32 Pakistan: TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar (Educational TV at Home)

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Type of intervention: governmental (federal Ministry of Education TeleSchool initiative, Punjab provincial government's Taleem Ghar initiative)

Website: [TeleSchool](#) | [Taleem Ghar](#)

General description

Pakistan put in place two educational television (TV) programming initiatives as remote learning tools during the COVID-19 school closures. Pakistan's [Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training](#) (MoFEPT) launched an educational TV initiative called TeleSchool and, at a regional level, the Punjab province's [School Education Department](#) (SED) launched its own local initiative called Taleem Ghar that is geared towards supporting students in Punjab.

In April 2020, TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar began broadcasting their educational programmes on TV across Pakistan and the province of Punjab to support remote learning. Both of the TV programmes' lessons are also available on demand, either on their respective websites or hosted on the YouTube channels or mobile applications of the broadcasting TV channels.

Both initiatives stand out because the federal and provincial (state) governments deployed educational TV programming as a remote learning tool within a few weeks of school closures on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both initiatives leveraged existing educational stakeholders as well as resources that were repurposed to ensure that student learning continued during the school closures. The MoFEPT worked closely with private education partners who offered their existing educational content for free for the

emergency TV programming. While some pre-existing resources could be mobilised, the province of Punjab did not have an existing fully functioning educational television programming prior to the health crisis. Punjab's SED leveraged educational content previously created by the provincial government for teacher training and adapted this for educational TV programming for students.

TeleSchool has broadcast programming for Grades 1-12, while Taleem Ghar has programming for Grades 1-10. TeleSchool started with maths, English, Urdu and science lessons while Taleem Ghar began with science-based subjects, maths and general knowledge and is working on adding Urdu and English in the near future. Both initiatives are working on expanding programming beyond these subjects as well as extending it beyond the COVID-19 period.

Television reach stands at roughly 95% of the population across Pakistan and roughly 90% across the province of Punjab, which is much higher than the reach of any other mass media in the country, making TV the viable option for remote learning. Both TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar programming aligns to the national and provincial curriculum, easing equitable continued remote learning for millions of children in Pakistan during the school lockdown.

Main problems addressed

In March 2020, school closures due to the pandemic left almost 50 million children in Pakistan and 12 million children in the province of Punjab out of school. The MoFEPT's and the provincial SED's main challenge was to support learning for these children. Few of them have access to the Internet or digital devices to access online learning. Internet access in Pakistan stands at 36%; smartphone ownership is around 32%, while computer/laptop ownership is around 27%. Given the reach of TV across Pakistan and Punjab, television education was chosen as one of the appropriate ways to ensure educational continuity for most students.

Mobilising and developing resources

The MoFEPT and the provincial SED leveraged multiple stakeholders in the ecosystem to ensure a swift response to support widely accessible remote learning for students across the country. The MoFEPT worked closely with private education partners who offered existing educational content for free to be used as part of the emergency TV programming. Punjab's SED leveraged educational content previously created by the provincial government for teacher training and adapted it for educational TV lessons for students. The MoFEPT leveraged TV production equipment and expertise from its tertiary education institution, the Allama Iqbal Open Learning University, while Punjab's SED leveraged the same from its IT board, the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB).

For example, since Punjab's SED leveraged its own existing video content initially intended for teachers, it created eight new animated characters (Miss Pi, Miss Curie, Mr. Isaac Newton, Miss DNA, Mr. Khwarizmi, Miss Mercury) in order to adapt the content to students. Videographers, content developers and animators from existing government projects were redirected to develop TV lessons for broadcasting. The Taleem Ghar team repurposed an existing mobile app for Punjab school information systems by adding its educational TV programming to the app as a short-term measure while also developing a separate app.

Fostering effective use and learning

TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar programming has been deployed to help ensure continued development of knowledge and skills as outlined by the national and provincial curricula during the school closures. The

content has been curated and adapted for students of each grade level to make it easily accessible, usable and engaging. For example, to make content more engaging for students, the Taleem Ghar team created eight new animated teacher characters. These animated characters pause during the lessons to ask questions, prompting the students to respond at home, and recreate some level of the teaching interactivity.

Both initiatives leveraged government schoolteachers to develop lessons for TV broadcasting. Both also worked with television operators across the country/province to ensure that TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar channels were broadcast across as many possible TV networks in the country and province, respectively. Government schoolteachers, subject experts and timetabling specialists worked on developing a sequencing of lessons aligned to the national or provincial curriculum and student learning objectives. Existing content was curated and aligned to this sequencing. New lesson plans and TV scripts were developed and formed the basis of the TV broadcast lessons.

Both initiatives aimed to set up websites dedicated to their education TV efforts to ensure that all related resources can be easily accessed by students, parents/caregivers and educators in one place. The Taleem Ghar website hosts its TV broadcast schedules, rebroadcast schedules, links to lessons and feedback forms while the TeleSchool website will be launched in the near future. Currently, the MoFEPT website hosts the TV schedules.

TV broadcast scheduling (e.g. Taleem Ghar schedules, TeleSchool schedules) and communication campaigns were developed by both initiatives to spread awareness regarding programming to students, parents/caregivers and teachers. This involved advertising via print media and television, and leveraging ministers, including the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the Chief Minister of Punjab, to increase awareness on social media. The Taleem Ghar and TeleSchool team made short 30-second teaser videos, and circulated them via WhatsApp and other social media to build excitement and awareness (e.g. TeleSchool). Punjab also made announcements in local mosques to ensure the communication reaches those without access to other media.

Making content available on demand increases and eases access for students, caregivers and educators to these resources. Taleem Ghar hosts its TV lessons as on-demand content on its YouTube channels as well as its mobile app while TeleSchool currently hosts it on the TV provider mobile apps and links it to its upcoming website. The Taleem Ghar mobile app also allows access to related online learning material and practice test questions. Teachers, schools and the administration can use the app to send notifications to parents as well.

Tailored support and communication were also provided to ensure that beneficiaries were able to smoothly access education TV at home and continue student learning. For example, the TeleSchool team set up a telephone helpline to field questions and queries well before the launch. Before and at the start of the TeleSchool launch, many users called the helpline to iron out logistical and technical issues in order to smoothly access TeleSchool programming. They also set up a two-way SMS service where beneficiaries could enrol in SMS-based notifications about TeleSchool scheduling and other related notifications and support.

Implementation challenges

The key challenges faced by the TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar teams are outlined below.

- ***Co-ordinating across multiple stakeholders, including within the government.*** Co-ordination across multiple government agencies supporting different aspects of the educational TV programming was challenging. This included the IT board supporting the technological related components of programming (e.g. National Information Technology Board of Pakistan/PITB), the institutions supporting TV production (e.g. Allama Iqbal Open Learning University/PITB), teams supporting the online platforms (e.g. Digital Pakistan initiative/PITB), the media regulation authority

working with TV networks (e.g. Pakistan Television), telecommunication authorities supporting mobile-based communication and zero-rating (e.g. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority), ministers raising awareness through communication, the Planning Commission and the National Disaster Committee. The government also needed to co-ordinate with private educational content providers like TV operators, telecom companies and communication agencies, among others.

- *Student engagement and learning.* Television is mostly a one-way mode of communication. Hence, using TV programmes to replicate teaching, which inherently involves two-way interaction, has been challenging.

- *Formative assessment of learning.* Assessing the programmes' impact in terms of student learning is tricky given this mode of education delivery. The TeleSchool team aims to use text messaging to assess student learning and engagement in the short term. The Taleem Ghar team aims to conduct student assessments once schools reopen.

- *Technical expertise.* Educational TV had not been used at this scale in Punjab or across Pakistan to provide learning until COVID-19. Given that the teams were operating under time constraints in order to deploy educational TV quickly as soon as schools were required to close, both the TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar teams leveraged existing TV production and broadcasting expertise within the public domain. The MoFEPT leveraged the expertise of its higher education institution, Allama Iqbal Open Learning University, while Punjab's SED leveraged its PITB.

- *Reach of programming.* To deploy TV programming quickly to benefit students, TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar followed a phased approach in launching their TV programming. Initially, it was launched for two weeks for specific subjects and grades (e.g. Punjab launched it for Grades 1-8 initially). After the initial launch, both released more content in subsequent two-week phases while continuing to internally develop further programming to be launched subsequently.

Monitoring success

Measures have been put in place to monitor the success of the TeleSchool and the Taleem Ghar initiatives thus far over the past few months of its deployment.

The MoFEPT requested Gallup Pakistan to conduct a "Gallup Pakistan Rapid Assessment" to measure the short-term impact of TeleSchool in Pakistan. In May 2020, adults in 1 200 households from over 100 urban and rural districts of Pakistan were surveyed via telephone. They had children in the household aged 5-15. The survey was conducted to understand four metrics: awareness, viewership, perceived quality and loyalty towards TeleSchool programming.

It was found that nearly 32 million adults, that is, 2 in every 5 Pakistanis, were aware of TeleSchool. TV was the most popular source through which 67% of Pakistanis learnt about TeleSchool. Nearly one in three Pakistanis said they have accessed TeleSchool lessons, with the highest proportion of respondents from the province of Punjab with an estimated 7-8 million Pakistani children having accessed it in its first two months of broadcasting and an estimated weekly viewership of 6 million children. Of those surveyed, 77% are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the educational content of TeleSchool, with rural respondents more satisfied than urban respondents. Two-thirds of those surveyed said they would recommend TeleSchool to other parents during the school closure period.

The Taleem Ghar team has been tracking website usage, mobile application downloads and the number of cable TV networks that broadcast the programming in Punjab and has set up an online dashboard to monitor these. In the first month, the Taleem Ghar mobile app was downloaded 72 000 times and the TV content was being broadcast across more than 95% of cable TV operators across Punjab (roughly 850 out of 890 cable TV operators). The Taleem Ghar website has been accessed more than 180 000 times since its launch.

Formative assessment of students learning from educational TV programming is no easy feat. The TeleSchool team has set up a two-way SMS-based service to communicate with students regarding programming. It aims to send multiple-choice questions to students to assess learning and engagement. The Taleem Ghar team aims to conduct student assessments once schools reopen to assess the programming's impact. Such data will also be used as feedback to further improve programming.

Adaptability to new contexts

Both TeleSchool and Taleem Ghar managed to ideate as well as to deploy educational television programming across the country/province within a matter of a few weeks of school closures. Both the MoFEPT and the SED leveraged stakeholders within the ecosystem as well as existing resources to ensure a swift response to remote learning. This led to minimal needs of additional financial resources in the short term. Hence, this model is easily scalable and replicable by national as well as state level education ministries/departments looking to rapidly deploy a remote learning strategy.

This is particularly adaptable for countries with limited resources to reallocate towards a TV educational initiative. This is ideal for countries where household TV reach is much greater than access to the Internet and digital devices. This can also be used by higher income countries to support other forms of learning, such as online learning.

Both the TeleSchool and the Taleem Ghar teams aim to extend this programming beyond the short term to provide a form of distance learning, to support out-of-school children as well as a standard operating procedure for education during emergencies. Educational TV lessons are already being used across the world to "support an inadequate supply of secondary education due to a shortage of qualified teachers willing to work in rural/marginalised areas, especially in developing countries" (Banerjee et al., 2013[1]; Calderoni, 1998[2]) as well as in areas with teacher absenteeism (Navarro-Sola, 2019[3]; Zacharia, 2020[4]). Countries can support, train and incentivise teachers to use these educational TV programmes to support classroom teaching as well.

Box 32.1. Key points to keep in mind for a successful adaptation

1. This model of educational TV programming can be easily scaled and replicated across a country or a state.

2. This model is useful for remote or distance learning during emergencies when household TV reach is higher than Internet access and the digital device ownership or TV broadcasting reaches traditionally hard-to-reach children.

3. Leveraging stakeholders within the ecosystem as well as existing resources is important to ensure that this programming can be deployed quickly. This should involve working with teachers, media regulation authority/TV operators, telecom companies, etc. It is particularly critical to leverage existing video content for developing TV lessons instead of developing this from scratch.

4. A phased roll-out approach is important to ensure that programming is deployed quickly in case countries are still in the process of developing educational TV content. This means releasing some content for some grades in the beginning while continuing to develop more content to be released subsequently. More grades and subjects can be progressively added to increase student outreach.

5. Continuous communication regarding educational TV programming is critical to its success. This must begin before launching the programming and continue throughout to ensure students, parents/caregivers and educators are up to date regarding scheduling and other related resources.

6. It is important to have all related resources and updates in one place (e.g. a website) to ensure that students, parents/caregivers and educators have easy access to all required resources. This allows for a higher engagement rate.

7. Focus on student engagement and learning to overcome the challenge of TV as a one-way mode of communication. For example, this can be done through teachers posing questions during lessons and students responding, leveraging text messaging for formative assessments.

8. Work with telecom companies to zero rate related educational online platforms to ensure that access to data does not limit learning.
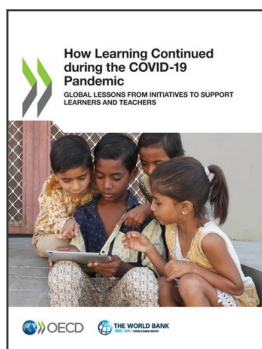
Source: (Zacharia, 2020[4])

Acknowledgements

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