act 2010 and implementing substantial changes in the madrassa education system. This research examines to what extent the reforms implemented by the PML-N government in vocational and madrassa education during 2008-2018 and how successfully the Government accomplished their desired objectives of modernization, integration, and enhancement of quality? This study utilizes a mixed-methods qualitative, quantitative and analytical methodology to offer a comprehensive assessment of the educational reforms implemented by government. The primary sources used such as official reports, educational statistics, and performance data from TEVTA and Madrassas while secondary sources are used to assess the effectiveness of vocational training programs and Madrassa reforms. This paper reports on notable efforts including curriculum revisions, infrastructure improvements, and the implementation of regulatory measures aimed at modernizing vocational education and incorporating Madrassas into the national education

system. The results demonstrated both significant accomplishments and ongoing difficulties, providing invaluable understanding of the wider consequences of these educational policies for Pakistan's growth path. This paper evaluated that PML-N had emphasized on implementation of reforms which helped to attain their objectives. The dynamics of educational reforms and offers impacted the PML-N government's to overhaul Pakistan's education system especially during 2013-2018 during their Central Government.

**Keywords:** Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, TEVTA, Madrassa Reforms, Policy Implementations, National Education Plan

## **Introduction**

This research deals with the educational reforms and their implantation by the Government of PML-N during 2008-18 in TEVTA and Madrassas. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), also known as Vocational Training and Career and Technical Education (CTE), is a form of education and training that equips individuals with the skills necessary to operate in a particular profession. Commonly, these initiatives focus on providing students with practical education and can result in a certificate or a diploma (Sarastuen, 2020). Typically, vocational and technical education is disinterested in content or traditional educational skills. TVET courses are typically more constrained and functional than higher education courses, with a focus on industry and employment and a connection to the labor market. Therefore, vocational training provides a bridge between education and the working world (Doak).

Reforming Madrassas is a significant concern of the modern liberal world. New international developments, particularly the events of 9/11 had elevated the significance of Madrassa reforms not only for Pakistan but for the entire Muslim World. It was said that unreformed Madrassas were rapidly emerging as major training grounds for terrorists (Gulzar). In addition, a large number of Muslims, including the Ulema, were at the vanguard of the movement to reform the Madrassa system.

## **TVET Policy**

Under the Punjab Vocational Training Council Act, the Government of Punjab established the Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTC) in October 1998. The Punjab Assembly enacted this act on September 24, 1998, and the Punjab Governor approved it on September 29, 1998. It was based on public-private cooperation using Zakat funds for poverty alleviation on the

principle of dole out to pay roll by providing demand-driven skill and training to deserving needy youth, particularly to deserving Muslims. Special Institution established in 1999 via Ordinance (XXIV of 1999) by merging Training Institutes from seven different departments of Government of Punjab (TEVTA).

Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), in their 2008 and 2013's manifesto highlighted that they will provide maximum amenities for science and vocational education. Similarly, the National Education Policy 2009 also emphasized on technical and vocational training so following policy actions was devised:

- Inputs from all stakeholders must be institutionalized to ensure prospective reforms of TVE as per market demands
- Curriculum and skills standards should be developed and standardized at the national level
- Development of TVE curriculum in standard modules
- Expansion of TVEs with the area requirements
- The National Education Foundation, provincial/area literacy departments/directorates, and relevant non-governmental organizations shall provide graduates of literacy programs with skills-based vocational training pertinent to the local labor market
- Prerequisites for becoming a teacher in TVE must be defined, and teacher professional development must be a continuous process (Education, 2009)

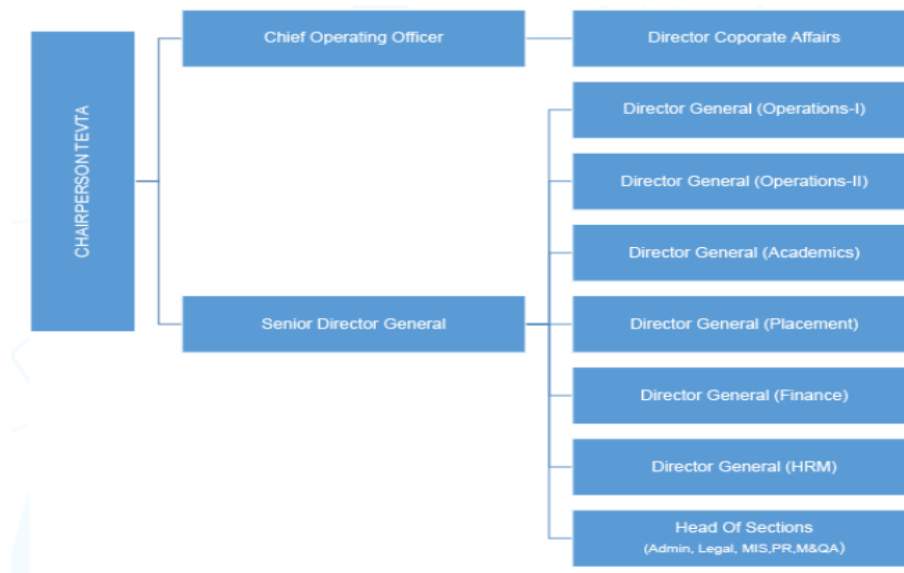
The National Skills Strategy Plan 2009-13 was another initiative towards the improvement of technical skills. The Strategy was developed using best practices for identifying and consulting stakeholders. NAVTEC met with a wide variety of stakeholders, including local and international experts, employers, trainees, government officials, and training providers, to determine their needs and expectations. The roles and responsibilities were set for TVET institutions as well as other governing bodies. It included:

- Concerned Ministries will aid in identifying extant structures or organizations that perform similar functions to those envisioned for IAGs.

- NAVTEC will notify IAGs, determine their terms of reference, and provide financial support on mutually agreed-upon terms.
- IAGs will develop and endorse competency standards, which will then be certified by NAVTEC.
- NAVTEC will collaborate with TEVTAs and Centers of Excellence (where they exist) to develop curriculum and training manuals for training materials (Commission, 2009).

With the inception of 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, education went under the jurisdiction of provinces so the Provincial Assembly of Punjab under the Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif had initiated a bill to constitute TEVTA authority to strengthen TEVT institutes. “The Punjab Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Act Bill 2010” ratified by the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab on 14 July 2010 (Punjab, 2010) and sanctioned by the Governor of the Punjab on 19 July 2010. It was provided to reorganize the Punjab TEVT Authority to ensure the appropriate provision of technical education in the province and to address incidental issues.

The authority was comprised of minimum seven and maximum fifteen members appointed by government. A Chairman, minimum three secretaries as ex-officio members and other members than these members would be the part of authority (Punjab, The Punjab Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Act 2010, 2010). The organogram of TEVTA is as follows:



The functions of the Authority were:

- To provide technical education, research, service and advancement of technical education in all sectors of economy
- Establishment and maintenance and administering the institutions
- Teachers' pre-service and in-service training and research
- Prescribing and developing curricula
- Innovation by adoption of new technologies as per market demand
- Deciding the teaching methods and strategies
- Prescribing the terms and conditions for employees
- Initiatives for placement of trainees and graduates by career counselling of alumni and maintenance of linkages with alumni
- Links development with national and international institutions
- Initiatives for welfare of its employees
- Financial assistance to needy students by fellowships, scholarships, bursaries, medals and prizes
- Assuring residence facilities to the students
- Maintain order, discipline and security
- Promote co-curricular activities (Punjab, The Punjab Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Act 2010, 2010)

The vocational education got much importance in Punjab so government of Pakistan had devised an act in June 2011. "The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission Act 2011" framed an autonomous organization for the regulation, coordination and policy direction of vocational and technical trainings. The board was consist of a Chairman, five secretaries of different Ministries and Departments of Federal Government, an executive director and six members from private sector (Pakistan, 2011).

The system of TVET in Pakistan faces numerous obstacles in terms of accessibility, quality, equity, and relevance. Existing training institutes were insufficient to meet the requirements of the expanding youth population. In terms of TVET policy formulation and delivery, there was

insufficient cooperation between the public and private sectors in terms of the quality and relevance of the training. TVET Reform Support Program was introduced in 2011 to assist the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to reform the TVET system in accordance with the National Skills Strategy.

Pakistan created its first National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) to increase skills training quality, relevance, and employability. This was created after extensive consultations with public and business sector players. The NVQF was essential to creating a coherent national system of qualifications, assessment, and training to fulfill the NSS and TVET policy's goals. NVQF aims to improve outcomes, skills, and industry-relevant knowledge. NVQF helped learners to grow horizontally and vertically in TVET and provided a foundation for national and international qualification recognition. During 2011-16, NVQF piloted over 142 TVET institutes across Pakistan with 60 trades and 20000 (UNEVOC, 2013).

Under the TVET Teacher In-service and Pre-service Training Program, 8500 teachers got training from different centers including 18 E-Learning centers. A Fund for Innovative Training (FIT) was set up to assist the TVET reforms in Pakistan by providing funds to trainees. Under this setup 125000 persons were benefitted who had worked in 36 projects at two learning regions. Approximately 1127 TEVT programs institutes were accelerated during 2011-2016. In Cooperative Vocational Training system, 10 institutes with the collaboration of 143 companies provided 886 graduates and trained 160 teachers as well. Similarly, 880 TEVT managers were trained to serve to prime agencies that proved very helpful to economy. Under the Vocational Counseling & Job Placement program, 102 centers with 247 trained officers served the alumni. At the end of 2016, there were 70000 employers under the said project with 700000 skilled workers (Khan & Pathan, 2016).

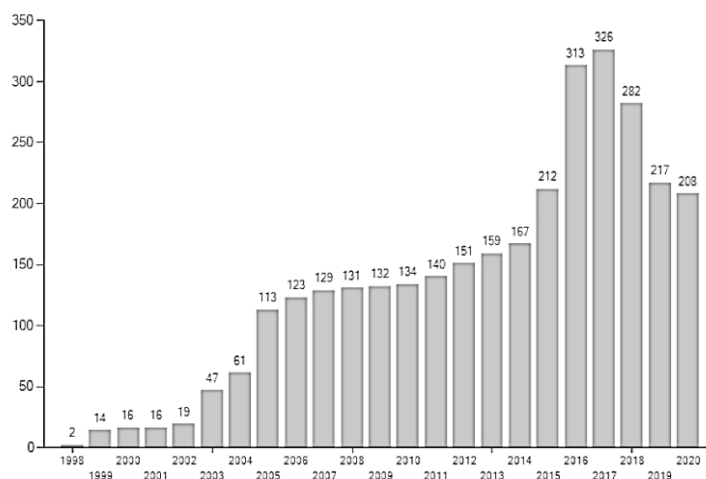
Energy, agriculture, and human capital were some of Pakistan's potentials that had not been fully utilized due to a deficiency of qualified labor. A little more than 22% of adolescents' complete secondary school and a very small percentage acquire employable skills. Through the traditional Ustad-Shagird system, a significant portion of the youth entered the informal economy and acquires diverse vocational skills. There were only 476,850 places available in formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through 3,581 institutes in Pakistan as of 2015.

This was despite the fact that approximately 3.5 million young people entered the job market annually. In addition to this disparity between demand and supply, the quality and relevance of the training provided did not meet the requirements of the labor market (GmbH).

In Punjab, during 2011-2016, 8 MoUs for cooperation with industry facilitated, certification facilitated for Punjab TEVTA, HRD Policy and plan for Punjab TEVTA developed and accredited 260 TVET programs in 40 institutes. During the said period, 5688 men and women were trained, 26 new CBT&A courses launched in 76 TVET institutes, lab/workshops of 64 institutes upgraded, 30 VC&JP centers established, 487 men and women trained through CVT, 7 CVT courses in 4 institutes with partnership of 68 enterprises initiated and 7 energy efficiency and occupational health and safety courses were launched. Similarly, 12,896 men and women benefitted from 12 innovative training projects in different trades, 70 VC&JP Officers received training and international certification and 6 E-Learning centers established. In addition, 4,006 teachers trained in CBT&A, 32 teachers received international training and certification and 93 TVET officials received training on management skills (GmbH).

The implications of TVET policy in Punjab under the Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif led long lasting result. The result achieved during 2017 to 2019 included establishments of one regional fora, which conducted 3 public and private sector meetings for the progress of CBT&A. Similarly, 2 agreements were signed among public and private stakeholders for stabilization of National TVET Policy ownership. Punjab TEVTA, PVTC and private sector companies had signed 220 agreements for jobs. One center of excellence for TVET teachers training and 206 TVET institutes were completed. In the said period, 10746 national certificates issued to skilled persons, 19 Chief Master Trainers, 58 Master Trainers, 1466 TVET teachers, 262 Principals in TVET institutes had completed their trainings. 408 CBT assessors and 5777 men and women through CBT&A had also completed trainings and got certificates (GmbH, Fact Sheet 2017-2019 TVET Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Support Program).

The Punjab province had expanded its VTI's with the span of time. There were only two institutes in 1998 that were moved to 540 in 2007. However, the two governments of Shahbaz Sharif brought boom in the number of institutions. It can be viewed in the following graph:



Source: VTI

The number of institutes was increased with the help of different foreign funding sources as well as indigenous Zakat funds. The aid program was co-funded by European Union, German Cooperation Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Norway and World Bank while Government of Pakistan and Government of the Punjab also added their share. The yearly funding received in the heads of Zakat and Grant-in-Aid was as follow:

Year	Zakat Fund	Grant-in-Aid
2008 - 2009	683,589,820	200,100,000
2009 - 2010	685,612,078	60,000,000
2010 - 2011	679,418,675	72,276,000
2011 - 2012	663,920,763	135,338,000
2012 - 2013	827,477,585	200,000,000
2013 - 2014	947,132,544	640,000,000
2014 - 2015	939,569,960	1,000,000,000
2015 - 2016	934,228,212	968,830,000
2016 - 2017	941,603,325	4,000,000,000
2017 - 2018	962,691,000	905,000,000

Source: PBS

Shahbaz government had worked more effectively that can be viewed by taking a comparative analysis of TVET sector in Pakistan. Analyzing the building, the following data shows the efficiency of Punjab government:



Province	Satisfactory	Partially Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory
Punjab	78.7	18.4	2.9
Sindh	56.1	28.0	15.9
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	62.3	23.1	14.7
Baluchistan	51.0	40.8	8.2
Gilgit Baltistan	58.3	36.6	5.1
AJK	56.1	28.0	15.9
FATA	54.9	40.8	4.2
Islamabad	46.5	42.5	10.9

Source: NAVTTC

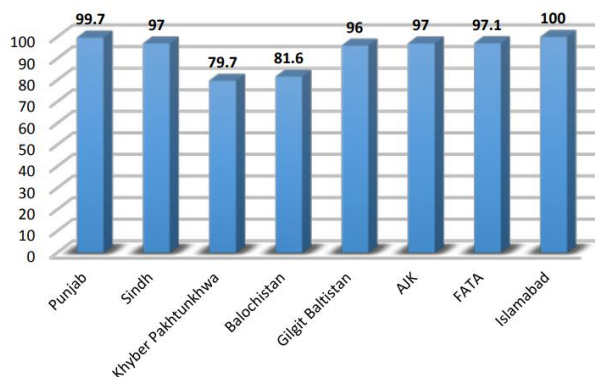
The data showed that on average 58 percent of vocational and technical TVET institution buildings were satisfactory, 23 percent were moderately satisfactory, and 10 percent were not satisfactory. Most TVET buildings served their intended purpose. Building conditions in provincial units stand out. Sindh and AJK had 15.9% unsatisfactory buildings, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (14.9%) and Islamabad (10.9%). 42.5% of Islamabad's buildings are partially good, which raises concerns about workforce development. 40.8% and 36.6% of Baluchistan and FATA structures are in poor condition. Punjab has the most buildings in good condition (78.7%), followed by GB (58.3%), Sindh (56.1%), and AJK (56.1%). The overall setup of buildings in Punjab was far better than other federating units. The Medium of instruction was another important factor in education so the provinces had adopted different mediums that are shown below:

Province	Urdu	English	Mixed	Local Languages	Others
Punjab	22.3	71.7	4.7	0.0	1.3
Sindh	36.4	3.0	9.1	50.8	0.8
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	90.4	1.5	8.1	0.0	0.0
Baluchistan	6.1	10.2	71.4	12.2	0.0
Gilgit Baltistan	20.5	7.7	16.1	55.8	0.0
AJK	36.4	53.8	9.1	0.0	0.8
FATA	32.4	25.4	1.4	40.8	0.0
Islamabad	1.5	0.0	98.5	0.0	0.0

Source: NAVTTC

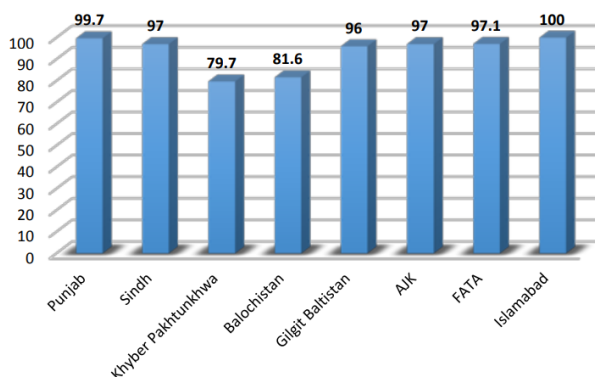
The table shows that Urdu was the most commonly used language as a medium of instruction in TVET institutions. Teachers/trainers used this language to make skill development easier for trainees. Participants received 30.8% of information in Urdu. English 21.7%, mixed languages

27.3%, and local languages 20% aid trainer-trainee communication. GB used 55.8% of native languages, followed by Sindh 50.8% and FATA 40.8%. Punjab had 71.7% English-medium TVET institutes and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had 90.4% Urdu-medium colleges. Islamabad used mixed languages in 98.5% of TVET institutions, followed by Baluchistan (71.4%), GB (16.1%), Sindh (9.1%), and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (8.1%).



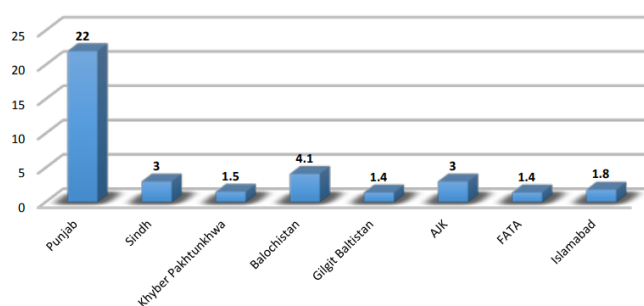
Source: NAVTTC

The graph shows TVET institutions in Pakistan and its federating units with drinking water facility. Islamabad institutions had 100% drinking water availability, indicating effective skill development through training. Punjab had 99.7% drinking water, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 79%, and Baluchistan 81.6%. FATA TVET institutions had 97.1% drinking water, followed by Sindh and AJK at 97%. The TVET institutions' good drinking water results made it easier for trainers and trainees to bridge the skilled labor force gap.



Source: NAVTTC

The graph showing countrywide institution electric connection and results showed that training and education could not be done without electricity. 99% of institutions use electricity to do their duties. It means institutions did not lose efficiency and effectiveness due to electricity shortages. The outcomes of Pakistan's TVET institutions' electrical connections showed that electricity was crucial. The statistics showed that 99% of TVET institutions had power, except in FATA, where just 92.9% do. Solar and electrical shortages were the main causes. Similarly in backup source of electricity, Punjab was at the top of the list.



Sindh (9.2%), AJK (9.1%), Baluchistan (6.1%), Punjab (3.9%), GB (3.4%) and Islamabad 3.3%

Source: NAVTTC

FATA had the most hostels (14.3%) in TVET institutions for students. This means that students from other provinces don't have residential issues. Sindh, AJK, Baluchistan, Punjab, GB, and Islamabad followed. Islamabad's institutions have the lowest hostel availability, prompting the administration to improve it for student convenience. However, in case of cafeteria, toilet facility, internet facility and in availability of first aid kit, Punjab was at the peak.

In fact, TEVTA had improved technical education under Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif as TEVTA upgraded its curriculum to meet industry standards and technological advances. Students obtain job-market-relevant training. Similarly, TEVTA partnership with industries offered internships and practical trainings. This collaboration helped students find jobs after graduation by bridging the education-employment divide. TEVTA also provided in-demand skills to students. To address job market demands, these programs focused on IT, healthcare, hospitality, and construction, among others. Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif had prioritized improving TEVTA's infrastructure, including building and renovating technical institutes and

vocational training centers. These facts unveiled that the PML-N's government in Punjab had fulfilled their promise as they had done in their manifestoes about technical education.

## **Madrassa Reforms**

After 9/11 due to American influence, that time of President, General Musharraf emphasized to limit the influence of religious institutions. However, his proposals were for the curricula and mainstreaming them, as well as prohibiting Madrassas from accepting pupils from other nations. The National Education Policy 1999-2010 also outlined the Madrassa's as most important subject that must be worked with reformed setup. The reforms included to bridge the existing gap between formal education and Madrassas, equating their degrees, recognizing them and providing relevant books for research and reforms, and developing an integrated system of national education by bringing Madrassas and modern schools closer in curriculum. In accordance with these goals, the government took revolutionary measures to enhance the working conditions of Madrassas across the nation.

The Pakistan Madrassa Education Board Ordinance 2001 was promulgated for the first time on August 18, 2001 that was actually before the incident of 9/11. It expounds that Pakistan was willing to overthrow the existing propaganda against Madrassas that was increased after 9/11. The purpose of this ordinance was to ensure the registration, regulation, standardization, and uniformity of curricula and educational standards of Madrassas in Pakistan that provide specialized Islamic education with the general education system.

The ordinance allowed for the Board's various schools of thought to be represented. In accordance with the provisions of this Ordinance, a Pakistan Madrassa Education Board was established on 8 September 2001 under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. However, the Ordinance could not be effectively enforced because religious communities refused to cooperate with the government. In light of this, the government reevaluated its policy and initiated additional measures regarding the registration of madrassas, the rationalization of their curricula, and their integration into conventional society (Lodhi, 2015).

The government drafted the "Deeni Madaris (Voluntary Registration and Regulation) Ordinance, 2002" in June 2002, and it was approved by the federal cabinet; however, it could not be enacted

because President Pervez Musharraf was unable to sign it due to significant opposition from the Madaaris. Under this ordinance, Madaaris were required to register voluntarily and were prohibited from receiving foreign financial assistance.

Under its provisions, "no Madrassa shall operate without registering itself; every Madrassa shall submit an annual report of its educational activities and performance to the registrar; every Madrassa shall cause the audit of its accounts to be carried out by an auditor and submit a copy of its audited report to the registrar; and no Madrassa shall teach or publish any literature that promotes militancy or spreads sectarianism or religious hatred (Gulzar, Madrassa Reforms in Pakistan)."

As a next stage, the government introduced the Madrassa Reform Project (MRP) in October 2004 that was a part of a government-wide initiative to reform religious institutions in the nation. In addition to religious education, the initiative aimed to teach formal subjects such as English, Mathematics, Pakistan Studies/Social Studies, and General Science. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the federal, provincial, and regional educational authorities for the execution of a multimillion-rupee project to reform 8,000 madrassas in five years was a landmark agreement (Lodhi, 2015). In 2005, Musharraf again tried to implement "Madrassa Ordinance 2005" but once again religious scholars did not agree that.

It was viewed that Madrassas might be overlooked because they were few compared to government or private schools. It also assumed that the absolute percentage of Madrassas was related to conflict development and that developing better alternative schools drew kids away from them. Pakistani schools, including madrassas need investment to boost education. The way to fix the problem was that Pakistani government support pluralism and reform Madrassas with the help of other Muslim countries and Ulema (Center).

The Manifesto of PML-N did not indicate the Madrassa Reforms; however, PPP had indicated in their manifesto that they would bring Madrassa Reforms. This was viewed in National Education Policy 2009 issued by PPP's Federal Government that what kind of Madrassa reforms they would implement. Bridging the public-private divide, NEP 2009 indicated that through the teaching of formal subject, academic level of pupils attending Madrassas would be brought up to

the same level as those attending traditional public secondary schools. The policy also espoused that Madrassas contributed to a distinct form of social divide. Young children educated in Madrassas typically lacked the skills necessary to seek employment outside the sphere of clerical responsibilities. This increased social tension because the children educated in these institutions feel excluded so this structural divide would be overcome through reforms (Education, National Education Policy 2009, 2009).

It was planned that through consultations, the federal, provincial, and local governments shall develop joint strategies with the major Madrassah systems to introduce formal subjects, such as market-oriented and skills-based subjects, that would provide Deeni Madaris graduates with more employment opportunities. It was decided that Ministry of Interior shall establish the Madrassah Education Authority that would perform the following responsibilities

- Provides an opportunity for all existing and prospective Madaris to excel and improve the services they already provide to the nation
- Allocates funds for the socioeconomic and educational welfare of students
- Devise infrastructure and tools for the enhancement of existing facilities
- Assures teachers training to improve their abilities
- Supports vocational training to empower students with the means to generate income
- Provides guidance and assistance in streamlining policies and curricula to give graduates a competitive advantage on the job market and placement in HEIs (Education, National Education Policy 2009, 2009)

After the adoption of the 18th amendment, the reform question has become more complicated. Under this amendment, provincial governments were also given jurisdiction over Islamic education. Regarding the reforms, provincial administrations were currently clueless. It was fact that they had not grappled with such issues prior to the 18th Amendment (Zaidi). However, the Madrassa reforms in Punjab at the end of Provincial Government did not seek any importance until the end of government in 2013.

With the winning of election 2013, PML-N's Federal Government had done some important changes in Madrassas. After the 2014 Peshawar incident, the government created a 20-point

National Action Plan (NAP) to combat militancy and extremism. The registration and regulation of Madrassas had been criticized for creating violent sectarianism, extreme beliefs, and instability in Pakistan. The Madrassas considered the clause another failed attempt. They requested that the government stop viewing all Madrassas the same. The Government and Madrassa authorities disagreed on reforms.

The Ittehad Tanzeemat-e-Madaaris Pakistan (ITMP), a coalition of five wafaqs (religious educational boards) from Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl-e-Hadith, Shia, and Jamaat-e-Islami schools, opposed the National Action Plan's Madrassa reform clauses, arguing that linking militancy with religion was wrong. ITMP President Mufti Muneebur Rehman remarked that NAP talks about religious terrorism but is silent on ethnic, linguistic and other types of terrorism, adding that all types of terrorism should be part of this plan. ITMP would support the government, and action should be taken against those madrassas which were involved in terrorism, irrespective of their religious affiliation (Rathore, 2015).

NACTA developed “Madaris Data & Registrations Forms” in consultation with Ittihad-e-Tanzeem-ul-Madaris. It was directed by the meeting held on September 8, 2015, which was presided over by the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. In addition, it stipulated that only registered religious seminaries should be permitted to operate. The documents were drafted and finalized after consultation with all stakeholders, including provinces (Sajjad, 2020).

Federal Government strictly implemented the policy and Punjab had adopted that in well-mannered way. Chaudhry Nisar, Interior Minister accredited that provinces were progressing slowly in madrassa reforms so Punjab’s Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Rana Sanaullah denied his views and claimed that not a single Madrassa in the Punjab had ties to militancy. Sanaullah provided details of action on Madrassas that 13,787 madrassas had been geo-tagged in the province and that one million students received religious education in these seminaries. He added that law enforcement agencies had also concluded a search of dormitories and universities. Similarly, law enforcement investigated a number of hostels and seminaries and detained dozens of suspects (Hussain, 2015).

Reforms of madrassas were mandated by the National Action Plan but nearly after a year, the government had not achieved its goals. Only 22,000 Madrassas were registered all across the country with 1.5 million pupils enrolled while approximately 15,000 Madrassas were still unregistered. Despite the fact that not all madrassas promote virulent polemics, it was established that a substantial number had become recruitment hubs for terrorist organizations (Times, 2015).

According to the Punjab Bureau of Statistics, the provincial government had closed seventy-five percent of mosque schools in a decade, 2005-2015. This was done to promote enrollment in formal educational institutions, but rather than increasing the number of government schools to accommodate displaced students, the government decreased the number of government schools by five percent. This action deprived pupils of one type of inadequate, even dangerous, education without providing an alternative that is superior (Statistics, 2015).

Although overdue, the recent police investigations into Punjab's seminaries 293 Madrassas were discovered to have ties to terrorism, leading to the arrest of activists from a variety of terrorist groups, including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, and Sipah-e-Muhammad. The effect of such Madrassas on the development of extremism, fanaticism, and terrorism was not hard to discern (Times, 2015). In 2006, 10117 foreign students from 45 countries were enrolled in Pakistani Madrassas; this number has since decreased to 2673 students from 37 nations. Since NAP was announced, 182 suspect Madrassas had been shut down. There were two in Punjab, 167 in Sindh, and thirteen in KP (Babakhel, 2015).

In effort to control militancy and the alleged exploitation of madrassas, Pakistan's government announced plans to incorporate all madrassas into the country's formal education system in 2018. Pakistan's Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal unfolded the fact that the government allocated funds for initiating reforms in the country's education sector, including modernizing the educational curriculum and incorporating traditional seminaries into the formal government (Anwar, 2018).

There was a positive shift in Madrassas and teachers' attitudes and instructional practices after these reforms especially in Punjab. They attempted to change their transaction strategies from



simple textbook reading and translation to the use of the blackboard and the notation of key points. Even in some Madrassas, Madrassa teachers gave assignments based on problem-solving and project-based methods, thereby diverting students from rote learning to understanding and leading to the process of self-learning, particularly in the subjects of Arabic language, Islamic law (fiqh), and interpretation (tafseer).

Though Punjab had not introduced Madrassa Reforms at provincial level separately but had effectively implemented the NAP and other Federal Government's reforms. The government had recognized the need to update the curriculum and ensured that students receive a well-rounded education that includes science, mathematics, and English, as well as religious studies. These reforms had sought to promote a more inclusive and balanced approach to education, thereby preparing students for a greater variety of future opportunities. The government had improved the infrastructure and facilities in Madrassas in order to foster an environment conducive to learning.

## **Conclusion**

There were several reforms in the education system of Punjab that had been implemented under the supervision of Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif during 2008-18. The Punjab's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy was significant in multiple ways. It filled the gap between the demand and supply of skilled employees in various industries. It ensured the students received training in relevant and in-demand skills by aligning TVET programs with the requirements of the labor market. It was a solution for the unemployed persons by developing necessary skills for the employment. The TVET promoted entrepreneurship and self-employment as well. It encouraged the development of entrepreneurial abilities and helped individuals launch their own businesses.

Madrassa reforms in Punjab were also significant because they had the potential to bring about positive changes in the education system and to promote inclusivity, modernization, and a well-rounded education for Madrassa students. Though the Madrassa reforms were projected by Federal Governments of PPP and PML-N but Punjab's Chief Minister had implemented these

reforms more effectively than other provinces. Overall the reforms manifested by PML-N were implemented in the province and role of Shahbaz Sharif remained venerable during 2008-2018.

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