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AKU IED NEWSLETTER

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From the Dean's Desk

Professor and Dean Farid Panjwani

Reflecting on a Legacy of Purpose and Service

In the following pages, you will read about the work of the AKU-IED over the last few months. Here I wish to acknowledge the efforts of my team and beyond that has made this work possible. It reflects the contribution of every member of the staff, faculty and student body. Some gave ideas for our work, others executed them through events and projects, and still others recorded and spread them. The landscape expands to include our school partners, co-researchers and teachers, donors and university leadership and colleagues from other units.

What you will read and see on your screen is thus the result of thousands of hours of dedication, generosity, intelligence and creativity. To each and every one, I would like to say thank you.

Each step forward is made possible through the steadfast partnership of our University leadership, donors, collaborators, alumni, partner schools, and government officials. This publication itself stands as a testament to the exemplary collaboration of our faculty, students, and staff.

We value your partnership in this ongoing journey and warmly welcome your reflections as we look ahead.

Highlights

AKU-IED's Conference Declaration: 'Child-rearing must evolve from a private family duty into a collective societal responsibility'

The 13th International Conference, 'Raising Children in Our Times,' organised in Karachi, Chitral, and Gilgit-Baltistan, transformed a critical global conversation into a powerful, unified national call to action. The central theme that emerged was that child-rearing must evolve from a private family duty into a collective societal responsibility.

In Karachi, Chief Guest Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Sindh's Minister for Education, framed child-rearing as the "fundamental challenge of our era." Dr. Farid Panjwani, Dean of IED, noted that our socioeconomic structures often leave parents without much support in doing what is probably the most important task of humanity – raising children. He proposed that raising flourishing children should be seen as a collective responsibility of families, neighborhoods, workplaces and governments. He observed that it is far easier to raise caring and intelligent children than repairing damaged adults.

This call for community-driven action was powerfully answered throughout the conference in all three venues. In Chitral, discussions highlighted collaborative early education programmes and the developmental value of traditional outdoor play. A key focus was supporting parents navigating a world vastly different from their own childhoods, using methods from screening for developmental delays to storytelling for empathy and community-based solutions for digital balance.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, the conference also celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the Professional Development Centre, North (PDCN). Dr. Moladad Shafa highlighted its monumental impact, having "strengthened over 21,000 educators and reached over 120,000 learners." Keynote speaker Dr. Nishat Riaz of Malala Fund Pakistan asserted that sidelining the majority in education "cripples a nation's development," a sentiment echoed by local leaders.

The multi-city conference wove diverse perspectives into a single, holistic vision. It championed inclusion, reimaged essential skills for adaptive learning, and framed a child's journey as a continuous path linking well-being, cognitive development, and the fundamental right to safety and dignity. [Conference highlights!](#)





Inaugural Qalam Conference Series - A Commitment to Intellectual Rigor

The Qalam Conference Series is a quarterly forum designed to promote dialogic rationality among thought leaders, scholars, and students. Its core mission is to reclaim and examine the transformative intellectual legacies of globally renowned Pakistani-origin scholars in the social sciences whose work has been overlooked locally.

The series aims to fuse critical thought with hope, fostering a culture of inquisitiveness and informed critical thinking.

The inaugural conference, was dedicated to the life and work of Professor Eqbal Ahmed. Eqbal Ahmad was a Pakistani political scientist and anti-war activist known for his incisive analyses of imperialism and resistance movements, from the Algerian Revolution to the Vietnam War.

The conference titled, "Revisiting Eqbal Ahmed in Contemporary Times," featured presentations by Prof. Pervez Hoodbhoy, Prof. Farid Panjwani, Prof. Jaffer Ahmed, Prof. Abdul Wahab Soori, Dr. Tahira S. Khan, Dr. Ammar Ali Jan, and Dr. Asghar Dashti highlighted salient aspects and the contemporary relevance of Eqbal Ahmad's thought. Panel discussions moderated by Professor Panjwani and Dr. Nazim Aman facilitated critical engagement with Ahmed's work and its implications for educational practice.

The series, generously sponsored by Dr. Tahira S. Khan of Columbia University, will continue quarterly in 2026, each session dedicated to celebrating the neglected legacy of a distinguished Pakistani scholar. [Qalam conference highlights](#)



The Historic Journey of Sindh's First Teaching License - A Triumph for Education

In July 2025, 646 in-service and pre-service teachers were awarded Pakistan's first-ever Teaching License in a resplendent ceremony conducted at the Sindh Chief Minister's House in Karachi.

When the first licenses were finally awarded, it was more than a ceremony for AKU-IED; it was the culmination of years of perseverance.

The quest to elevate teaching standards in Sindh began in 2022, when AKU-IED's visionary White Paper on Teaching License, ignited a movement for change. Through relentless collaboration between STEDA, AKU-IED, Durbeen and Ziauddin University, the Sindh Teaching License policy came into being in 2023, a visionary framework designed to honour excellence in teaching.

The road to implementation was rigorous, testing the dedication of educators across the province. Out of 4,000 aspiring candidates, only 646 met the stringent standards, proving their commitment to shaping the future.

This historic milestone marks the beginning of a new era for education in Sindh, where teachers stand as architects of progress, one classroom at a time.



“Receiving my Teaching License is a significant milestone validating my dedication and identity as an educator. As part of the first licensed teachers cohort in Sindh, this honor brings recognition, dignity, and credibility to my journey. The license represents my commitment to serve with skill and purpose, ensuring quality education that impacts every student.”

Ayesha Chagani



Pakistan's First Neurodiversity Certification PDCK

PDCK, in collaboration with the Institute of Behavioral Psychology, launched a 24-week Certificate in Foundations of Neurodiversity for Pre-Primary and Lower-Primary Education. The program, enrolling 37 participants from 240+ applicants, equips educators, caregivers, and parents to support neurodivergent learners through inclusive, trauma-informed practices, covering brain development, autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and inclusive pedagogies.



Inauguration of فُنْكَاری - A functional art space

The AKU-IED launched Funkari, AKU's first functional art space, featuring exhibitions and workshops to cultivate campus artistic culture. Art in education unlocks creativity and critical thinking, essential for student development. President Dr. Sulaiman Shahabuddin hailed it as a new chapter to promote arts as a holistic part of Pakistan's education system. [Funkari inauguration](#)

Research and Development

Researchers and policy makers convene for Equitable Education in Sindh

AKU-IED hosted a DARE-RC policy roundtable, funded by the UK FCDO, bringing together researchers, educationists, and policymakers to integrate field-based research into Sindh's education reforms. Discussions focused on equitable access, climate resilience, and governance, aiming to shape the province's future education sector plan through actionable, data-driven insights. DARE-RC is a national education research programme generating rigorous, actionable research to transform education in Pakistan.



Phase II of the Education Fellows Project

The Head of PDCN, Dr. Mola Dad visited EF schools across four districts of Baltistan. The visits aimed to assess Education Fellows' performance, review institutional support, provide feedback, and strengthen collaboration between Fellows, school leadership, and PDTs. A total of 57 Education Fellow positions were advertised this month, attracting over 4,000 applications. The shortlisting, testing, and interview process is currently in progress. GB EFs Project team completed hiring for 57 vacant EF positions, conducting tests for over 170 applicants in Gilgit and Skardu. All positions were filled except three.

The SLAT post-tests were conducted in 56 EFs schools across six districts, involving around 1,800 Grade 5 and 8 students.



A Decade of Dedication to Chitral's Youngest Learners (IREAD)

Since 2010, the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), in partnership with IREAD, has been at the forefront of expanding early childhood education in the Chitral district. What began with the establishment of 11 ECD centers, now successfully managed by the Aga Khan Education Services Pakistan (AKESP), has grown into a robust, community-led movement. Between 2021 and 2023, the initiative launched an additional 43 centers, demonstrating a powerful shift toward local ownership and sustainable development.

Building on this momentum, the upcoming Phase III (2025-2027) will focus on strengthening the quality and sustainability of existing centers while expanding access to 12 new locations. To support this growth, teaching and learning materials have recently been distributed to all schools involved in Phase I, II, and the incoming Phase III.

Central to the project's philosophy is the engagement of families. On October 24, a parent sensitization session was held at the ECD Denin Gologh center. Led by Ms. Salma Ali, the session welcomed 30 mothers for a deep dive into the critical importance of early childhood development. The event highlighted the project's holistic approach, and the mothers expressed strong appreciation for the initiative, requesting continued sessions to support their children's learning journeys at home.



Kazim Bacchus Research Seminar

The Kazim Bacchus Research Seminar hosted two distinct sessions. PhD Scholar from the University of Cambridge, Usama Javed Mirza, explored the decolonization of science education by proposing Islamic Scientific Critical-Consciousness as a framework to connect Islamic scientific heritage with modern pedagogy and address biases in existing materials. The other session featured Dr. Jeff Tan, who presented research on utilizing traditional materials, such as clay bricks and lime mortar, to reduce CO₂ emissions and enhance thermal performance at a Malaysian UNESCO site, highlighting their lower embodied carbon and superior capacity for thermal regulation compared to modern alternatives in support of healthier, energy-efficient indoor environments.

Fostering Dialogue at the Intersection of Science, Faith, and Pedagogy

This initiative was organised by AKU IED and The Initiative on Islam and Medicine, which was funded by John Templeton Foundation. It was a crucial dialogue focusing on the essential role of Islamic ethics in navigating contemporary biomedical challenges.

At the intersection of rapid biomedical advancement and deep-seated human values, questions are no longer purely scientific—they are ethical, cultural, and spiritual. To address this, the AKU-IED and the Initiative on Islam & Medicine convened a symposium titled *Biomedicine, Religion, and Education*.

The event united scientists, healthcare professionals, theologians, ethicists, and educators to explore the critical overlap between scientific innovation, moral reasoning, and pedagogy. As fields like genetic engineering and AI reshape healthcare, they introduce profound dilemmas tied to religious and cultural understandings of life and dignity. This dialogue is especially vital in contexts like Pakistan, where Islam deeply informs public life and where inclusive educational reform is essential.

By bridging biomedicine, Islamic theology, philosophy, and curriculum development, the symposium moved beyond siloed expertise. Participants collaboratively explored how to align cutting-edge science with religious ethics, ensuring these critical conversations are embedded in education for future generations.

Symposium highlights



Professional Development

Strengthening Science Education in Remote Chitral

AKFP, in partnership with Professional Development Center, Chitral delivered a four-week course on Teaching Science in Multigrade Situations for 104 teachers from Gharam Chashma, Bamborat, and Ayun valleys. The training equipped teachers with practical strategies, lesson planning tools, and classroom management techniques to improve science education in resource-constrained, multigrade settings.

Early Childhood Development Trainings in Skardu

AKU-IED and F4C, in collaboration with GB and Chitral's Health and Education Departments and AKRSP, conducted a four-day training (June 25–28) in Skardu. The program strengthened the skills of 38 lead ECD facilitators from nine districts, advancing efforts to institutionalize quality ECD services in the region.

Teachers' Education on Active Learning & STEM

PDCK partnered with Civilizations Public School to deliver a three-day training for 90+ educators (KG–Grade 11). Led by Dr. Tasneem Anwar and Kiran Qasim Ali, the sessions focused on active learning strategies, STEM awareness, and practical classroom tools.

Empowering Educators: Enhancing Assessment for Learning Practices

A three-day, 15+ hour professional development module was conducted by Ms. Kiran Qasim Ali for the faculty at NJV School, aimed at strengthening teachers' understanding and application of Assessment for Learning (AfL). The initiative sought to reframe assessment from being merely a measurement tool to becoming an active driver of student growth, blending conceptual insights with hands-on practice.

Effective Classroom Management Professional Development Workshop

PDC-K, conducted a 3-day workshop, for Human Development Foundation (HDF) educators at their Karachi campus, was conducted by our faculty members Dr Rabia Nauman & Ms. Kiran Qasim Ali. The training prepared participants as master trainers, focusing on classroom management, differentiated instruction, reading enhancement, and activity-based learning to improve teaching practices and student outcomes. [Learn more about our professional development centers](#)



Partnerships and Visits

Exploring potential avenues for collaboration with Peabody College and Vanderbilt University

Leadership from Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, visited AKU to meet with faculty from the Institute for Educational Development. The visit aimed to gain insight into the educational landscape of teacher education and to explore potential avenues for collaboration between AKU-IED and Vanderbilt University. Representatives from the U.S. Consulate General Karachi also attended the meeting. The discussions were rich and forward-looking, and meaningful outcomes are already in the works.



Visit to Nani Ghar – Centre for Arts-Based Methodologies & Well-being

The AKU-IED team visited Nani Ghar, a center promoting well-being through art. The visit highlighted its inclusive approach and explored future collaborations to help educators foster self-awareness, empathy, and resilience.



Exploring Pathways for Special Needs Education

The AKU-IED team visited NOWPDP to discuss collaboration on advancing Special Needs Education in Pakistan. The visit included hands-on disability simulations and dialogue on research, teacher preparation, and partnerships, setting the stage for a joint roadmap toward inclusive learning.



Supporting evidence-based policy development and contribution to improving educational quality in collaboration with BRAC University

BRAC University and the Institute for Educational Development at Aga Khan University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that launches a significant collaboration focused on strengthening education across the region. The partnership brings both institutions together to share expertise, co-develop academic initiatives, and conduct joint research addressing key educational challenges. It also promotes cross-border learning through faculty and student exchanges and collaboratively designed programs. By combining their strengths, BRAC University and AKUIED aim to support evidence-based policy development and contribute to improving educational quality, all within a framework that ensures long-term cooperation aligned with institutional standards and legal requirements.

External Visits to AKU-IED



Visit of higher education regulators from AKU Pakistan and East Africa, along with HEC representatives



Reshaping Universities in the Age of AI Visit of Professor Dr. Nasir Mehmood



Visit from the British High Commission
Mr. Richard Yates from the British High Commission, accompanied by his colleague Mr. Ghufraan Abbas, visited AKU-IED to explore potential areas of collaboration.



Review governance practices by HEC delegation



Awareness visit by SBBUSBA Students and Faculty Mountain Lands' Schools System, Gilgit



His Excellency Mr. Frederico Silva, Ambassador of Portugal met with IED faculty and leadership for academic partnerships avenues



Teacher education, Assessment, Research, and Policy Development discussed with The Sindh Education Foundation team

Graduate Programmes

Artist-in-Residence Programme

Multidisciplinary artist and Senior Lecturer, IQRA University, Ms. Syeda Sheeza Ali, joined AKU-IED on a one-month special artist residency. Throughout her stay, Ms. Ali enriched the AKU-IED community by sharing her expertise on the integral role of art in education. She conducted engaging art workshops for our staff and scholars, thoughtfully demonstrating how creative practice cultivates a more holistic and impactful learning experience.

The residency culminated in a joyful celebration for International Children's Day. In collaboration with Right to Play, Ms. Ali designed and led a vibrant, hands-on session for children, inviting them into a world of imagination and playful exploration with colours. This event perfectly captured the spirit of what every child loves most, the freedom to create and express. [Children's day art activity](#)



ECED B.Ed. Student Exhibition

Organized by Ms. Yasmeen Mehboob, AKU-IED faculty, the exhibition celebrated the creativity and innovation of ECED Specialization B.Ed. students. The students effectively transformed low-cost and no-cost materials into interactive games and storytelling resources, demonstrating their ability to design engaging and meaningful learning experiences for young children using simple and accessible materials.



Re-Entry Series Sessions

As part of our efforts to help our graduating batches prepare for their post-studies' professional journey, a series of capacity-building and professional readiness sessions were conducted, including:

- Interview Techniques Session: Getting Ready for the Wider World
- Say What Matters—Clearly, Simply, Powerfully
- Essentials for Mature Leadership: Educators as Professionals
- Career Session under the theme Bridging Paths, Broadening Networks
- Edu-preneurship for Emerging Educators: Turning Ideas into Impact

Events and Happenings

World Teachers' Day 2025

AKU-IED celebrated World Teachers' Day 2025 with a panel discussion titled "Voices of Diversity: Minority Contributions to Education in Pakistan." Guest speakers Kermin Parakh and Leonardo Dias highlighted the vital role of minority-run schools in promoting quality education, inclusivity, and interfaith harmony.



Annual Sports Fest 2025

AKU-IED celebrated its Annual Sports Fest with vibrant participation from students, faculty, and staff. The event featured cricket, volleyball, table tennis, carrom, and ludo, concluding with a prize distribution ceremony recognizing winners with trophies and certificates.



Summer Camp for Staff Children

Building on last year's pilot programme, AKU-IED hosted a summer camp for more than 30 children of ancillary staff members. Led by MPhil scholars and alumni, the program expanded beyond Mathematics to include English, Science, and Life Skills, fostering academic growth, engagement, and confidence.



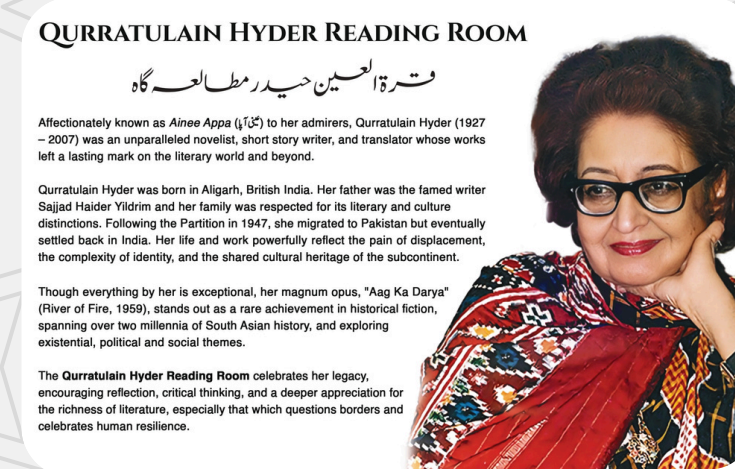
Global Encounters Internship Programme

AKU-IED hosted Global Encounters Interns, Burhan Ali (LUMS), who contributed to the Marketing & Communications department, and Nina Wali (UCA, Tajikistan), who worked with the Research & Policy Studies team. Their contributions brought fresh perspectives and added value to ongoing projects. The experience was mutually enriching for both interns and the IED team. [Let's hear from our interns!](#)



Baatein Kitab Ki – Inauguration of the Qurratulain Hyder Reading Room

The AKU-IED Library hosted the 6th episode of Baatein Kitab Ki featuring Ms. Ameena Saiyid. The event also marked the inauguration of the newly named Qurratulain Hyder Reading Room. Qurratulain Hyder's inspiring journey, as honoured by Ameena Saiyid, spoke of her life and work, especially her masterpiece Aag Ka Darya, echo the subcontinent's anguish, fluid identity, and shared culture, challenging rigid borders and time itself.



Alumni & Student Achievements

Four distinguished alumni have achieved exceptional milestones in the field of education and public service. **Salma Jan** secured the top national position in the Federal Service Commission's highly competitive selection process for headteachers. In a major administrative appointment, **Naghmana Sardar** has become the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, assuming leadership of one of Pakistan's largest educational systems.

In a moment of immense pride, congratulations are extended to **Bahadur Ali** (M.Ed, Cohort 3) on his landmark appointment as the Interim Education Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan. This pivotal role is a testament to his dedication and leadership, and his vision is poised to greatly benefit the region's education sector.

On the international stage, **Saniya Surani**, now with New Zealand's Ministry of Education, served as her country's sole delegate to a major global conference on refugees and migrants in Rome, where she presented expertise on resettlement and was granted a private audience with His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.

These accomplishments highlight the alumni's profound impact, from local and provincial leadership to national ministerial roles and global advocacy.



Salma Jan



Naghmana Sardar



Bahadur Ali



Saniya Surani

Faculty Achievements

Pakistan Civil Awards 2025

Warmest congratulations to Dr. Mola Dad Shafa on being awarded the prestigious Sitara-e-Imtiaz. This honor recognizes his transformative contributions to education and human development, particularly through his leadership as Head of AKU's Professional Development Centre, North (PDCN) in Gilgit-Baltistan.



National Curriculum Advisory Committee

We take great pride in sharing that Dean and Professor Dr Farid Panjwani has been appointed on the National Curriculum Advisory Committee by the Federal Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has established an Advisory Committee to oversee the rationalisation and optimisation of Pakistan's National Curriculum. The Committee's core mandate is to provide strategic leadership, high-level oversight, and policy coherence for the entire curriculum review process.

Faculty Appreciation Day 2025

PDCK hosted Faculty Appreciation Day to honour AKU-IED faculty for their dedication and support in training sessions and professional development initiatives. The event celebrated both individual achievements and the collective contributions shaping the future of education.



Staff and Faculty Promotions

Our heartfelt congratulations on our staff promotions, in recognition for their unwavering dedication!



Dr Takbir Ali, Professor



Sarah Khan, Senior Manager



Syed Tahir,
Specialist at PDCC



Jamal Akhtar, Associate
Librarian at the PDCN Library



Arif Mehmood, Senior
Accountant at PDCN

Donor Acknowledgement

Neurodiversity Course initiative

AKU-IED launched a 24-week certificate course on Neurodiversity to help teachers and caregivers recognize, understand, and support neurodiverse learners in pre-primary and lower-primary classes. This course was made possible with the generous Endowment Fund set up by the Ramji Family.

Dean's Honours List Ceremony

AKU-IED held its inaugural Dean's Honours List Scholarship ceremony to recognize outstanding academic achievement and commitment to community service. Six students, three from the BEd programme and three from the MPhil programme, were awarded scholarships. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Aziz Shariff, our long-standing benefactor, for his generous contribution towards the endeavour



Blogs and Educational Resources

AKU-IED offers a wealth of resources and learning materials for teachers, parents, and the public interested in deepening their understanding of education and related initiatives. [Explore our free resources!](#)

Ideas have the power to drive transformation. Our blog is a platform for sharing scholarly insights, practical initiatives, and fostering open, candid, and critical conversations about education in all its dimensions. It serves as a dynamic space for meaningful intellectual exchange. [Explore our blogs!](#)