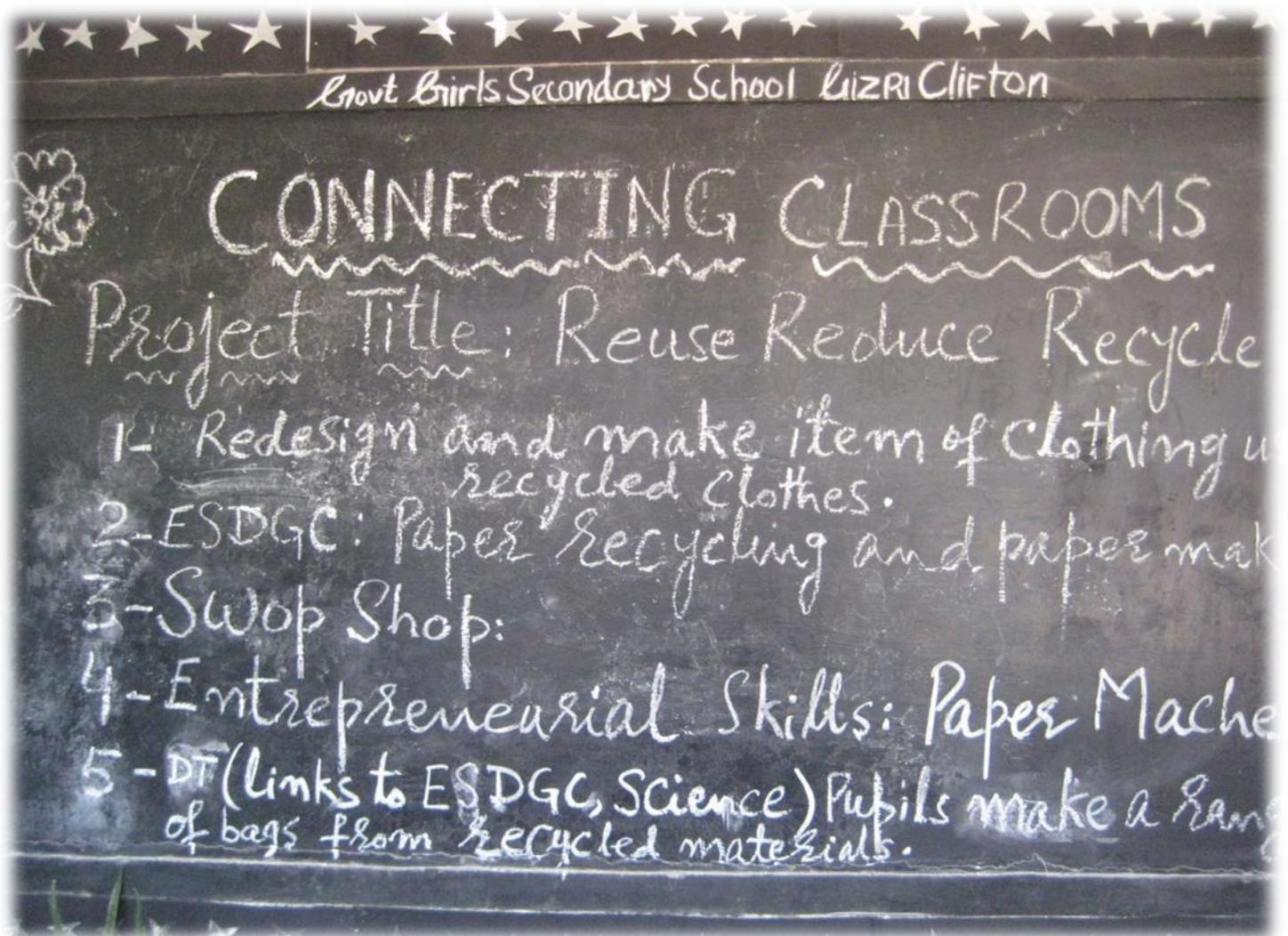


Connecting Classrooms in Pakistan - a Review

Marie Lall



'We all have a brain. Some use it more, some use it less.'
(Student who participated in Connecting Classrooms projects)

Connecting Classrooms in Pakistan – a Review

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1 Executive Summary

Objectives

The proposed review focussed on how the British Council (BC) programme *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* has influenced community cohesion across the Pakistani school clusters including change in school and teacher practice as a result. It also aimed to evaluate the project's school based work, to identify the "lessons learned", and recommend pivots or change in direction to ensure success in further iterations of the programme.

Methodology

The research was conducted in November and December 2011. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals and coordinators in 24 schools. Most were secondary schools, however there were a few primary schools as well. The schools were located across 11 clusters in Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Azad Kashmir. Care was taken to choose clusters which had a variety of different types of schools and the research team visited government and private schools as well as madrassas. Focus groups were held with 123 teachers and 71 parents or grandparents across the selected schools. Interviews were also held with a number of members of the local community who has been invited by the schools. In each school children who had taken part in *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* were asked to do a group exercise.

Main Findings

Significant **positive outcomes** on community cohesion, removal of barriers and social networking were achieved and the research gained **insights** into what needs to be in place to ensure success. Some **extraordinary** (isolated) examples of success were observed as well. Finally the areas that need **further development** are listed below.

The **positive outcomes** were

Increased Confidence: Students who had taken part in *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* activities had a greatly increased sense of confidence, and this was corroborated by enthusiastic public presentations and feedback via interviews with principals, teachers, and parents;

Open and wider world view: Over 2/3 of the students the research team interacted with, held a very open world view, aware of differences, accepting of them, and did not see overcoming them as impossible. The differences across the wider world were just seen as extensions of the differences they encountered at a Pakistan wide level.

Change in teaching methods: The biggest impact across the board was the change in teaching methods, typically the Child Centric Approach (CCA) in facilitation and was higher than expected as it had a (limited) impact¹ even on those teachers who had not themselves undergone BC training.

Breaking down of local barriers in some cases: Although few principals explicitly referred

¹ The level of impact depended on the school, but some impact was observed in over 2/3 of the schools.

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to CONNECTING CLASSROOMS as a means for breaking domestic barriers, in fact some local barriers both in class and gender within the classroom and between schools were broken down.

Appreciation of challenges in local clusters: The cluster model, allowing schools for the first time to work with a different type of school, helped remove misconceptions and prejudices through the collaboration. The appreciation was that though certain types of schools lacked autonomy or resources, they were not necessarily less able.

Greater cohesion amongst students in heterogenous schools: In diverse schools with large Hindu communities CONNECTING CLASSROOMS has had a real impact and now children play and socialise across religious lines. In more heterogeneous schools the principals admitted that the project had given them a platform to discuss differences. Many schools now celebrate Christian as well as Hindu festivals (such as Christmas, Easter and Diwali), with all children taking part.

These additional **insights** deserve a separate mention

The choice of school dictates the impact of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS as it is not necessarily equally suitable for all and will have a deeper, more sustained effect in some (types of) schools than in others.

The project works better in schools that are already 'active' and 'out'. Others take longer and need a lead in time. But in these cases impact is less easily visible and attributable.

Social connectivity and networks: The CONNECTING CLASSROOMS platform evolved as a social resource; however its uptake was limited by technology (varying degree of connectivity) and hierarchy (relationships evolved slowly, in a top down manner, over a period of time)

The results were achieved despite a lack of a shared, common understanding in aims and objectives and in some cases a lower level of engagement from UK partners than hoped for.

School Principal's leadership is critical to the success of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS in his or her school, to ensure the cluster dynamics worked well and schools actually benefitted from the links created, however he/she needed support from a school coordinator.

These examples below were instances of **extraordinary CONNECTING CLASSROOMS success** forced by externalities or otherwise occurred in isolation and hence have been mentioned separately:

Unforeseen externalities created great cohesion amongst some clusters: During the last monsoon the floods were so bad that a number of participating schools were designated as relief camps for the surrounding population, where the cluster school children, teachers and parents would bring breakfast to those living in the relief camp school.

Impact on the wider community: Despite the cascading nature of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS linkages (principals, coordinators, teachers, students, and finally

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community) some projects connected the school with its immediate environment. Examples included distributing of cloth bags, asking shopkeepers for discounts where plastic bags were not required, cleaning the local park, visiting local slums where students would teach locals how to clean their drinking water.

It is clear from the above that the overall BC objectives are being met and that there has been progress with regard to each and every one of the 21 BC indicators. However it should not be forgotten that such a project needs time, and sustained input in particular for good practice to solidify.

The areas that **need further development** to improve implementation effectiveness are

Better dissemination of learning as the cascade model of sharing learning and experiences did not work effectively due to hierarchy and teachers' lack of training in training their peers.

Better guidance on implementation of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS and communication of shared objectives as the relationship between the clusters and the BC varied widely, some schools and clusters clearly requiring more support, explanation and guidance than others.

Recommendations:

The CONNECTING CLASSROOMS programme has ambitious objectives and programmes of such a nature require sufficient time for good practice to embed. The programme achieved commendable results in a short period of time, but needs to be sustained as a short programme will fall apart if the funding stops. The role of the external funding agency is key – especially if it continues to be accepted as 'neutral'.

These summary recommendations flow from the outcomes, insights and development areas identified previously, and will require an investment in effort to be defined and implemented.

Framework required for dissemination of information, induction, and formalisation of peer training in the cascade model.

Infrastructure for permeation of social networks to accelerate engagement at each peer level and allow for sustainable engagement means to accelerate engagement at each peer level should be considered.

Role (and training) of leadership at school principal level and role expectation (role of cluster coordinator was better suited to a teacher) and principal needs to be supported by a school coordinator.

2 Objectives of the Review

The purpose of the proposed review was to focus on how *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* has influenced community cohesion across the Pakistani school clusters. It also aimed to evaluate the project's school based work and to identify the 'lessons learned' to date. In addition the review focused on how *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* has changed school and teacher practice. The TOR defined the following three broad areas of research around which the review was conducted:

Aims and Design of Connecting Classrooms

The fieldwork in the schools wanted to identify how the aims and objectives of *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* were perceived by the participating schools, their principals, teachers and families. Each school was also asked to explain what resources (most of which were in kind) they allocated to the project in addition to the grant received and how the combined resources were used.

Evaluation of Operation and Outcomes of Connecting Classrooms

The review focused on the successes the principals and teachers could identify, in particular with effects on teaching practice and how it had affected students in the classrooms. The parental interviews contributed towards the picture by explaining how this effect was carried into the children's homes. Questions asked aimed at assessing in how far *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* had affected community cohesion across the cluster and within school communities (especially in those schools in a heterogeneous environment). The classroom exercise conducted in each school visited helped reflect what impact the project had had on the students who had taken part in *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* activities. Whilst it is difficult to directly correlate *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* activities with changed attitudes, it was generally assumed that both students and teacher responses in the discussions would reflect their views on change and how *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* had impacted them. Under this heading principals and cluster coordinators were also asked to identify problems or barriers they had faced whilst taking part in the project and how these had been overcome.

Identifying 'Lessons Learned' and Potential Future Developments

Under this heading the review wanted to collect evidence as to what worked best and under what circumstances, as well as focusing on the differences between the schools and clusters. All schools visited were asked about their local barriers to community cohesion and how these could best be overcome; as well as what they felt had been their most important lesson learnt during the course of the project.

Methodology

The research was conducted over 30 days in November and December 2011. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals and coordinators in 24 schools. Most of the schools were secondary schools, however there were a few primary schools as well, or schools which had both primary and secondary sections and where *CONNECTING CLASSROOMS* was deemed to have affected both sections. The schools were located across 11 clusters in Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Azad Kashmir. The schools in Balochistan could not be visited due to the early end of the school term in December. However teachers and

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principals were met both in Karachi and in Quetta at a hotel. Care was taken to choose clusters which had a variety of different types of schools and the research team visited government, private, and trust schools as well as madrassas and charitable schools serving the poorer sections of society in urban and rural areas. Focus groups were held with 123 teachers and 71 parents or grandparents across the selected schools. A classroom exercise was conducted with around 20-30 students who had taken part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS in each school. Interviews were also held with a number of members of the local community who has been invited by the schools. In each school children who had taken part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS were asked to do a group exercise.

Overall the review wanted to gain an understanding of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS on the ground and give a voice to those who had participated. Their reflections, suggestions and concerns primarily inform this report.



3 Background

3.1 Political backdrop – violence and fragmentation in Pakistani society

Pakistan has a very fragmented society. Like many developing countries there are large wealth differences between the tiny rich upper class, the small but growing middle classes and the wider large, poor population. The lack of a social contract (Lall 2012 b) and state support structures in health and education, mean that the poor have to fend for themselves or rely on a network of local philanthropic or international aid organisations. Class differences are stark and there is no social mixing across class-lines.² In areas where few landlords hold large tracts of land, in particular in Sindh, class structures are maintained through feudal and kinship structures (Lieven 2011).

In the last decade Pakistan has increasingly been perceived as a failed or failing state. Whilst the reality on the ground is nowhere near the rhetoric across news channels, the frequent bomb attacks, military interventions in tribal areas and constant drone attacks by the US do not give an impression of stability. In addition to terrorism and the war on terror, sectarian violence and increasingly ethno-political violence in Karachi showcase a very divided society which has fuelled the violence that has recently plagued Pakistan.

When examining Pakistani society three main fault lines are usually discussed and used as a prism of analysis: ethnic/linguistic or provincial identities, sectarian identities, and the army vs. the rest of the population. Whilst all these fault lines do exist and indeed divide Pakistani society, the ethnic and religious identities are often superimposed, combined and even compatible unless and until they are politicised and subsequently may lead to violence.³ The first two issues – ethnicity and religion are discussed below, before a short analysis is given of the more recent radicalisation moves in light of Pakistan's geopolitical position and its role in America's 'war on terror'.

- Ethnic /linguistic lines; explaining Pakistan through regionalism:

Pakistan was born with a temporary sense of national identity, many suspending their regional, ethnic and linguistic identities during the period immediately preceding independence. Even Jinnah regarded all identities as subservient to Islam, and regionalism was seen as negative and detracting from Islamic unity. Pakistan struggled with the balance of power between the region and state. Because of regional conflicts Pakistan took nine years to frame a constitution. The institutions that rose to power in Pakistan engendered much resentment and little confidence as they were ethnically dominated. The military in particular, was controlled by a disproportionate number of Punjabis. This situation alienated other ethnic groups, especially the Bengali majority group, notably under-represented in the government, and increased the intensity of the divisive forces for regionalism. In addition, a relative paucity of economic wealth was apportioned to Pakistan after partition. This wealth, in turn, was unevenly concentrated and invested in the western wing of the country, only furthering provincial tensions and ultimately leading to Bangladesh's secession. Even the ideology of 'Islamic Socialism' under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto failed

² Aside from in mosques at prayer

³ So many individuals will not see any contradiction in being a Seraiki speaking Punjabi Shi'a or a Sindhi speaking Baloch Sunni.

to cut across ethnic structures. In the elections of 1970, Bhutto's support was mainly from Punjab and Sindh, not Baluchistan, NWFP or East Pakistan.

Ethnic Punjabi bias became synonymous with a class bias in the new state. For many Punjabis, there is no conflict between a Punjabi and a Pakistani identity. However, the other provinces have not been as able to identify with Pakistan's institutions. To this day there are ethnic divisions and grievances based on provincial origin. They are very real and reinforced by the renaming of NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as the flaring up of Balochistan's insurgency. However there are many cases of compatible and superimposed ethnic identities. The calls for secession (especially in Balochistan) are politicised and/or used as political bargaining chips which are badly managed by the centre.

- Religious conflict, looking at Pakistan from the religious conflict angle.

Pakistan was conceived as a homeland for Muslims in South Asia. At the time of independence the question of what kind of Islam was not addressed. The first sectarian conflict which emerged in 1953 was that surrounding the Ahmadiyas in Punjab. In 1974 the government capitulated to long standing demand to declare the Ahmadiyas a non-Muslim minority. The issue was intensified under General Zia-ul-Haq's rule with the blasphemy law (especially Article 295-C) which brought in the death penalty or life imprisonment for blasphemy against the Prophet and effectively put each and every Ahmediya at risk by simply practicing his or her religion.

More prominent however has been the conflict between Sunni and Shi'a which really took off after Zia declared that Sunni Islam would be enforced across the country. Zia's Islamisation program was in contrast of the popular culture, in which most people are 'personally' but not 'publicly' religious. An unexpected outcome was that by relying on a policy grounded in Sunni Islam, the state fomented factionalism: by legislating what was Islamic and what was not, Islam itself could no longer provide unity because it was then being defined to exclude previously included groups. This had a particular repercussion in Shi'a -Sunni sectarian disputes as people started to ask 'Who is a Muslim - really?' (Lall 2008)

The fact that Islam can mean different things to different communities is at the bottom of Pakistan's sectarian problems. That Pakistan professed to be an Islamic state meant that Islamic laws would not merely be observed but that the state would enforce them. Which school of Islamic law would hold sway, and how that would affect those who do not recognise its authority was not taken into account.

- Radicalisation, violence and anti-state movements

For many years more Pakistanis were dying because of sectarian violence than any other issue. However since the start of the 'war on terror' with US troops in Afghanistan going after militants based in Pakistan's tribal territories, the violence levels in Pakistan have increased dramatically. Whilst there are still Sunni Shi'a killings, the main violence now comes in three new forms: the US is using drone attacks to kill militants in tribal areas (and this results in large numbers of civilian casualties as well); the diverse groups of militants (some of which operate cross border and others who operate only in Pakistan) have increased their bombing campaign and feyadeen attacks against Pakistani military and state targets, often with large civilian casualties as well; and the Pakistani military is fighting limited campaigns in areas (first Swat and then South Waziristan)

where militants are based. The second half of 2009 was a particularly violent time in Pakistan. A wave of terrorist attacks started targeting both government and security institutions (police, security services and army) as well as civilians (markets, university) leading to 3,021 deaths in terrorist attacks, up 48% on 2008 figures. There were a total of 12,600 violent deaths across the country in 2009 (14 times more than in 2006) half of which were in drone attacks. (Lall 2012a) The violence resulted in increased anti-state religious movements gaining momentum across the social classes, especially in particular areas (where the violence is highest – KP, southern Punjab) but for different reasons and not at the same pace. The situation has not been helped by the fact that Pakistan has been led by an unstable and allegedly corrupt civilian government. Whilst the violence has abated with fewer militant attacks (but still unabated drone attacks), the result has been even more fragmentation across all ethnic, religious and class groups and an increased trust deficit with the west.

3.2 Education in Pakistan

Pakistan has a history of parallel education systems where private schools have catered for the middle classes for many decades. In the last few decades non state education provision has increased dramatically with low fee private schools offering alternative provision for the poorer sections of society. The diverse types of schools have underpinned further fragmentation across Pakistani society as different groups of children are taught different curricula and schools are based on different ethos. A majority of children still go to government schools, with increasingly stark differences in terms of resources within the government sector.

Pakistan's education problems remain acute: According to a report by the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (November 2005) 45 % of children in Pakistan have no access to early childhood care and education, 40 % do not attend primary school, 76 % do not attend secondary school. According to the latest PSLM survey (2008-9) the overall literacy rate is 57% (68% male, 49% female; urban 74% and rural 48%).⁴ The net enrolment rate in schools is 57% and the GPI is 0.65. Dropout rates are high and the quality of government schools remains variable.

(http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_10/10_education.pdf)

Access to schools is limited in remote areas, especially for girls. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Pakistan as a whole was 0.63 for 2006/7 with fewer girls going to school than boys. The State Bank of Pakistan's special section on education for 2004 list gross primary enrolment rate for 2001 at 74% with 5.8 million children out of school between the ages of 5 and 9. The net primary enrolment was 42% for 2001. The Economic Survey list some improvements as the general participation rate is listed as 91% between 2006/7 but with net enrolment rates still very low at 56% in 2006/7. Facilities often are minimal or inadequate, and the quality of education is poor, primarily relying on learning by rote and repetition. Often they are being taught by teachers who have little more than an elementary education themselves. The amount of continuing professional development for

⁴ The Pakistan Economic Survey 07/08 estimates the figure to be even lower: Adult literacy is estimated at 50% (age 15 and above) and the overall literacy rate is estimated at around 55% (age 10 and above) – 67% for men and 42% for women. Literacy is higher in urban areas at 73% whereas in rural areas the level is around 45%. Province wise the literacy rates are as follows: 58% Punjab, 55% Sindh, 47% Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 42% Balochistan. It is of course possible that things have improved between 2007 and 2009.

serving teachers is limited and their salaries are low.

The physical infrastructure of schools is very poor. Pakistan's Economic Survey 2007-8 states that only 51.6% of the buildings of all institutions are in satisfactory condition and 5.7% of the buildings are in fact in a dangerous condition. 'Out of total institutions, 12,737 (almost all in the public sector) have been reported as non-functional. [...] About 37.8% schools in public sector are without boundary wall, 32.3% without drinking water, 56.4% without electricity, 40.5% without latrine and 6.8% without building.' (Pakistan Economic Survey 07/08, p.176)

The Pakistani government spends less than 2% of GDP on education (1.7% in 2004), whilst UNESCO recommends countries spending at least 4% of GDP. Historically priority was given to higher education and little was spent on universalising elementary education. Pakistan has over the years been the recipient to large packages of international development aid from the US, the UK, the wider European Union and Japan to name just a few. Many of these aid packages will have had an education component, aiming to help Pakistan to deal with the development issues of access, gender gap and literacy amongst others. Yet despite all this aid, Pakistan's education public sector has not improved, but has in large parts stagnated or become worse. Western aid packages are not making the difference needed in particular in the rural areas.

Education history

The regions which went to make up Pakistan had been regarded as border regions under the British Empire and consequently they did not have access to the same kind of education infrastructure as the territories which made up India. Education infrastructure and resources had been focused in and around the three presidencies – Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, which all came to India after partition. At independence the priorities for the new Pakistani state was the creation of a new nation. Pakistan had done badly at partition (e.g. receiving only 30% of the army, 40% of the navy and 20% of the air force). But the lack of infrastructure was not the only issue as the five very different provinces (Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, NWFP and East Bengal) had to find common ground despite the different cultural heritages and languages. At independence Pakistan has a literacy level of 16% and only around 10,000 primary and middle schools as well as 408 secondary schools. Only 1,700 and 64 respectively were for girls. (ICG report, 2004, p.3) Education was not very high on the political agenda despite the 1947 All Pakistan National Education Conference outlining the aim of free and compulsory education for the first five years with the aim of redressing the imbalances left over from colonial times. However, national unification was seen to rest on one language and religion rather than the creation of an educated middle class. The same conference made Urdu the national language despite the fact that Urdu was not spoken in any of the five provinces. Whilst the state struggled to set up a countrywide education infrastructure, a parallel system of private schools (where English was the medium of instruction) and Madrassas existed from the start. As a result Pakistan's children have been educated in separate and parallel education systems from the start. The development of a strong national education system was further hampered by a lack of a unified vision as to the purpose of education and the role of religion in education. (Lall, 2010) The portfolio of education in the first Pakistani Government was initially held by Fazlur Rahman (Qureshi, p. 28). 'There was no doubt in Rahman's mind about the aims that the education system should seek to achieve: he believed in the necessity and importance of religious instruction. He declared that 'unless the moral and spiritual growth of man keeps pace

with the growth of science, he is doomed to utter extinction' (Qureshi, p.30). Along with other key Pakistani educationalists and intellectual leaders of the time Rahman thought that an emphasis on religious instruction should take precedence over on the promotion of education in science and technology.

In 1949 the central goals of improving quality, achieving 80% literacy in 20 years, and requiring 75% of children of school going age to be enrolled were formulated. The subsequent 9 five year plans (1957-2003) set out to increase the quantity of the schooling infrastructure and increase the enrolment of children through mass literacy programmes. None of the targets of these plans were however achieved as envisaged. Literacy was raised from 16% in 1951 to 51.6% in 2003, but did not reach 100% by 1975 as had originally been envisaged.

In 1959 there was a significant change in government thinking, shifting the responsibility from the state for universal education, to the parents, resulting in an increased number of private schools selling quality education at rates out of reach to the majority of Pakistanis. This shift was largely due to the government admitting that the state education system was underfunded and not managing to meet the needs of the wider Pakistani population. The Sharif Report (or Report of the Commission on National Education), written in 1960 under the rule of General Ayub Khan (1958-1968) was a detailed and comprehensive document, which laid the foundations for the Pakistani education system. At the same time the textbook board was created, whose primary task has since been to ensure that government's policies are reflected in the textbooks. Khan saw Pakistan's future as one where the education system would change the 'national consciousness' and would reconstruct it according to 'modernity, development and Pakistani Nationalism' (Saigol, p.2). The two national objectives were national integration and the modernisation of the economy and society.

In 1969 when General Yahya Khan imposed martial law, a new education policy was formulated, entitled the New Education Policy (GoP 1970). Pakistan was on the verge of civil war which resulted in the secession of Bangladesh. This traumatic event resulted in a national identity crisis, as Islam as a unifying tool had faltered in light of Bengali nationalism. The role of Islam in Pakistan's national identity had to be re-affirmed lest other provinces (such as Balochistan) went the same way as East Bengal.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced another new education policy upon coming to power in the new truncated Pakistan, which did not however move away significantly from the previous policies. Adult literacy officially became a priority and 3,334 private educational institutions were nationalised. Despite his secular leanings, Bhutto promoted a brand of Islamic socialism and he tried to gain the support of the Islamic parties by banning alcohol and instituting the study of Islam (Islamiyat) in schools. Bhutto's government ended when General Zia ul Haq took over in July 1977. Zia took a number of steps to islamise Pakistani society which included a radical overhaul of the curriculum. (Lall 2009) The failure of the education system culminated under his rule between 1977 and 1988. The fifth five year plan (1978-83) had envisioned educating 8.5 million adults to combat illiteracy – however in the end the programmes reached only 40,000 adults. The sixth plan (1983-88) promised a push on primary education with a fivefold increase in funds allocated. However none of the education targets such as the expansion of primary schooling or combating adult illiteracy were met and the military regime prioritised military spending over that

of public education and health, resulting in an increase of private schools and madrassas as alternatives to the public education system.

The civilian governments which followed Zia's rule and were led alternatively by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, did not reverse the islamisation process intensified by Zia. The National Education Policy 1998-2010 put forward by the Sharif government vowed to focus on the universalisation of primary education by 2010 and an increased emphasis on IT.

Under General Musharraf's government the Education Sector Reforms were engendered encompassing both a curricular reform as well as policies which sought to tackle Pakistan's general education problems. Private sector investment in secondary and higher education continued to be encouraged. After 9/11 USAID supported Pakistan's education reform through the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) and resulting in curricular reform crisis as schools saw US involvement as undue interference in domestic affairs as well as an imposition of westernisation through the back door. (Lall 2009) Today the new curriculum is in use primarily in private schools. Government schools are lagging behind as the matching textbooks have just recently been printed in 2011. At the time of writing it is unclear if they have been distributed countrywide.

The current situation of Pakistan's education sector is critical. This is nothing new. The SDPI report in 1999 already concluded that 'the state of public basic education is an unmitigated disaster.' (Khan et al. 1999, p.24) As the state is increasingly less involved in the education sector, the private sector has come in to fill some of the gap. Today the public sector still offers the majority of primary education - 86% but at middle level this share declines to 37%. Whilst private schools used to cater to the middle classes and the very rich, a new brand of private schools (for profit) for the poor has also seen expanding numbers, both in semi-rural and in densely populated urban areas. Whilst government schools are largely seen as ineffective with not enough teachers, overcrowded classrooms and no access to furniture or materials, the private for profit provision for the poor is a dangerous alternative as there is no control on what the children are taught. The SDPI report found that overall between government, private and NGO schooling, NGO schooling was by far the most successful largely due to 'good management', which they identified as a key ingredient for good schooling. Amongst other things they flag up the exodus of richer and brighter children to private schools, and government schooling standards deteriorating even further. According to their research most teachers in the government sector sent their children to private or NGO schools. This however does not mean that private schools, especially the for profit sector for the poor have better learning outcomes. In part the drive towards private provision is driven by the poorer classes emulating the middle classes, in part it is driven by the provincial governments themselves, where for example in the Punjab poor families are given money which they can choose to spend on school fees of a private school of their choice. The recent proliferation of private schools catering to different segments of society is a reflection of international neoliberal education policies driven by the World Bank and other international organisations which advocate the private sector as a credible alternative to government education provision across developing countries.⁵

⁵ See for example 'Learning For All' The World Bank Education Strategy 2020 available at

'Since public sector schooling sets the base standard for private and NGO schooling, this decline in quality means that the private sector has little to compete with.' (Khan et al. 1999, p.24)

This has resulted in a situation where the poor often have the choice (if they have any choice at all) between bad government schools and quite awful private provision. It is only in cases where good NGO provision is offered as an alternative that parents in poor urban or remote rural areas can assure a reasonable level of education for their children.

The recent 'new' education policy

The 2009 National Education Policy aimed to lay out the way forward for Pakistan's education sector. It built on previous, similar plans – yet came earlier than expected due to the alleged non-performance of the 1998-2010 policy. It based its call for the adaptation and innovation of the education system on the 'Vision 2030' report of the Planning Commission. The policy drive for the document however seemed to stem from Pakistan's international commitments on reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and providing Education For All (EFA).

Whilst the policy actions offer good suggestions, they do not reveal how these changes will be implemented. In fact the policy puts the responsibilities of change and implementation squarely on the back of the provinces. Whilst this might look like it would allow the provinces to choose their own priorities, it will in effect mean that there will be no national level leadership and changes can occur at very different rates across the provinces, leading to more rather than less inequity across the country. As the federal ministry is assigned only a facilitating and coordinating role, the 'how' of the implementation is missing, leaving too much room for failure at provincial level. For such major changes to take place decentralisation, right down to the school level is likely to throw up more problems rather than resolving them.

The principal vision of the document is to bring the quality of public schooling on par with what the private sector is offering more affluent sections of society, creating a more equitable country. However the NEP does not address the most vital issue across Pakistan: half of Pakistan's school aged children are actually out of school. The priority should be to get them off the streets and into a school.

Consequently Pakistan has been left with little or no central leadership in education, which is compounding the problems of the state sector which will even with this policy not be able to respond to popular needs.

Connecting Classrooms in Pakistan



4 Connecting Classrooms and its aims in Pakistan

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS is a school partnership programme that aims to build links between different types of schools in Pakistan and schools in the UK. The schools involved in a partnership receive funding for the design and implementation of projects that will help develop better understanding between young people in the UK and in Pakistan. To support teachers and head teachers in this work the British Council runs various professional development programmes in Pakistan each year. The programme started in Pakistan before it became a global programme and was the first BC programme that tried to work with schools across the education sector involving different types of schools catering to different classes.

The programme has grouped schools in Pakistan into clusters of five schools. These clusters are linked with a cluster of schools in the UK. A Pakistani cluster is typically composed of a combination of private, government, boys, girls and co-educational schools. In some clusters one of the five schools is a madrassa. Each school has a school co-ordinator who is responsible for making sure that the schools contribute their part of the project work. The co-ordinator will also identify which teachers take part in training programmes and who will be nominated to visit their partner schools. The cluster also has a co-ordinator, in Pakistan usually one of the five head teachers, who is responsible for making sure the cluster fulfil their obligations to the partnership and the project.

The 21 success indicators below were set as benchmarks for the programme in Pakistan. Both this review and the larger evaluation exercises which have taken place over the last three years show that the programme is starting to meet most of these indicators, at least in part, and that it is just a matter of the programme running for a longer period for these to become entrenched.

1. Education Ministries and schools recognize the importance of international dimensions in education and actively support its inclusion.
2. The public-private partnership agenda in the school sector is encouraged as policy and welcomed by communities
3. Schools and communities work more closely, with communities becoming more involved in school planning and activities, and schools more involved in community and social issues.
4. The connection between school education and skills for employability is improved
5. School partnerships are seen as an important contributor to community cohesion, ICD and increasing understanding and trust between people in the UK and other societies.
6. Collaboration with the UK is significantly enhanced.
- 7 Learners, teachers and policy/decision-makers in the UK and CSA participating countries have more realistic and informed perceptions and understanding of each other's cultures and society, achieved by taking part in open dialogue with each other and having perceptions and views challenged through this.
8. Schools in the UK and in participating CSA countries are viewed as valued partners for

internationalism in education and community inclusion.

9. Teachers and head teachers have reflected on the role of the school in communities and on effective teaching practices and adapted their approaches accordingly.

10. Learners have a more active approach to understanding global issues through enhanced skills in critical thinking.

11. Standards in teaching and learning are improved in participating schools

12. Learners have developed skills relevant to their employability

13. Teachers develop the skills to internationalise the curriculum

14. Learners have leadership skills which enable them to organise and lead a team to achieve a project goal, putting their ideas and talents to action

15. Head teachers have improved their knowledge and skills in school leadership

16. Teachers' improve their knowledge and skills in ICTs and English (CSA teachers)

17. Schools instil a strong global dimension into the learning experience of young people through the curriculum and the ethos of the school

18. Training and development opportunities for teachers and head teachers have been positively influenced

19. Schools actively engage with their communities, and in the UK enhanced recognition of community languages and ability for schools to show how community cohesion can be delivered through the partnership

20. Schools value and encourage student participation and provide space for students to voice their views and opinions within the school

21. Links and partnerships between state, private and faith-based schools lead to improved school effectiveness and sharing of skills

These success indicators can be seen in the six key positive outcomes described in the executive summary:

| Outcome | Indicators |
|--|--|
| Increased confidence amongst students | 4, 12, 14, 20 |
| Open and wider world view | 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 |
| Change in teaching methods | 9,11,13,16,18 |
| Breaking down local barriers | 3,19 |
| Appreciation of different challenges that schools in the same community can face | 2, possibly 15 (this study did not look at this) |
| Greater cohesion amongst students in heterogeneous schools | 3, 5, 14 |

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The official global outcomes that CONNECTING CLASSROOMS aimed to achieve – not only in Pakistan, but across all countries where the programme is running are listed here below:

- Systems prioritise the knowledge skills and understanding required to equip young people for life in a global society and work in a global economy
- Institutions give increased priority to internationalising the curriculum and create an institutional ethos that supports the global dimension
- Practitioners demonstrate the leadership skills necessary to support the instilling of a strong global dimension into the learning experience of young people
- Learners demonstrate a critical understanding and knowledge of society, the world and their place in it, contributing to positive social change
- Communities give recognition to elements of the following agenda for schools and young people: community cohesion / challenging misconceptions, challenging attitudes and environments that may give rise to extremism

There are fairly clear correlations between these global outcomes and those which the research team found in Pakistan.

As the project was originally conceived clusters would classify their projects under one of the themes of intercultural dialogue, active citizenship or skills for employability. However, once projects got going it became clear that these themes were fairly cross cutting and the categorisation was dropped by the BC. Nevertheless some of the schools still talked about their projects in those terms.

As a part of this review the research team wanted to collect the voices of those taking part in the project and reflect their views on how the aims of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS were perceived and how the programme was viewed by the principals, teachers and parents of the schools that were involved. The research uncovered a wide variety of views. In some cases these views did reflect what the BC had in mind, in other cases the aims were seen as more limited; for example more than three quarters saw that there was a global dimension to the vision with the aim of internationalising teaching and opening the eyes of teachers and students beyond the standard curriculum., but around a quarter of the schools thought the project was all about the UK and bringing an understanding or appreciation of the UK culture to Pakistan. Around half saw political objectives driving the funding. Less than a quarter realised that the cluster structure of the project was meant to build a central way for self support and only a handful saw CONNECTING CLASSROOMS as aiming to reduce domestic barriers. More than half thought it was about reducing international barriers.

In general the *school principals* had most to say about the aims of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. This reflects the Pakistani hierarchical culture, where principals take the decisions and teachers follow orders. The principals had to ‘own’ the project for it to be successful in the schools. As such they also had the best understanding of the overall aims of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS.

A number of principals interviewed would have liked to be given a manual/ documentation on ‘how to do CC’. They felt the information and application between schools varied and that even within their clusters there were every different views on what they were supposed to achieve.

Some did not mind the discrepancies and felt everyone could take from the project what they felt was most important. Many however felt there needed to be more 'direction', especially from the BC (not necessarily from their UK partners). In one instance however the Pakistani school felt it had very little say on what they could do and they were being told by their British school partners what to do.

The different answers showcased below also reflect what the different schools had focused on during the life of the project.

'In Pakistan there is little awareness of the world.' (Principal, school D) In her view CONNECTING CLASSROOMS meant to change attitude of the nation, especially government schools. 'Students are not aware of what is going on outside school and their own local world.' (Principal, school D). The increased awareness of a world beyond their own locality was one which was repeated often – sometimes expressed as 'more information' or 'to learn about other countries'. Another central theme was that of 'changing perceptions', 'remove misconceptions' or 'reduce prejudice': 'CONNECTING CLASSROOMS aims to remove cultural barriers and remove narrow mindedness by giving students and teachers a 'global vision'. 'We cannot live in our exclusive corner of the world. And we have to prepare our students'. (Principal school A) The 'global village' theme, finding out about each other's education and culture and how others live was also seen as a central theme. One principal (school M) also saw the project's aim as crating awareness of thinking globally beyond the school among the general public by 'opening the minds of many'.

When it came to *global citizenship*, the term was understood in a limited manner and seemed to encompass only 'being in touch and sharing ideas and experience through e-mails or skype', which is a starting point, a willingness to engage being a pre-requisite for any school partnership project to succeed. This reinforces the relatively low baseline almost all of these schools were starting from in terms of international outlook or engagement (as per Principal School D's comment above). In one case the view was expressed that the aim of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS was for the British to understand Pakistan (and if that was not the case it should be). Very few saw cluster cooperation or connections between different types of school both in Pakistan and the UK as an objective, but in almost all the schools either the principal or the coordinator said that they had found working in clusters generally helpful. Only in two or three cases where the cluster relationships had not taken off was this view not reflected. Even fewer mentioned the removal or reduction of barriers at a local level as an objective. Only one principal mentioned the words – 'community cohesion' and 'building bridges'. This was from one of the Christian schools visited. It is important to mention that during the interviews many principals would, as the discussion progressed, explain how the cluster concept had in fact broken down some local barriers both within the classroom and between schools.

The term 'active citizenship' was again only understood in a very limited way. In a few schools principals would talk about how the project helped students and teachers to learn that they can 'do' things to change society. But when pressed, in most schools this 'change' had more to do with personal and civic responsibilities such as cleaning up the classroom and not jumping traffic lights.

A more comprehensive view of citizenship is not widely held (or taught).⁶

Other things which were mentioned as aims were that CONNECTING CLASSROOMS was meant to provide 'skills for employment' (such as better English) and 'teacher development' which included new, more child centric, teaching methods as well as the ability for teachers to learn from each other.

Not every cluster included a madrassa, but where they were involved the madrassas saw the main aim as allowing them to interact with other types of schools. But they also mentioned improved teaching methods and improved skills; increased tolerance across different religions and the understanding of different views as CONNECTING CLASSROOMS's objectives. In madrassas there seemed to be less reflection about the structure of the programme than in other types of schools; however there had been great debate about the actual objectives of the BC.

The *coordinators* both at cluster and at school level held similar views to the principals, but being more actively involved on the ground and in the implementation of projects, they often had a more micro level understanding. Most of them realised the aims of the cluster model: 'CONNECTING CLASSROOMS is there to increase communication between schools in Pakistan and with the UK. But it has also opened the channels for a boys' school to communicate with a girls' school'. (Cluster coordinator A) 'We are now able to discuss global issues with each other and remove misconceptions. We can have cultural exchanges, comparing the lives within two countries.' (Coordinator school C). Fewer coordinators than principals expressed the view that the project aimed to break down barriers between the West and Pakistan. In fact hardly any coordinators saw political motives in the project.

The main aim however was seen as improving teaching methods and to help teachers and students: 'Our students can learn outside the box. Now they can work as a group, learn how to think critically and this will change attitudes.' (School coordinator L) 'By sharing projects teaching styles also change' (School coordinator K). The use of extracurricular activities was seen as a potential model of doing more group work in the classroom.

Many spoke about intra Pakistan and international school linkages and how they thought the improved the use of English was a major aim of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. They also felt that more than just the language the objective was possibly to learn about modern technologies from better equipped schools and the find joint solutions when sharing difficulties.

In one particular case the cluster coordinator (School A) mentioned that the project's aim might also be to increase competition between Pakistani schools: 'to create motivation to work harder and to do things beyond the curriculum'.

Whilst the views shared do to a certain degree reflect the BC objectives, it has to be added that the aims and objectives of the projects were clearer in some clusters than in others and that those who had found a good way of working with each other generally felt more comfortable with the aims or did not question them very much. Principals in general were quite satisfied with what the project was trying to achieve and some (mainly in private schools) said it aligned with the ethos of

⁶ Lall, M. (2012b) Why education matters – school 'choice' and differing views on citizenship in Pakistan, *Citizenship Studies*

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their own school. The issue of 'what does the BC actually want/ do this for?' was only posed in schools and clusters who had not managed to get the project rolling or who had had difficulties they had not been able to solve.



5 The schools and Connecting Classrooms in practice

This section will review the findings related to the main stakeholders of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS, looking at the schools, the teachers, the training they received, the projects the schools implemented, the effects on students their parents and the wider community. There is a special subsection relating to the effects of the project on madrassas.

5.1 The schools and their clusters

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS works on the basis of school clusters, where different types of schools, often located in different areas of the town or city are linked up with each other. One of the intentions behind this clustering model is to allow for schools with better facilities to help those where the facilities are less abundant. Normally the private schools will be 'better off', however many government schools also benefit from larger space, making them often the best place for cluster meetings, events or projects. Each cluster visited had a number of government schools and at least one private school. In some areas madrassas were also included. The aim was that in working together differences between schools and between the students attending these schools can be overcome.

Most schools visited said that the cluster model had allowed them to work for the first time with a different type of school, and that some misconceptions and prejudices were removed through the collaboration. However 'differences' were also seen as problems which had to be overcome. In this case it was not so much about the sharing of resources and richer vs. poorer schools, but more about the differences in curriculum, the fact that government schools were less autonomous than their private counterparts and that homogeneous schools faced different issues from those with a more heterogeneous population.

Cluster connections and network creation generally start between principals or coordinators, later, through certain projects inter school links move down to teachers; however not all are involved. At student level (and their families) there are fewest connections with limited impact on parents and the local community. For new networks to be created across classrooms at different schools and to link families who send their children to different schools a lot of time would be needed with many more projects.⁷ This in any case is very hard to achieve.

The principal was central to the success of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS in his or her school. It was again up to the principals if the cluster dynamics worked well and schools benefitted from the links created. The cluster coordinator was also central, especially in bringing all principals on board and facilitating communications with the BC. It seems however that in many cases where this role was taken up by one of the principals, it was just too much work. The best model was where the cluster coordinator was an ordinary teacher and when they were supported and accepted by their principal and the principals of all other schools involved. Such a structure of

⁷ Mostly projects were done at classroom level, sometimes with students from different year-groups working with each other. Only in very few cases did students from different schools meet to work on projects with each other.

course upsets hierarchies – so everyone has to be behind it.⁸ The other essential thing was that each principal had at least one school coordinator to help implement the projects within the school, engage the teachers and students at the school and who would be able to coordinate outwards with the cluster coordinator as well as downwards with the teachers of the school.

Some clusters have become particularly close. Aside from a good cluster coordinator, this has often been brought about by unforeseen externalities such as the floods or the behaviour of UK schools. During the last monsoon the floods were so bad that a number of participating schools were designated as relief camps for the surrounding population. In one particular case the cluster school children, teachers and parents would bring breakfast to those living in the relief camp school. With regard to UK school behaviour it is no secret that one UK cluster decided to end its engagement with the Abbotabad cluster upon the killing of Osama Bin Laden in that city. The negative effect of this brought the local schools together to make the most out of the local cluster even without the participation of their UK counterparts.

Most principals interviewed learnt to use the support mechanism of the cluster, getting advice from other principals and also call on parents to help. This was particularly the case in girls' government schools. However the network also extended beyond the cluster with principals, coordinators and teachers who had taken part in BC training outside of their own city, maintaining connections with their counterparts from other clusters.

5.2 Teachers

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS affects mainly teachers who take part. In many schools teachers were either selected or volunteered to take part. In some cases the nature of the project determined which teachers would be most involved (for example if the school focused on a geography project, the geography teacher would automatically be involved). However in more than half the schools visited it was not the nature of the project that determined teacher involvement, but rather teacher interest or selection by the principal. Those who were selected to take part in trainings felt they had benefitted most. Whilst they were in principal willing to share their experiences with their colleagues, there was often not the space or the opportunity to do so. In some schools those selected were seen as privileged. In other schools it was indicated that the whole school took part since the teachers who had benefitted from training and or travel would speak (often at assembly) about their experiences. However CONNECTING CLASSROOMS expected the teachers who received training and gained personal experiences to share these with their colleagues – possibly passing on new skills. Unfortunately the 'cascade model' does not work well as teachers are not trained to train their peers. Sometimes this is also linked to hierarchy where younger teachers would not be seen as able to 'teach' their older colleagues. In other cases the lack of sharing is simply due to tight schedules (particularly in government schools preparing for exams) or the transfer/ departure of teachers who were most engaged with the programme. It is possible that some teachers did not want to share their new knowledge as it would 'give them an edge' over their peers. The evidence for this is based only on a few teachers who had not been included in the

⁸ It was observed that often the cluster coordinator was a female principal. It was also observed that in these cases the male principals were less involved – possibly because they would have had to take instructions from a female colleague.

training complaining that their colleagues became more arrogant and felt superior after having received training, creating a new hierarchy in schools. These teachers felt left out, especially when it came to international travel. Those who did travel found their eyes opened wide. Some female teachers had to leave young children in the care of mothers in law to travel and it is commendable that these teachers or principals were able to travel without their husbands or other male relatives but in the company of male teachers from other schools. It cannot be emphasised enough what kind of a gender barrier this has broken down.

Most teachers who took part in the focus groups spoke how the project had affected their teaching. In all focus groups across all schools teachers spoke unprompted about more child centred methods (CCA) they had started to use in their classrooms. When asked how this was related to CONNECTING CLASSROOMS, some described workshops they had attended and others spoke of the observations and method sharing sessions they had had either with their UK partners, or more often with their other cluster schools. The only variance seemed to be in the degree of change as many private schools had already some CCA methods in place. However even in private schools the teachers found that being part of the project reinforced the teaching methods. The teachers all spoke about encouraging students to question the material, work in groups with higher ability students leading lower ability ones as well as refraining from too much 'chalk and talk' type teaching.⁹ They found this more difficult when having to prepare the students for government metric exams (which require a lot of cramming) but easier through the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS projects that students and teachers undertook together.

The teachers also spoke of how they learnt from other cluster schools. In a few cases private schools felt they did not learn but were able to share good practice with government schools. This has been one of the chief benefits of local clusters and some clusters took more advantage than others, but generally the teachers benefitted from the cluster model. In a limited number of cases teachers from different schools across the clusters started to communicate with each other and share ideas. As mentioned above this was most prevalent between school coordinators, but did in certain cases extend to ordinary teachers as well. What started as conversations around CONNECTING CLASSROOMS related projects did reach into teaching and other classroom related issues as well.

Many teachers felt that CONNECTING CLASSROOMS had enriched their world view and made their teaching more interesting. The fact that there was a 'tangible' wider world out there and that they were able to do other, interesting things with their students was seen as universally positive, even if it took more time and effort. A number of government teachers also spoke about how the project had spurred them on to show that they could be just as good as private schools. They generally perceived such competition as positive, and their principals felt that this had been a good way to combat teacher apathy. The projects which emanated out of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS, and the collaboration across clusters contributed to a general increase in teacher motivation beyond the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS projects and therefore, some principals felt also improved the quality of teaching in the classroom.

⁹ Although there is still a long way to go, especially in government schools and madrassas, encouraging students to question the material is the first step to develop critical thinking skills, one of the key objectives of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS.

5.3 Training

Teachers who had taken part in workshops found that they had changed their teaching practice. In some cases this was spread around the whole school, but in many cases the benefit was limited to the participants. Most found training where they mixed across clusters most useful and interesting. The fact that training was not only limited to teaching methods, but that there was training on a number of things, including English was perceived as very positive. Across schools teachers asked for more training, in particular with regard to English and IT and for more teachers. Those who had not been selected to take part felt left out. The mechanisms for the sharing of knowledge were not in place at any of the schools and it depended largely on the attitude of the teacher who had been trained, quite an ad hoc arrangement. A further problem arose when the one teacher who had been trained (especially when it came to IT matters such as e-mails and skype) either left or was posted elsewhere. In that case the remaining teachers felt that the project would stall because the knowledge had been 'lost'.

5.4 Projects

The projects each cluster decided to undertake differed widely. Sometimes there were marked differences between schools within a cluster as well as some schools were more active or engaged than others. In one case the projects seemed to depend entirely on the UK partner schools (who were seen as dictating what they wanted to do) However in most cases the schools across a cluster decided on the projects together and in the course of this also saw what activities schools could undertake together. Many projects related to the environment and another central theme was different cultures (both within Pakistan as well as with regard to the wider world). Students taking part were asked to 'introduce themselves' to their UK counterparts. Culture often included cooking and recipes (with those in the boys schools getting their mothers and sisters involved). The projects relating to the environment ranged from recycling of waste material, to how to produce clean drinking water for the community to making (really nice) cloth bags which would avoid the use of plastic bags. In some cases these projects involved contact with the wider community (one school went to the local slum and showed families how to clean their drinking water, in another school the students went to the local shop keepers asking them to give discounts to those who brought their won cloth bags). Aside from these types of projects cluster schools would invite each other to their sports days allowing students from other schools to compete with the hosting school. In many schools cultural days were organised with students celebrating the UK as well as the Pakistani culture. Mostly the projects, their organisation, extent and effectiveness depended on the cluster coordinator, the principals and the willingness of the teachers to engage.

Of course projects also linked the Pakistani schools with their UK counterparts and festive greeting cards for Christmas and Eid, as well as occasional skype conferences were the most common connections. However many Pakistani schools complained that whilst they had increased their connections across their Pakistani cluster, they had not received what they termed an 'adequate' response from their UK partner schools. All schools displayed students' work and often also project work, photos or cards that had arrived from the UK, but it was clear that many of them wanted a deeper or more regular engagement.

5.5 Students

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS has had a different impact in each school. Whilst most schools emphasize that there is no discrimination between student from different religious, ethnic, linguistic or class/ caste backgrounds; the reality on the ground is often that minorities keep a low profile. This is particularly the case in homogeneous schools. Through CONNECTING CLASSROOMS students from different communities have been able to work with each other within the school. In diverse schools with for example large Hindu communities this has had a real impact and now children play and socialise across religious lines (whilst they did not do so before). Mostly however the gap bridged is one of class when students meet across the cluster and government school students interact with private school students (or madrassa students). In these cases students admit that their eyes are opened to the fact that not everyone in Pakistan is equally fortunate. This is particularly the case for students from private schools. The British Council has already acknowledged that one of the main learning points for the future is that projects have to be designed in a way that lets as many students as possible participate. In many schools only selected students were able to participate on account of logistics, time, red tape and issues relating to the curriculum and exam timetables.

5.5.1 Results of the group work

The classroom exercise conducted in each school visited showed that even with very young children there was mostly a very open mind and a good awareness of the outside world. All students worked well in groups and then gave short presentations about the discussions they had had amongst themselves. Not only were they very confident in speaking in front of strangers with no advance warning, but they also were able to articulate their ideas clearly. The teachers in all schools confirmed that the increase in student confidence was due to the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS project work that had been undertaken.

It is noteworthy that the type of school visited had a significant impact on the answers given. In most government and private schools the students believed that differences between people globally could be overcome and had to be overcome. However in two or three more conservative schools, one of which was a religious school, this was not the case and students would argue that differences between Muslims were the only ones which could and should be overcome.

5.6 Parents

Parents were not available in every school; however most schools made an effort to ask a handful of parents to attend a meeting with the research team. Parental involvement and parental links varies wildly between schools. Principals would explain how and when they would invite parents to attend. Often this depended on the parental occupations as well; as such poorer, lower class parents would have less frequent contact with the schools whilst private schools engaged with their parents and also managed to engage the parents in the school projects.

Many parents were not aware of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. Those who knew about the project, were usually middle class. However many parents were aware of the projects that had been undertaken as a part of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. In private schools there were projects that went beyond their involvement in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS, and parents often could not distinguish between the two. Parents of children in government schools often wondered

if the focus of teachers should not be exclusively on exams. Many were not that convinced of the value of extracurricular activities and needed time to come around to the idea.¹⁰

Parental involvement in government schools in general was very low. This is not because of a lack of interest but because parents believe that it is the school's responsibility to educate their children and that they do not pay a direct role.

5.7 The wider community

As mentioned earlier the linkages that CONNECTING CLASSROOMS creates are first and foremost between school leaders (principals and coordinators) and then between teachers. The students link up only occasionally. However it would be unfair to say that the wider community has not been impacted upon at all by CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. Whilst most schools will not have any involvement with outsiders beyond a management board, some projects implemented in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS allowed for a more direct connection between the school and its immediate environment. Examples reach from the cloth bags being distributed and shopkeepers asked to provide those not requiring plastic bags with a discount, to cleaning the local park, to visits to the local slum where students would teach locals how to clean their drinking water. The floods also brought a chance for local connections as some schools became relief camps and other cluster schools brought food and blankets. But the direct links and connections with the local community (beyond parents) remained limited. In some cases the project had to be explained publically as either the press or other outsiders were spreading stories that the BC was trying to 'convert' students and teachers at a particular school. This is why in some cases schools preferred to keep a low profile and not advertise the fact that they were taking part.

5.8 Madrassas - a special case

In Pakistan most of the madrassas are run on donations. Each madrassa is managed by a committee responsible for administration as well as collecting the funds. Madrassas are attached to mosques and have boarding and lodging facilities. Students are charged no fees. Admission age, criteria and required qualification differs between madrassas, as do the facilities each madrassa offers. A large majority of the parents sending their children to madrassas are uneducated. This in turn affects student mentality, generally making them more resistant to change¹¹. Madrassas focus on religious studies and life in a madrassa is run according to a strict routine. Since madrassa structures differ so markedly from government or private schools, any programme involving a madrassa will face different difficulties in its implementation there, compared to the programme running in other types of schools.

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS is a unique project in that it tries to work with mainstream government schools and faith schools in Pakistan. The interviews revealed that at the beginning the madrassa principals were not very interested in taking part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. This was in part due to the low exposure to the outside world that madrassas have, both within

¹⁰ Principals in government schools often had a very hard time convincing parents and many therefore decided not to give away too much detail about the project; their parents engagement was limited to getting parental permission for projects and outings.

¹¹ This was explained by two madrassa principals during the research.

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Pakistan and to foreign countries. Interaction at a national or international level was not seen as a priority. The implementation of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS depended in part on the principal, but due to their administrative structures, madrassas also face restrictions with regard to their ability to take decisions, as the board has to be consulted and the donors yield significant influence.

It was observed that donor influence could have a negative impact, particularly when it came to the installation and use of internet facilities. Neither the madrassa teachers nor the students have the freedom to what they want and the use of private USB sticks with materials brought from the outside was restricted or forbidden. Even where computers were available the use of the equipment and the internet was limited and controlled. In one case the principal of the madrassa encouraged his students to access the internet, e-mail and English classes in their free time outside of the madrassa, so as to not contravene donor instructions.

Most of the madrassas visited still had very traditional teaching methods (and physical punishment) and they explained that they found it difficult to change to more modern teaching methods. However in two madrassas out of the four visited, the teachers did start to implement new teaching methods and had stopped or at least had reduced physical punishment due to the training that had been received through CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. Change in essence was seen as having to happen slowly and could not be brought in overnight by an external programme. Not only the madrassa principals and teachers had to be brought on board, but also the donors and the wider community as well.

One of the barriers mentioned in working together with other schools in a cluster was the differences in school timings as well as the difference in weekly and annual holidays. Madrassas are closed on Fridays whilst other schools have a Saturday-Sunday weekend. Another barrier was the lack of English which is spoken both by the teachers and students. This was felt as a barrier in communicating with the UK.

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS has had some impact on the madrassas where it was being implemented. In the madrassas where some students from across all classes were involved, teachers observed change with students learning how to do group work, better time management and some students developing leadership skills. Both students and teachers mentioned that they were relieved that the programme allowed others to see that madrassas were not only 'producing terrorists'. It was unclear if they meant the UK or their Pakistani partners. However since many students are older than in ordinary schools, principals felt that it was difficult to change or open their minds to new ideas.

The impact of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS varied from madrassa to madrassa depending upon the willingness of teachers and students to accept change, the extent to which the use of new technologies was allowed and modern teaching methods were being implemented in the classrooms. Some teachers and administrators displayed a high level of awareness and they knew the advantages of using more child-centred teaching methods and the internet. In one case lesson planning became part of the daily routine. However these more 'open' teachers had to argue their case with more conservative colleagues who were more suspicious of the programme. High

teacher turnover¹² also means that teachers who have been trained by the BC leave and the 'knowledge' and skills acquired are lost.

Since each madrassa has its own structure, curriculum and set of rules, the effect of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS also varied markedly from madrassa to madrassa. Some were more willing to accept change whilst others would need more time. One particular madrassa has gained a lot due to an enlightened principal. They have welcomed the new technologies, establishing an IT and a language lab, encouraging both students and teachers to make use of these facilities. The students and teachers involved in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS in this particular madrassa feel that there has been positive change and there was a clear difference in outlook compared to their peers who were not involved in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS projects. The main reason for these good results was the high motivation level of teachers and the administrator, who were convinced of the advantages of taking part in the project. In madrassas, more than other schools, the attitude of the principal is crucial to success. It also needs to be remembered that in a number of cases madrassas were in the most recently formed clusters and that for the project to be successful more time and communication effort would be needed.

5.9 Achievements and lessons learnt

The perceived achievements and lessons learnt varied from school to school, as well as between principals, teachers and coordinators. A few themes emerged, most of which are discussed in more detail across the report. This section allows for the personal views of teachers and principals to be heard.

English as a life skill - opening up the world: A number of interviewees mentioned that their biggest achievement was their improved English and the increase use of the language, especially with the UK partner schools: 'We cannot live without accepting the world as a global village, we have to live in peace with difference.' (Former principal R school)

IT skills - although in practice many teachers did not have access to computers at their schools¹³, a number of them felt that their biggest achievement had been to start to learn how to use e-mail and the internet or skype. In clusters where the better resourced school acted as a communication hub the learning curve of teachers of other schools had increased markedly. However this differed from cluster to cluster. All teachers who were interviewed felt they needed much more training than what was on offer and those schools who did not have IT labs or an IT teacher suffered most.

¹² It is unclear if this is any higher than in government schools but it seems to be frequent in the madrassas visited.

¹³ Although it is understood that the BC did allow in the second year for funds to be spent on IT equipment it has to be said that many schools did not have adequate IT facilities and that often there were stark differences between the private schools and the others with regard to equipment. The way clusters decided to spend the money differed from cluster to cluster and was not transparent. Certainly some of the more poorly equipped schools complained about their situation. This was less the case in clusters where the better equipped schools gave access to their facilities to the poorer schools or where principals, coordinators and teachers simply used their home computers.

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But it was still seen as an achievement as previously these skills were often not seen as relevant in the Pakistani curricular context.

Communication and tolerance: Others mentioned not only language as a communication skill but also communication as a means of increasing tolerance 'With communication every barrier can be broken down'. (Teacher focus group ST school) Often the reference was to the differences with the UK partners but some also recognised and explicitly stated that communication between cluster schools had also increased tolerance vis-a-vis other systems, gender and class barriers. This was extended by one principal who mentioned that beyond being exposed to the outside world this had allowed her school to 'Think of others but ourselves' (Principal school G), referring in particular to the floods. Working with an organisation was also mentioned 'Before I did not know how to work with an organisation. I would have hesitated to speak to outsiders.' (Coordinator school AB)

Increased confidence and sharing of ideas: Many teachers mentioned the fact that they had learnt new things from their training, in some cases from their UK partners and in some (isolated) cases from colleagues as their biggest achievement. This had changed teaching practice, teacher exposure and teacher attitude as teachers were now working beyond the curriculum. This and the increased knowledge for teachers, beyond new teaching methods, was often seen both as the greatest achievement and the biggest lesson learnt by the principals. In two cases the coordinators were now studying for other degrees, something they said they would not have had the confidence to do before.

Learnt to think outside the box: 'You learn so much when you start to think outside of the box; even if you know certain things, in a routine you forget. This project has reinforced this. Sadly we need someone from outside to make us do this.' (Principal L school) This included certain schools learning how to engage parents to solve problems, or learning how to work with other types of schools. One principal mentioned that since he had taken over his main CONNECTING CLASSROOMS achievement was to make his school the hub for all activities. Others mentioned the chance to do other things which included travelling for training to other parts of Pakistan, interacting with foreigners and doing very different things they had never envisaged before.

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6 Community Cohesion and overcoming barriers

Social cohesion is a distant dream for Pakistan – as it is in fact for many countries – both developed and developing. The literature reviewed on these topics (see Appendix) shows that societies with high levels of social cohesion tend to be more homogeneous and have high levels of trust in public institutions. However, even in very heterogeneous societies, fragmentation at a local level can be overcome, especially through the development of social networks which cut through ethnic, religious, gender and class differences. Education and educational institutions such as schools (but also colleges and universities)¹⁴ are key in such a process, both because of what and how they teach as well as by providing a platform for the interaction of people from different backgrounds.

One of the principal aims of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS was to improve community cohesion and help overcome differences at a local level. This went well beyond the global aim of reducing the information and understanding gap which underpins many of the problems between Pakistan and the West/ the UK. It is also a much more ambitious aim for an international programme to want to improve tolerance not only internationally but also at a local level, without however interfering either in the curriculum or in the ways the schools operate. In fact many schools saw CONNECTING CLASSROOMS primarily as a platform to improve the relationship between Pakistan and the UK through the mutual understanding and sharing of information. Only in discussion did many then admit that the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS platform had been as important if not more important in bridging local barriers as well.

In order to understand how CONNECTING CLASSROOMS was able to reduce local faultlines and bridge gaps within the Pakistani clusters, it is important to remember the information given in the background section which depicts a very fragmented society and the ‘low base’ from which many taking part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS were starting off. This section reviews the different local barriers within schools and clusters and discusses how CONNECTING CLASSROOMS has helped some of these to be reduced or even overcome. The main issue here is that the barriers are different for every cluster and within every school/ local community. At some level there are always a number of different, overlapping barriers, but one is generally perceived as more prevalent or important than the others (depending of course on who was asked)¹⁵. In some cases it is gender, class or religion. Other perceived differences are ethnicity, caste and sectarian divisions. Interestingly the ethnic difference seemed to be the one ascribed least importance to. Caste, was mentioned, but is not widely understood and often mixed up with religious sect. However in Sindhi communities where there are still significant Hindu minorities, caste does play an important divisive role. In practice the most widely overcome barrier in the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS schools and clusters seems to have been gender, then class. Religious differences (both sectarian and between religions) are very real but a long way off being resolved or overcome.

¹⁴ However the type and ethos of the institutions matter. More conservative outfits are less likely to be tolerant towards minorities.

¹⁵ Many girls’ schools were less concerned about ethnic, class or religious differences but found that through CC they had managed to connect with boys and mixed schools for the first time. This view was never reciprocated by the corresponding boys’ school who generally did not perceive gender as a barrier.

6.1.1 Bridging gaps within schools:

Most schools proclaimed that there was no discrimination between children of different religions, sects and ethnicities. In fact many argued that the children do not know the difference and they all study and play together. They also argued that the teachers treated all students the same way. This is particularly the case in very homogeneous schools with small minorities where it seems that the minorities tend to keep their head down. In more heterogeneous schools the principals admitted that the project had given them a platform to discuss differences. This was particularly the case with regard to religious festivals and many schools now celebrate Christian as well as Hindu festivals (such as Christmas, Easter and Diwali), with all children taking part. Some private schools had always had some form of international celebrations, but their principals felt that through CONNECTING CLASSROOMS they had a reason and a justification to improve the knowledge of the Muslim majority students about other religions and the minorities within their schools.¹⁶ This was unfortunately less the case in more homogeneous schools with tiny minorities, where many teachers professed they did not know if there were Shi'a, Christian or Hindus in their classes. All simply were assumed to be Sunni Muslim as they took part in Islamiyat. One principal recalled how he had taught the difference between Christians and Muslims in class and only later found out that one of his students was a Christian. He then felt that he had been too harsh on the Christians and apologised to the student. He recounts how this student later converted to Islam and how he as a teacher feels he needs to be more neutral so as to take all different backgrounds into account.

There rarely are big class differences within schools. Some trust schools¹⁷ are an exception as they attract both lower and upper middle classes. Gender differences do not play much of a role either as in mixed private schools boys and girls work and play together. Most other schools are in any case single gender as of secondary level.

It is therefore fair to say that CONNECTING CLASSROOMS allowed for a certain religious gap to be addressed in more heterogeneous schools with larger minorities. One principal told the story that previously differently coloured cutlery and crockery had been used for Hindu students. He had to publicly drink out of a Hindu cup to lead the way in improving the relations between the

¹⁶ Celebrating/ discussing non Muslim festivals can pose a problem for schools – even private schools, as parents will presuppose their children are being 'converted'. Parents in many schools questioned even the practice of writing and sending Christmas cards to the UK partner schools as they felt this would threaten their children's adherence to Muslim traditions. One school was even threatened in the press after sending Christmas cards and the principal had to have a public information session about CONNECTING CLASSROOMS and the role of the British Council in order to appease those who held the view that sending Christmas cards was 'haram'. This reflects the increased lack of trust with regard to the West that has been discussed in the background section. In many, more conservative parts of Pakistani society the West is seen increasingly as an enemy of Islam due to the western propagated violence in the country and the rest of the Muslim world.

¹⁷ The CONNECTING CLASSROOMS project tends to differentiate only between private schools, government schools and madrassas. However some of the 'private' schools are not for profit schools run by trusts. This was the case with two of the schools visited – one run by The Citizens Foundation (TCF) and one by a Shi'a trust which had been set up by a family a few decades ago. They tend to cater to the poorer sections of society but due to high teaching standards they often attract middle classes as well.

two communities. He states that CONNECTING CLASSROOMS has allowed for Hindu and Muslim children to work and play together and that they now also visit each other's houses – something which had not happened before the project was implemented.

All principals reiterated that whilst they did not feel there was any active discrimination between different students, the projects engendered through CONNECTING CLASSROOMS created a platform where students were able to work with each other and that this in itself helped reduce any differences and misconceptions.

6.1.2 Overcoming differences between schools within clusters

The principal barrier overcome between schools within clusters was that of gender. Girls' schools and female teachers had for the first time the possibility to interact with boys schools. The international travel which was a part of the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS project linking the clusters to the UK saw female teachers travel with male colleagues (without being accompanied by their own male relatives). It was again the girls' schools which in many clusters took the lead in implementing the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS projects and engaging with the boys' schools. The principals, school coordinators and teachers from these schools all spoke about how they felt a gender barrier was being overcome and that misconceptions held by certain boys schools were being cleared away. Some who felt that they had previously been looked down upon but that when the other schools saw the girls compete in sports competitions, and involved in the projects, it 'opened the eyes' of the other schools.

Class was another barrier which was successfully overcome in a number of clusters as private schools catering to the middle classes engaged with government schools or trust schools who had mainly students from poor and very poor backgrounds. This was particularly the cases in the larger metropolises where the government schools tended to have students from the manual labour and servant classes. In four or five schools visited students from different schools interacted with each other on CONNECTING CLASSROOMS projects. It was often felt that this level of cross school engagement should be implemented at parental level as well, but that more time and resources would be needed to do this.

Class of course is a variable concept and teachers at a government school would not see themselves as from a different class from those teaching at a private school. The reverse however is certainly true as the perception of those teachers in private institutions tended to be that they were 'better' than their public sector counterpart. The CONNECTING CLASSROOMS project opened the eyes of many private schools, their teachers and students in that those working at government schools were just as good and capable as them. In fact some government schools spoke about how this had created a sense of competition and that they wanted to show that despite the differences in resources they could be just as good and achieve just as much as the private schools.

6.1.3 The students – differences and similarities between communities

As mentioned in the previous section, most students had a very open world view, aware of differences but also very accepting of them. Many groups either argued that the basic humanity between people was more important than any difference dividing them, or that in fact it was important to understand differences in order to be able to respect them and reduce misunderstandings. However there were clear differences between students at different types of

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schools, with students at a particularly conservative Muslim private school arguing that there was only one community – the Muslim one and that differences with others could not be overcome.¹⁸ When doing the exercise many children were clearly influenced by the various projects they had undertaken as a part of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS as the issue of climate change, recycling and pollution as communal problems which the whole world had to solve together came up repeatedly. The students of the schools which had less resources, or had had less chance in taking part in cross school activities tended to refer less to the project work. It was interesting to note how the differences across the wider world were just seen as extensions of the differences they encountered at Pakistan wide level, which probably explains why many did not see the issue of overcoming differences as impossible.

Overall it seemed as if the worldview of many of the students was wider and more open than that of even their teachers or parents.



¹⁸ Unfortunately these views are becoming more prevalent, as are these types of schools. It will depend on the BC if they feel that they can have an impact with CONNECTING CLASSROOMS in such schools.

7 Other Emerging Themes

This section describes the crosscutting themes which were identified from the interviews of the various stakeholders. They reflect what teachers and parents as well as head teachers commonly said.

7.1 Changed children's attitudes

The main theme that emerged from all interviews – principals, teachers and parents was that the students who had taken part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS activities had a greatly increased sense of confidence. This was reiterated without exception in every school visited. Teachers believed this was due to a greater exposure to the outside world – with the excitement of communicating with students in the UK being a central feature of this, as well as being able to do extracurricular activities the students were interested in. It should be remember that extracurricular activities aside from some sports activities are normally unheard of in the government schools. CONNECTING CLASSROOMS allowed for government schools to instil a culture of other activities, loosely related to the curriculum, which in turn made school more fun for both teachers and students. In the government schools visited it felt from the student activity and the conversations with the staff that the children taking part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS were more engaged than their peers who were not directly involved in the projects.

The visits from the UK as well as the visits of their principals and coordinators to the UK brought the wider world a bit closer to home. Many realised that they were in fact not that different from students in the UK. The confidence of the students was witnessed by the research team as all students were put into random cross class and cross age groups and asked to complete a chart together, after which they were asked to present their discussions either in Urdu or English. In all cases the presentations were delivered with a lot of enthusiasm and energy and most students turned out to be surprisingly good public speakers.

7.2 Changed teaching methods

Both the interviews with the principals and the focus groups with the teachers brought up the theme of teaching methods and how taking part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS had impacted on the classrooms. Most schools visited stated that they now used more child centred teaching methods, allowing children to work in groups and ask questions. This was particularly the case in government schools – but even in private schools the more child centric approach was reinforced. In one school teachers spoke of facilitation as opposed to teaching. All related this primarily to the BC training that had been received by selected teachers from each school. Those who witnessed different teaching methods in the UK were particularly impressed and wanted to replicate these in Pakistan. In some cases the teaching methods were reinforced by the visits of UK teachers who occasionally taught in their host school during their visit. The exchange of views and methods and how to make teaching aids became a link between teachers within clusters and the 'new' child centric approach seems to have become the 'accepted' methods, even for teachers who did not take part in the BC trainings. This seems to have been the biggest impact across the board.

7.3 Extra work for teachers

Those who took part in the projects had to put in the time. Teachers did not complain but did mention that taking part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS increased their workloads. When this was supported by the principal, and the whole school was taking part, the result was positive for all. However teachers and principals did point out that time is a big resource in a country where the syllabus is tight and where parents demand to know why extracurricular activities are run when the exam preparation should be the priority. Private schools generally found managing extra projects and making time easier than government schools who were hampered by red tape and hierarchies. Those teachers who did take part found that they gained a lot and even asked for the project time to be extended. Some suggested that such projects should be made available to all Pakistani schools. A large number also said that working with their students had created new bonds and they felt closer to their students because of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. Changing teacher student dynamics is a big plus point to keep students motivated and in schools, especially in government schools in poorer areas, as traditionally Pakistan's hierarchical education system does not allow for much student teacher cooperation.

7.4 Getting to know the other sectors – government, private, trust schools and madrassas

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS in effect became a platform for different types of schools to get to know each other and work together. With the exception of a few private schools and one government school all schools declared never having had links with other schools prior to joining CONNECTING CLASSROOMS. It helped reduce preconceptions: Many private schools were very surprised at what they found in government schools. The presumption that government teachers did not work hard or did not know their subject well was quickly thrown out of the window. Government schools felt they benefitted from the cluster concepts but were held back by a lot of red tape. No one had ever been in touch with a madrassa before and many found that very interesting. Many spoke of the 'widening of minds'. Whilst it took some time for 'normal' schools to be able to effectively communicate with the madrassas, all felt that they had benefitted from the interaction.

In some cases the link with a private school created a feeling of competitiveness with the government schools and they wanted to do better. This was mentioned by all the better resourced government school principals (and some of their teachers), but interestingly enough also by a few of the government schools located in poorer urban areas. In these schools the teachers were particularly proud to showcase the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS project work, saying 'Look, we can do this as well. We are as good as they are.' In three cases the principal also pointed out that the government school buildings and grounds were so much better than their private counterparts that they insisted on hosting all the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS meetings in their school. However in other cases the disparity of resources made things more difficult as government schools felt at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the private school in the cluster.

7.5 Creating a Social Network

The links between schools went beyond the 'knowing' and 'understanding' as principals, cluster

coordinators, school coordinators and in some cases even teachers started to see the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS platform as a social resource. During the life of the projects there was an increased mutual sharing of problems. Of course this was more prevalent in some clusters than others, and largely depended on the personalities of the cluster coordinators and the principals. Sometimes the social network extended across clusters as teachers met for training outside of their city.

Connection was normally via mobile phones (not internet, as many cluster partner schools would not have the necessary internet resources)¹⁹. The female teachers across the various schools seemed to think of this more as a social network rather than the male teachers, but both male and female teachers tended to communicate, especially at coordinator/principal level. More teacher to teacher interaction would be needed to really create a sustainable network.

There seemed to be a process where first principals talked to each other, then coordinators and only later teachers and later sometimes students. However whilst the network remains active at senior level, it does not really have a sustained impact at teacher levels and nothing yet at student/community level. In one case, in a very heterogeneous schools students from different communities who had taken part in a project started to engage with each other after school at each other's homes. But that was the exception rather than the rule – and it has not started between schools. The social network stage precedes 'community cohesion'. Community cohesion is improved but it takes time and happens first within schools before it happens between schools. It is a very slow process.

Disasters and tragedies actually helped bring some schools closer together as the floods impacted on some schools. In one case a school was transformed into a relief camp for the local population and the other cluster schools became involved in giving food and other items to help. This had a direct impact on community cohesion, but now that the floods are over and people are back home the connection has not been sustained at community level.

7.6 Issues and difficulties

It needs to be reiterated that overall the schools felt that the project was worthwhile and many wanted it extended and expanded. However as with all projects difficulties were faced, some of which were harder to overcome than others.

Selective involvement: First and foremost a central difficulty lay in the fact that only some teachers and students within each school were involved. It was unclear how those taking part were selected and the number of participants varied widely from school to school. The assumption that the teachers who had been trained would be able to share their knowledge (cascade model) worked in very few schools, not least because of teacher transfers, the lack of time and facilities and hierarchical structures which had not been taken into account.

UK response: Another issue mentioned frequently was that the response from UK partners in many places was poor. Time difference is partly to blame but in many cases there seems to have

¹⁹ This is despite the fact that the schools were allowed as of year 2 to invest some of the grant in computers and internet resources. In many schools the IT resources remain woefully inadequate, but even where computers were available mobile phone calls or sms were seen as easier and quicker.

been a perceived lack of interest. The excitement from Pakistan was not perceived as matched. Many private schools were more interested in links with the UK and saw this as the main benefit for their school. A few of the private schools had had international cross school links before.

IT hardware and support: Levels of available IT hardware varied widely between schools and often there was a lack of IT teachers and support. The grant did not initially allow for much hardware investment. This makes the difference between government and private setups hard to bridge. Communication was generally via phone as opposed to e-mail or internet and many government schools could not be in touch with UK partners due to the lack of internet access. There is a very low level of usage or understanding of the internet especially with the older teacher generation in government schools. In some cases principals, coordinators and teachers had to use their own computers or internet connections at home in the evening if they wanted to be in touch with other partner schools.

Facilities: Differences between the facilities in government schools and private schools (as well as difference between Pakistani schools and UK schools) can be difficult with poorer schools feeling that they cannot possibly measure up. Sometime this also spurns the poorer school to 'show' that they are just as good. In some cases the private schools were quite 'arrogant' as they felt superior and maintained that 'the government schools are learning from us'. The disparity in facilities is perceived as worse in the poorer schools in clusters where private schools have been less willing to share their facilities. In some clusters it was found that government schools were more willing and able to share the space they had with other project schools. In some cases there is a grant issue as the clusters decide how to spend the BC grant and some poorer schools felt they had not received according to their needs.²⁰ The 'one size fits all' does not necessarily work.²¹

Government red tape: Government schools have particular problems that do not seem to be taken into account: With regard to IT there is a lack of IT facilities, often a lack of IT teachers, IT facilities where available are locked and many students (and even teachers) are not allowed to access these freely. There is immense pressure of getting through the curriculum especially for metric examinations and little time to do other things. Government schools do not have a culture of 'extra-curricular' activities and need permission to do anything unusual – including hosting events on school premises. Often this involves a lot of red tape, time and effort. There is also an issue of teacher transfer where the teachers who had been trained (or who had travelled) had left the school for another one (or to get married) and it was felt that the benefits had been lost.

Differences in Curriculum: Many schools mentioned the fact that the wide variations in what was being taught did not provide a common ground to develop coherent, curriculum related projects with each other. However they also felt that in order for the project to be sustainable the projects

²⁰ The partnership (UK-PK cluster) can apply for a grant of up to 12k a year (reduced to 9k in 2011-12), they decide how that money is spent between the schools, based on need. It is not the case that all schools received the same amount of money. In some partnerships the UK have always been keen for PK to have the larger share because their need is greater, within PK clusters then in some cases the private schools have stepped back and more investment made in public schools – e.g. display boards, computers, projectors, cameras.

²¹ This is also important when thinking about the 'type' of school as the project has a bigger impact in less conservative schools, regardless of the facilities.

should increasingly be linked to their curriculum and allow it to be 'widened' in this way. The difference between the UK and the Pakistani government curriculum was also mentioned as a barrier in working together which needed time to be overcome.

Hierarchy: Since teachers are not trained to train their peers and there are hierarchy issues the cascade model does not work well. Trips to UK were mostly made possible for the oldest/ most senior teachers, not necessarily with the greatest effect. Principals will tell their school (at an assembly time) about their experiences, but the sharing of information is random and does not have the required impact everywhere.

Understanding the terminology:

The key words of the project *citizenship* and *global citizenship* are not commonly understood. They are generally very thin concepts and not linked to the state or wider societal responsibilities. *Citizenship* means cleaning up after oneself, personal responsibility, obeying traffic rules and being polite. The understanding of rights and duties is limited to the local sphere – not to the national or state sphere.²² *Global citizenship* means being interconnected with another country or school via the internet/e-mail and skype. In some cases both citizenship and global citizenship have a connection with recycling, the environment and climate change. But issues of rights, duties and political participation do not generally figure in the discussions around these themes, even with the principals and teachers of private schools.

More time: Invariably the schools felt that they had progressed. In many they listed an impressive list of achievements and lessons learnt (which have been discussed above). However in all cases they felt time had been limited and they felt that for the benefits of the project to really take root a lot more time was needed (as well as an increase involvement of schools with many more teachers receiving training and more students taking part). Time was mentioned a number of times also with regard to finishing projects, organising trips etc. Many coordinators felt the timelines were too tight and felt more time would allow for better achievements.

Sustainability beyond end of funding: In schools which felt that the project had finished the project materials had to be taken out of store room again for the research team to see. All schools professed they would continue but it is questionable if they will without external drivers. One principal explained that: 'It is sad that we need an external agency, and a foreign one at that like the BC to bring us together, however without the external driver and support the clusters would never function.' (Principal school L)

²² This is an issue across Pakistan. See Lall, M. (2012b) Why education matters – school 'choice' and differing views on citizenship in Pakistan, *Citizenship Studies*.

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8 Conclusions and Recommendations

The project is being implemented in schools that are starting from a very low baseline due to the recent violence and the high fragmentation across Pakistani society. The objectives are big and a lot of time is required for such aims to be achieved even in more favourable circumstances. As such what has been achieved is commendable but needs to be sustained as a short programme will fall apart if the funding stops. The role of the external funding agency is key – especially if it continues to be accepted as ‘neutral’.

8.1 Main findings

While focusing on evidence of community cohesion, removal of barriers, and social networking we found some **extraordinary findings**, as a result of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS and some **general conclusions** where CONNECTING CLASSROOMS had succeeded and needed to be extended or needed further support.

Significant outcomes on community cohesion, removal of barriers and social networking were achieved despite a lack of a shared, common understanding in aims and objectives and in some cases a lower level of engagement from UK partners than hoped for. The areas that need further development to improve effectiveness in implementation are around the cascade model and communication and choice of school dictates impact of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS.

8.1.1 Extraordinary findings

These examples below were instances of extraordinary CONNECTING CLASSROOMS success forced by externalities or otherwise occurred in isolation and hence have been mentioned separately from the general conclusions (that follow later). The extraordinary findings, which deserve a specific mention, were:

Unforeseen externalities created great cohesion amongst some clusters: During the last monsoon the floods were so bad that a number of participating schools were designated as relief camps for the surrounding population. In one particular case the cluster school children, teachers and parents would bring breakfast to those living in the relief camp school. In another instance when one UK cluster decided to end its engagement with the Abbotabad cluster (upon the killing of Osama Bin Laden in that city), the negative effect of this brought the local schools together to make the most out of the local cluster even without the participation of their UK counterparts.

Removal of gender barriers at a collegiate level: As a part of the requirement to travel to the UK, some female teachers had to leave young children in the care of mothers in law to travel and it is commendable that these teachers or principals were able to travel without their husbands or other male relatives but in the company of male teachers from other schools. It cannot be emphasised enough what kind of a gender barrier this has broken down.²³

²³ Whilst the project structure builds in girls’ and boys’ schools working with each other, and consequently

Impact on the wider community: Despite the cascading nature of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS linkages (principals, coordinators, teachers, students, and finally community) some projects implemented allowed for a more direct connection between the school and its immediate environment. Examples reach from the cloth bags being distributed and shopkeepers asked to provide those not requiring plastic bags with a discount, to cleaning the local park, to visits to the local slum where students would teach locals how to clean their drinking water.

8.1.2 General conclusions

One of the principal aims of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS was to improve community cohesion and help overcome differences at a local level. This went well beyond the global aim of reducing the information and understanding gap which underpins many of the problems between Pakistan and the West/ the UK. It is also a much more ambitious aim for an international programme to want to improve tolerance not only internationally but also at a local level, without however interfering either in the curriculum or in the ways the school operates.

Significant outcomes on community cohesion, removal of barriers and social networking were achieved...

Confidence in students: Students who had taken part in CONNECTING CLASSROOMS activities had a greatly increased sense of confidence, and this was corroborated across the board by interviews with principals, teachers, and parents; and the student's enthusiasm and energy in their delivering public presentations on cross class, cross age research projects. They were also able to work together in groups, across gender and often across class lines as well. Common projects increase common ground and research shows that students tendency to associate with similar others.²⁴ As such the CONNECTING CLASSROOMS projects allowed for common ground to be built between students who might otherwise have not interacted with each other, both within a school and where it was on offer, between schools.

Wider world view in students: Most students (over 2/3rd of those we interacted with) had a very open world view, aware of differences but also very accepting of them. The differences across the wider world were just seen as extensions of the differences they encountered at Pakistan wide level, which probably explains why many did not see the issue of overcoming differences as impossible. They were clearly influenced by the various projects they had undertaken as a part of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS as the issue of climate change, recycling and pollution as communal problems which the whole world had to solve together came up repeatedly.

Teaching methods: The biggest impact across the board was the change in teaching

forces the schools to engage with gender parity, travel of unrelated female teachers with male colleagues is an out of the ordinary situation. This means that the project has brought a different level of tolerance to these teachers' families.

²⁴ See Literature review in the Appendix: Homophily, namely the tendency to associate with similar others (Lubbers 2003)

methods, typically the Child Centric Approach (CCA) in facilitation and was higher than expected as it impacted even those teachers who had not undergone BC training in CCA previously. In all focus groups across all schools teachers spoke unprompted about more child centred methods (CCA) they had started to use in their classrooms. The reasons for this are outlined in Section 5.2 & 7.2.

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS achieved breaking down of local barriers in some cases:

Although few principals explicitly referred to CONNECTING CLASSROOMS as a means for breaking domestic barriers, in fact some local barriers both within the classroom and between schools were broken down. The principal barrier overcome between schools within clusters was that of gender. Girls' schools and female teachers had for the first time the possibility to interact with boys' schools. Class was another barrier which was successfully overcome in a number of clusters as private schools catering to the middle classes engaged with government schools or trust schools who had mainly students from poor and very poor backgrounds.

Improved appreciation of challenges and opportunities faced in local clusters: The cluster model allowed schools for the first time to work with a different type of school, helped remove misconceptions and prejudices through the collaboration (the government schools were less autonomous than their private counterparts though not less able as discussed in 6.1), and that homogeneous schools faced different issues from those with a more heterogeneous population as discussed in Section 5.1 and 5.2. This increased awareness is a first step on the path to community cohesion.

Greater cohesion amongst students in heterogonous schools: In diverse schools with for example large Hindu communities this has had a real impact and now children play and socialise across religious lines (whilst they did not do so before). In more heterogeneous schools the principals admitted that the project had given them a platform to discuss differences. This was particularly the case with regard to religious festivals and many schools now celebrate Christian as well as Hindu festivals (such as Christmas, Easter and Diwali), with all children taking part.

Social Connectivity and networks: The CONNECTING CLASSROOMS platform evolved as a social resource and as such successfully encouraged bonding and bridging ;²⁵ however its uptake was limited by technology (varying degree of connectivity) and hierarchy (relationships evolved slowly, in a top down manner, over a period of time) as discussed in Section 7.5.

Leadership/management mix (or Role Expectation) for an effective implementation model: The principal (and his/her leadership) was central to the success of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS in his or her school, to ensure the cluster dynamics worked well and

²⁵ See literature review in the Appendix – (Woodcock, Narayan) Bonding: social networks among homogeneous groups (family, close friends); Bridging: social networks among heterogeneous groups (professional acquaintances, classmates); Linking: links between people in dissimilar situations, outside of the community (political parties, group membership)

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schools actually benefitted from the links created, however needed support from a school coordinator for effective internal implementation and external engagement.

... despite a lack of a shared, common understanding in aims and objectives and in some cases a lower level of engagement from UK partners than hoped for.

These outcomes were achieved despite a great ambiguity on shared understanding of the purpose of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS across the schools, a lack of understanding of key terminologies, and a lack of enthusiasm from certain partner schools.

(Lack of) Common understanding of key terminologies: The key terminologies of the project *citizenship* and *global citizenship* exist as thin concepts linked to personal responsibility and being in touch. These terms have not extended to their broader meanings, of state or wider societal responsibilities, and were not commonly understood or shared. (17, 33)

(Lack of) Common understanding on purpose of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS: Despite achieving a range of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS initiated desired outcomes; a surprising finding was that the participants had widely different views on the purpose. Many reflected on the global dimension of internationalising teaching and curriculum, some on appreciation of the UK culture to Pakistan, and few that the cluster structure of the project was meant to build a central way for self support or to reduce domestic barriers²⁶ (such as gender, class, and religious differences).

(Lack of) UK partner response: Frequently mentioned was that the response from UK partners in many places was less than they had hoped for. Time difference is partly to blame but in many cases there seems to have been little interest. The excitement from Pakistan was not perceived as matched. Many private schools were more interested in links with the UK and saw this as the main benefit for their school.

The areas that need further development to improve effectiveness in implementation are around the cascade model and communication...

Disseminating learning: The cascade model of sharing learning and experiences from teachers visit to the UK did work effectively due to hierarchy issues and teachers' lack of training in training their peers. (See section 7.6)

Communication of shared objectives and better guidance on implementation of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS: The relationship between the clusters and the BC varied widely and some schools and some clusters clearly needed more support, more explanation and more guidance than others.

and choice of school dictates impact of CONNECTING CLASSROOMS.

The project is rolled out in many different types of schools – it is not necessarily equally suitable

²⁶ Some of the outcomes were met implicitly without being overtly stated as an objective and given the sensitive nature of explicitly stating that the objective at a local level was to remove barriers of class, gender and religious different, it was better that certain objectives remained implicit.

for all and will have a deeper, more sustained effect in some (types of) schools than in others.

Limited impact in homogeneous schools: In homogeneous schools, the minorities are invisible (they keep a low profile and are identifiable) and therefore cohesion across religion is not seen as a problem. In schools with tiny minorities, where many teachers professed they did not know if there were Shi'a, Christian or Hindus in their classes. All simply were assumed to be Sunni Muslim as they took part in Islamiyat.

It is unclear how the schools were chosen. It seems to work best in schools which are already 'active' and connected with other schools (mostly private – but one government boys school was also well interconnected). However in these schools it is harder to identify the impact as this can be due to other activities as well.

8.2 Recommendations

Framework for dissemination of information, induction, and formalisation of peer training in the cascade model: Train the trainer model is required in cascade training and how to model for implement CONNECTING CLASSROOMS was also suggested.

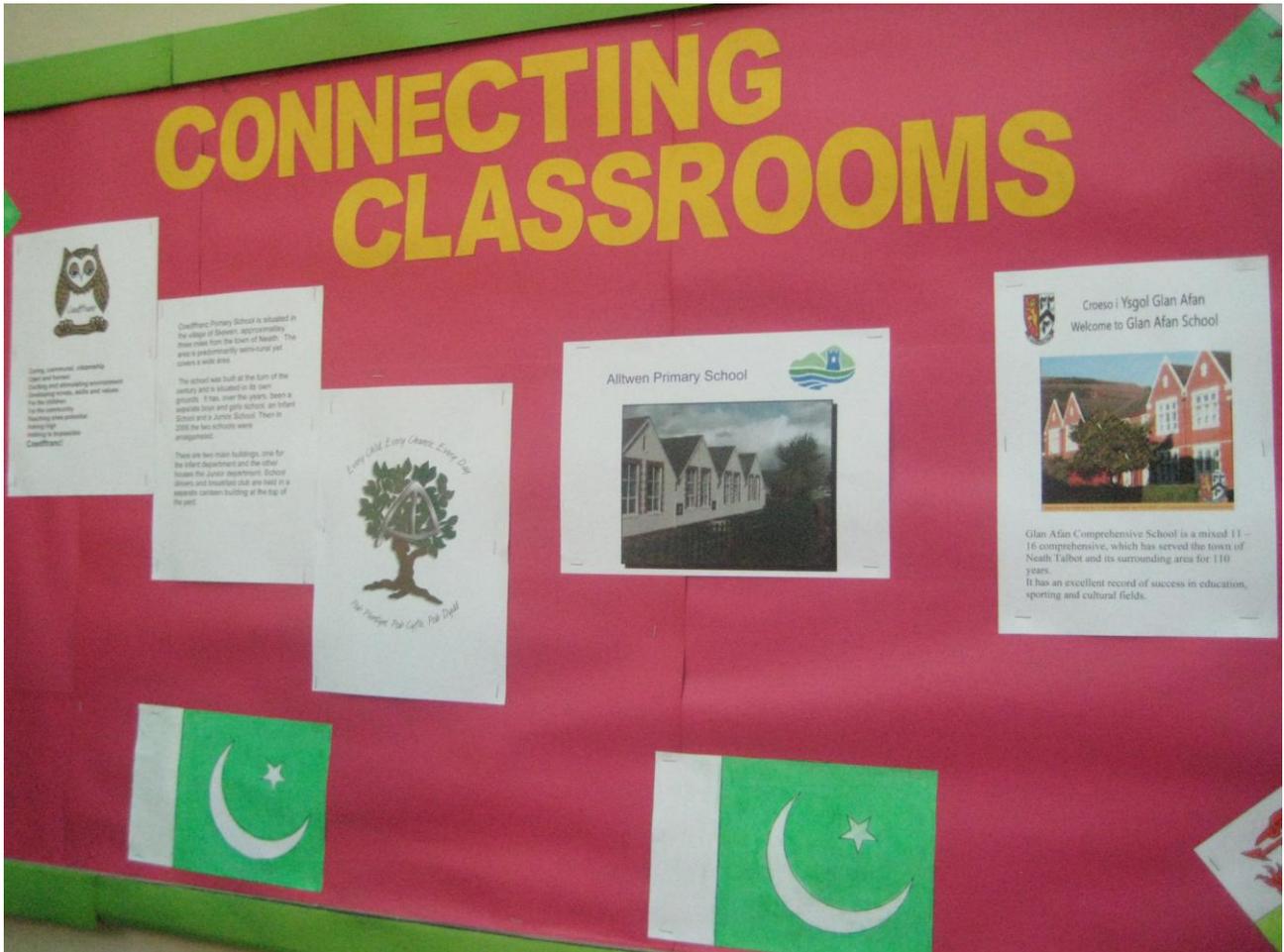
Infrastructure for permeation of social networks: The social network that was started has taken time to permeate, and for sustainable engagement means to accelerate engagement at each peer level should be considered. The social network stage precedes 'community cohesion'. Community cohesion is improved but it takes time and happens first within schools before it happens between schools.

Leadership/management mix (or Role Expectation) for an effective implementation model: The role of cluster coordinator was better suited to a teacher, rather than a principal and each principal, should be supported by a school coordinator, whose role is to create the internal engagement within school, implement the projects, and coordinate outwards with the cluster coordinator.

Choose school with care for CONNECTING CLASSROOMS Impact: Be aware that choosing certain madrassas or a Jamaat e Islami trust school will lead to very little results.

Project works better in schools that are already 'active' and 'out'. Others take longer and need a lead in time. But in these cases impact is less easily visible and attributable.

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Acronyms

BC British Council

CCA Child Centred Approaches to teaching and learning

EFA Education For All

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GPI Gender Parity Index

GoP Government of Pakistan

IT Information Technology

KP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

MDG Millennium Development Goals

NEP New Education Policy

NGO Non Governmental Organisation

NWFP North West Frontier Province

SDPI Sustainable Development Policy Institute

ToR Terms of Reference

UK United Kingdom

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10 Appendix - Literature review

10.1 Definitions and the broader literature relating to social cohesion, community cohesion and education

10.1.1 Definitions

Society: is based on interactions coordinated through anonymous, rule bound, transparent exchanges (Storper 2005: 32).

Social cohesion focuses on inclusion and deals with inequalities and long term poverty (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011). Social Cohesion refers to a relatively harmonious society characterized by low levels of crime and high levels of civic co-operation and trust (Green et al. 2006:4); the different constituency elements however can be combined in different configurations (ibid:179). For most people, in most societies, social cohesion is probably a desirable state, so long as it is based on equality, or at least relative equality, of access to goods, opportunities and power (ibid:10). Jenson (1998:1 in Green 2006) argues that social cohesion does not necessarily involve shared values (bonding) but rather relies on the legitimacy of democratic institutions, effective institutional mechanisms and active civic participation. Maxwell (1996:3 in Green 2006) on the other hand argues that social cohesion is built on shared values and community interpretation, reducing disparities among members.

Community: forms of collective life in which people are tied together through interpersonal contact, informal relationships and particularistic affinities (Storper 2005:31).

Community cohesion deals with intracommunity and intercommunity tensions (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011). Refers to a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging, in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued, where similar life opportunities are available to all and strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider context (Johnson 2006). Indicators that reflect Community Cohesion include amongst others associational membership, tolerance and political engagement (Green et al. 2006: 52).

10.1.2 Community cohesion, education and social networks

The role of community cohesion has emerged in the UK predominantly after the 2001 disturbances in Oldham and Burnely, led by fractions within local communities. Following these episodes, the UK Government implemented new policies for the building of 'cohesive communities'. The introduction of citizenship education in the school curricula lies within this broader framework. Many reports submitted during the last decade (2001-2010) have defined schools and education as instruments to build trust in students through dialogue and active engagement with the larger community.

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) define social networks as “norms and networks that allow people to act collectively” and provide three features of the interpersonal dynamics that characterize these networks:

Bonding: social networks among homogeneous groups (family, close friends)

Bridging: social networks among heterogeneous groups (professional acquaintances, classmates)

Linking: links between people in dissimilar situations, outside of the community (political parties, group membership)

While bonding capital is more inward looking and tends to build cohesion among members of homogenous communities, bridging is more inclusive and enables the linkages among members of different social divides.

For Robert Putnam (1993) social capital represents a shared set of networks, norms and trust. He adopted social capital to explain economic and institutional development in different countries, arguing that levels of social capital determine civic life and the level of democratic trust. Putnam differentiates between two forms of capital, physical and social and argues that 'Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue.” The difference is that “social capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital' (Putnam 2000: 19).

In this perspective social capital represents the formal and informal ties that link together people and enables the building of trust, cooperative behaviour and civic engagement. Societies rich in social capital are more harmonious and citizens more engaged with their civic responsibilities. However, in his work Putnam does not effectively discuss the implication of different forms of social capital (bonding/bridging/linking) leaving an open debate on the external validity of his assumptions.

Andy Green (2003) argues that social cohesion differs from community cohesion; while the latter one is generally measured with social capital, the former one requires other indicators.

There has been a substantial shift from the macro societal perspective on social cohesion to the micro individual and community level (Green et al. 2006:24). Theories of social integration have been superseded by social capital discourses that focus on community renewal rather than social solidarity (ibid). Putnam argues that social capital is good for social integration and it represents the levels of voluntary participation and civic engagement. However, these two features are facilitated among groups with higher levels of bonding capital rather than bridging, which in turn relates to homogenous communities rather than larger social groups. This implies that Putnam's focus on social capital as a requirement for interpersonal integration should be applied at community level rather than to societies (Storper 2005).

Globalisation and new technologies enforce interconnectedness in the world and generate centrifugal forces that dislocate traditional bonds and create fragmented societies (Green et al 2006:1). The assumption common among social capital theorists that countries with communities rich in social capital will also usually be more cohesive as societies is largely unexplored in the literature and highly debatable, because, in reality, this all depends on the norms and values of particular constituent communities and whether the different communities are at war or at peace with one another (Green 2001: 249).

Putnam (1995) argues that education has a very powerful impact on social and political participation (Putnam 1995:667). More educated individuals tend to join voluntary associations, show greater interest in politics and take part in political activities. They are more likely to express trust in others and in institutions. Social capital has an impact on political participation, but the dynamics and outcomes of this relationship need to be questioned. Social capital refers to our relation to one another, while political participation refers to our participation with political institution (Putnam 1995:665). Civic engagement on the other hand is the engagement of people within their own community (ibid). Education has a strong impact on building trust and associational membership, which in turn are indicators of social capital. Indeed, education seems to be strongly and positively correlated with civic engagement (ibid:667). Research shows that education has larger impact on civic engagement in the last two years of college; the impact is ten times higher on students aged 14 to 18 than on younger pupils. The same pattern is independent of gender, race and generation (Putnam 1995).

Puzzle: why is social capital level in the US declining while education is rising? Education is rising but civic engagement is declining. Putnam argues that this paradox is a generation related phenomena. After the '50s the increase of new communication technologies has generated new distances among community members which in turn cause reduced levels of social capital and civic engagement.

Andy Green (2006) addresses the social capital paradox discussed by Putnam (1995) sustaining that there may not be any link at all between associational membership and social trust. While Putnam refers to associational membership as key to social capital, there might not be any link between joining at community level and trusting at societal level (Green et al. 2006:30). Indeed, the building and type of social trust depends on the type of organisations and its objectives.

There is a significant link between levels of education and social capital (community cohesion) such as trust within a community but this is not reflected in aggregate data at national level, where education levels are not reflected in increases in tolerance (Green 2003). It is not the level of education that matters for social cohesion (trust, tolerance, political engagement and civil liberties) but rather how education and skills are distributed and the values²⁷ that children and adults learn in education (Green 2006: 4). It does not automatically follow that because education raises levels of community participation among individuals, it will also increase cohesion. Nor does it follow

²⁷ This is also relevant when thinking about the *type* of school

that the mechanisms through which learning generates community participation and social capital are the same as those by which it may help to promote societal cohesion (Green et al 2006).

10.2 School networks, community cohesion and citizenship education

The OECD defines “network” as the relation between different schools with a focus on the idea of community and common principles of connection between institutions (Chapman 2003). School networks are different from mere clusters (geographical proximity) or groups (accidental agglomeration) in that networks are established with the aim to achieve common goals and interests. (Chapman 2003:42). Communication can only take place in contexts with shared norms and conventions (Ackerman 1980 in Chapman 2003:43) and schools can be a perfect tool in this sense in that they are delineated as communities for the evolution of streams of thought and knowledge (ibid:43).

Networking refers to the systematic use of external and international communication, interaction and communication between people and organizations to improve performance (Van Aalst 2003). In education, networking may help to interpret codified information and enable to share these information more effectively (ibid). School networking therefore tends to be widely investigated as a means to improve education outcomes through shared knowledge.

McMeekin’s research (2003) aims to investigate the impact of school networks on education performance from the perspective of institutional Economics. His argument draws in particular on the role of institutions inside school organizations in reducing agency problems and facilitating transactions between actors in school communities. Based on results from school networks in Latin America and in the US he finds that: (1) the institutional climate in schools (formal rules, informal rules, mechanisms for enforcing both kinds of rules, clear objectives and an atmosphere of cooperation and trust) has a strong influence on school performance; (2) “networks” of schools such as the Accelerated Schools Project in the U.S. and the Fe y Alegría schools in Latin America help improve school performance in a variety of ways, and have been successful in providing good education to disadvantaged children; (3) that one of the reasons some networks are successful is that they promote the creation of sound institutional environments in member schools (ibid).

Feuerstein (2002) discusses the impact of school board voting for local school governance and it is therefore concerned with the teaching staff rather than with the student community. Interestingly though, he argues that a decreased level of trust in school boards is reflective of an adversarial view of democracy. In his article, Feuerstein suggests that deliberative democratic practices are alternatives to adversarial practices that rely too heavily on elections to create legitimacy. It relies on the continuous re-discussion with the voters of the positions promoted by the political representatives (Gutmann & Thompson 1996). This would happen through regular meetings and public discussion. Deliberative democracy practices ask citizens to do more than win elections and more to respect constitutional rights.

Lubbers (2003) explains that students networking is led by Homophily, namely the tendency to associate with similar others (Lubbers 2003:311). Indeed, similar others provide rewards for one owns actions and sharing similar values enables easier communication. McPherson et al. (2001) argue that homophily organizes social networks linking people with similar preferences; however,

ties may also emerge as a consequence of shared social environment, e.g. being grouped together. The composition of a class room therefore constitutes the constraints and baseline within which students are allowed to take their sociometric choice. I.e. ethnic heterogeneous classes provide students with wider opportunities to choose from in larger groups (Lubbers 311-312).

Kilcher and Jopling (2006) investigate how networks are formed and maintained based on the implementation of the Networked Learning Communities programme established in 2002 by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England. The programme was committed to four principles (NCSL, 2002; Jackson & Temperley, 2006): moral purpose (a commitment to the success of all children), shared leadership (e.g. co-leadership and distributed leadership), enquiry-based practice (evidence and data-driven learning), use of a model of learning (systematic engagement with the three fields of knowledge). The study highlighted that in order to be successful, three characteristics need to be managed within a school network:

- Establish network purposes, in order to implement motivation among group members
- Manage people in networks so that their roles are identified within the network
- Build network relationships in order to translate collaborative learning into expansive learning

The National College for School Leadership has investigated the role of school networks extensively. John West-Burnham and George Otero (2004) argue that social poverty plays a central role in educational outcomes and deprived communities tend to have lower outcomes. Attempts of schools to tackle the poverty issue internally, namely within the school environment, have been successful in building bonding networks among members of the same group. However, this also risks to undermine the capacity of students to engage in external networking (bridging) which is in fact the core of social capital (West-Burnham and Otero 2004:3). In order to reduce social poverty the focus should therefore shift from Institutional integrity (inner networking) to the building of Social Capital. Schools should be linked to the wider community through strategies that implement dialogue and build relational trust. The latter one in particular can be measured with: Respect, Competence, Personal regard and Integrity (Bryk and Schneider 2002 in West-Burnham and Otero 2004: 5). Without trust no bridging relationship can be establishment and the achievement of common goals for the community will be hindered.

Cordingley, Bell and Jopling (2005) have analysed the impact of school networks on pupils as well as on teachers. The study is still questioning the impact of school networks on school achievement, but takes a broader view to understand the dynamics at play and also discusses the role of social capital embedded in these networks. Among key findings (ibid:6):

- Networks can be effective if they have a specific goal and this is clearly specified
- More effective networks targeted socially excluded students and minorities and linked them to broader community
- The size of the networks did not seem important; what mattered was the quality of the collaboration between schools.

With regard to the impact of the networks on the schools, nine studies reported evidence of increased community liaison, changes in school and classroom organization and management (ibid:13).

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