



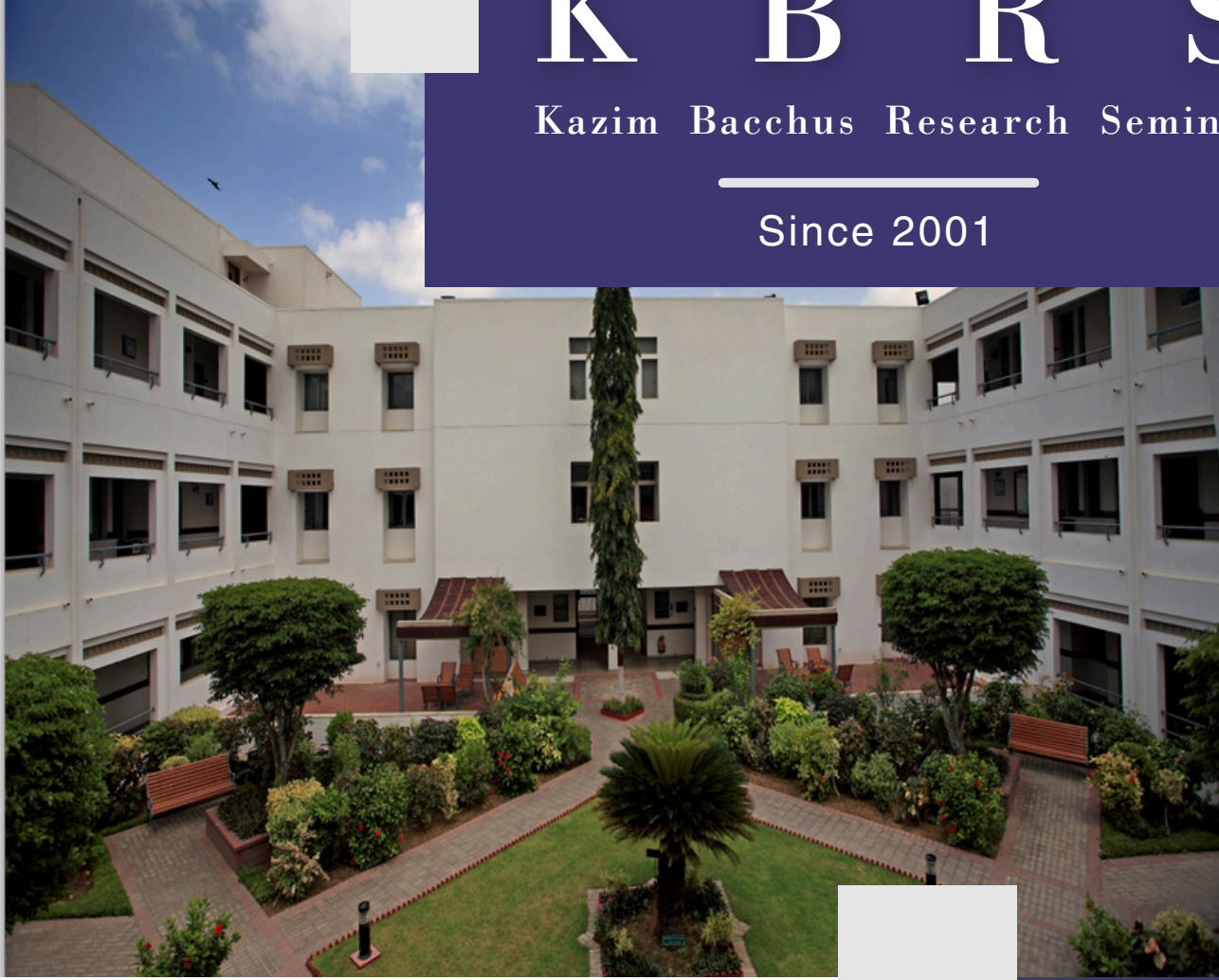
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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Institute for Educational Development

K B R S

Kazim Bacchus Research Seminar

Since 2001



January-December
2024

Research and Policy Studies
(RAPS)

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Message from the Dean



Dr Farid Panjwani
Professor and Dean
Aga Khan University
Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan

It is not unusual that good research remains out of sight. This is a loss not only for the researcher but also for all of us who wish to benefit from evidence. Avenues where research findings can be presented to a wider audience are thus important. By generating conversations among scholars, practitioners, students and policymakers, such spaces can give birth to new questions and serve as inspiration for students and early career researchers.

Embedded in this vision, a seminar series, now called the Kazim Bacchus Research Seminar (KBRS), originated some 24 years ago and has continued. This tradition has reflected our commitment to building capacity, shaping policy, and advancing educational practices for the betterment of our communities.

This edition of the annual booklet brings together the events of 2024, capturing the width and depth of topics, institutions and scholars. I am grateful to all those who have contributed and participated.

I will end with a note of thanks to the members of RAPS for their diligent effort in organizing these seminars.

KBRS Background



Mohammed Kazim Bacchus (1929–2007)
Founding Director,
Aga Khan University
Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan

The Kazim Bacchus Research Seminar (KBRS), named after AKU-IED's Founding Director, is a monthly platform for sharing and discussing research. It unites AKU faculty, students, and national and international education experts to foster intellectual exchange.

Originally launched over two decades ago as "Friday Research Seminars," KBRS has since evolved into a global forum featuring in-person and online sessions with scholars from diverse institutions.

Dr. Kazim Bacchus, a distinguished scholar in international and comparative education, was AKU-IED's first Director (1993–1996). He played a pivotal role in establishing the institute's foundation. Born in Guyana, Dr. Bacchus held advanced degrees from the University of London and UC Berkeley and was recognised with a higher doctorate for his research contributions.

His enduring legacy inspires educators and researchers through the KBRS platform.

Article:

Schugurensky, D. (2008). Mohammed Kazim Bacchus (1929–2007). *Comparative Education*, 44(2), 125–126.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060802040938>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kazim Bacchus Research Seminar (KBRS) series, hosted by AKU-IED in 2024, brought together a diverse group of scholars and researchers from around the world to engage in stimulating discussions on key challenges and opportunities particularly in the field of education.

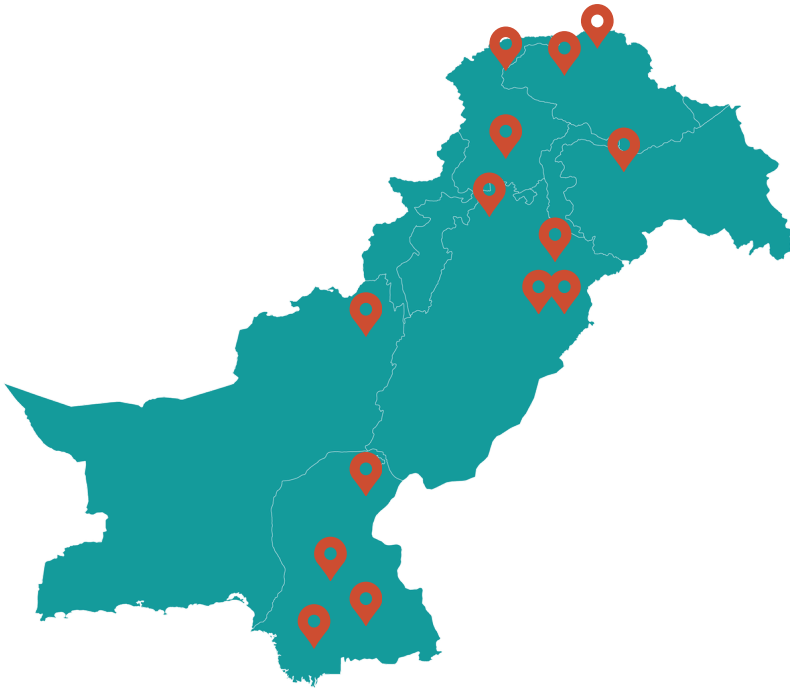
This year, the KBRS featured 13 distinguished speakers, addressing diverse and critical topics included the transformative potential of early childhood education for lifelong success, the resilience of education systems amidst conflict in Gaza, and the evolving role of technology in reshaping higher education. Discussions also navigated historical, cultural, and political dimensions, from the blurred lines of fact and fiction in classical literature to the challenges of integrating moral values and decolonizing educational practices. Each session offered valuable insights and tools, empowering attendees to address contemporary educational challenges with innovative and inclusive strategies.

Through a blend of in-person and virtual sessions, these seminars brought together a global audience, including educators, policymakers, researchers, and students, to engage in rich discussions. The speakers provided fresh insights, actionable recommendations, and thought-provoking perspectives that continue to shape conversations on education and its evolving role in society.

This booklet offers a comprehensive summary of the individual talks, capturing the essence of each presentation, key findings, and their implications for educational development.

The KBRS remains a testament to AKU-IED's commitment to fostering meaningful collaborations and advancing scholarship that addresses contemporary challenges in education.

Total no. of Participants: **1,510**



Pakistan **94%**



Rest of the world **6%**



EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES THROUGH SECONDARY DATA

SESSION # 01
JANUARY 2024

Dr Muhammad Akram, a distinguished biostatistician and research fellow, discussed the critical role of secondary data in complementing primary research. Drawing from his expertise in time-series analysis and forecasting, he highlighted how secondary data provides valuable opportunities for robust research while addressing its inherent challenges.

Key Insights

- Secondary data, while valuable, often comes with limitations such as biases and gaps in reliability.
- Researchers must exercise caution when analyzing such data, as its original purpose may differ from their current objectives.
- Secondary data can significantly enhance research efficiency by offering pre-existing datasets for validation and comparative analysis.

Dr Akram provided practical insights on navigating the challenges of secondary data analysis, emphasizing the need for meticulous methodology to ensure the validity and reliability of research findings. He highlighted how tools and strategies could help young researchers overcome common pitfalls.

- The importance of training students and educators in effective secondary data analysis.
- The role of secondary data in driving policy decisions, particularly in fields like health and education.
- The value of combining secondary data with community-driven insights for more meaningful and impactful outcomes.

Conclusion

Dr Akram concluded by encouraging researchers to embrace secondary data as a complementary resource while being mindful of its limitations. His session served as a guide for young scholars, equipping them with the tools to conduct thorough and impactful research.

Speaker



Dr Muhammad Akram

Biostatistician,
PhD
Monash University
Australia

DECOLONIZATION AND ANTI-COLONIAL PRAXIS: SHARED LINEAGES

SESSION # 02
FEBRUARY 2024

Dr Anila Zainub explored the intersection of decolonization and anti-colonial practices, focusing on the challenges faced by highly educated Pakistani immigrants in Canada. Her session examined systemic barriers and the need for inclusive educational approaches.

Key Insights

- Despite their qualifications, many Pakistani immigrants face obstacles in integrating into the Canadian economy, often returning to educational institutions to improve their employment prospects.
- The devaluation of immigrants' skills and knowledge highlights systemic biases in educational and professional systems.

Dr Zainub's qualitative research revealed the struggles of racialized immigrant communities and underscored the importance of anti-colonial frameworks in addressing these inequities.

Recommendations

- Shift towards anti-colonial educational practices that value diverse knowledge systems.
- Create inclusive policies to support the integration of immigrant communities into educational and professional settings.

Conclusion

Dr Zainub's session highlighted the need for systemic change to ensure equity and inclusivity in education. Her insights provided valuable perspectives for educators and policymakers striving to create more equitable learning environments.

Speaker



Dr Anila Zainub

PhD
University of Toronto
OSIE, Canada

WHAT SHOULD EDUCATORS KNOW ABOUT EINSTEIN?

SESSION # 03
APRIL 2024

Muhammad Hamza Waseem provided a comprehensive overview of Albert Einstein's contributions to science, education, and society. Beyond his groundbreaking theories, the session explored Einstein's philosophy on education and his advocacy for social responsibility.

Key Insights

- Einstein's work revolutionized physics, with his theories of relativity and quantum mechanics forming the foundation of modern science.
- He cautioned against excessive specialization in science, advocating instead for critical thinking and interdisciplinary learning.
- Einstein was a strong proponent of pacifism and ethical responsibility, emphasizing the role of scientists in addressing societal challenges.

The interactive session included discussions on Einstein's views on nationalism and militarization in science. Waseem engaged the audience with examples of Einstein's educational philosophies, inspiring educators to cultivate curiosity and creativity in their students.

Conclusion

Waseem concluded by emphasizing the relevance of Einstein's ideas in today's world. His call for educators to prioritize critical thinking and ethical awareness resonated with participants, highlighting Einstein's legacy as a scientist and humanist.

Speaker



M. Hamza Waseem

DPhil
University of Oxford
United Kingdom

COLONIAL LEGACY AND POLITICIZATION IN PAKISTAN

SESSION # 04
MAY 2024

Dr Asghar Ali Dashti delivered a thought-provoking session on the enduring impact of colonial legacies and the politicization of education in Pakistan. Drawing on his extensive research, he called for a re-evaluation of entrenched pedagogical practices and historical narratives.

Key Insights

- Colonial influences persist in Pakistan’s educational system, shaping curricula and reinforcing dogmatic approaches to learning.
- The "banking model" of education—characterized by rote memorization—stifles critical thinking and holistic development.

Dr Dashti highlighted the distortion of Indo-Pak history in curricula and the need to reclaim indigenous narratives. He cited ancient institutions like Nalanda and Taxila as examples of pre-colonial knowledge systems that prioritized intellectual inquiry.

Recommendations

- Transition from rote-based learning to alternative models like “metaphysical education,” which fosters critical thinking.
- Revise curricula to include transparent and inclusive representations of history.
- Emphasize the academic traditions of the global South to counterbalance Eurocentric narratives.

Conclusion

Dr Dashti’s session inspired attendees to challenge colonial legacies in education. He urged educators to embrace more inclusive frameworks that honor indigenous knowledge and promote intellectual freedom.

Speaker



Dr Asghar Ali Dashti

Researcher
Federal Urdu University
Karachi



LOCATING PAKISTANI MID-TIER PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN LOCAL & GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES

SESSION # 05
JUNE 2024

Dr Saulat Pervez provided an in-depth analysis of Pakistan's mid-tier private schools, examining their role in local and global educational contexts. Her session challenged conventional categorizations of private schools and highlighted the socio-linguistic complexities affecting students' learning outcomes.

Key Insights

- Pakistan's middle-tier private schools are distinct from elite and low-fee private schools, serving families who primarily speak Urdu or regional languages, with parents often holding tertiary degrees and middle-management roles.
- The dominance of English in education marginalizes Urdu and regional languages, hindering the development of strong reading and writing cultures in both languages.

Dr Pervez explored whether the bilingual and multilingual experiences in these schools are additive (enhancing language skills) or subtractive (diminishing native language proficiency). Her case study in Karachi highlighted the struggles students face in balancing English and Urdu literacy.

Recommendations

- Move beyond simplistic binary classifications of private schools (e.g., elite/non-elite).
- Implement language policies that promote bilingual proficiency while preserving native languages.
- Encourage further research on the linguistic and cultural dynamics in middle-tier schools.

Conclusion

Dr Pervez's session emphasized the need for nuanced approaches to understanding Pakistan's private schools. By addressing linguistic inequalities, educators and policymakers can better support students in navigating bilingual and multilingual environments.

Speaker



Dr Saulat Pervez

Researcher
International Institute of
Islamic Thought (IIIT)
USA

DATA FOR DECISIONS

SESSION # 06
JULY 2024

Syed Ahamed's session explored how data-driven policy advocacy strengthens social accountability in Bangladesh's education sector. Despite high enrollment rates, systemic challenges in quality and equality persist, necessitating robust data collection and community involvement.

Key Insights

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) play a pivotal role in enhancing accountability through evidence-based advocacy.
- The 3i approach: Inquire, Inform, Involve, was highlighted as a method for integrating grassroots data into national policy dialogues.

Through townhall meetings and policy conclaves, organizations like IID ensure that local insights inform national education policies. Youth involvement through policy camps and hackathons further strengthens advocacy efforts.

Conclusion

Syed Ahamed underscored the transformative power of data in addressing educational challenges. His session served as a call to action for stakeholders to leverage data for more informed, equitable decision-making in education.

Speaker



Syed Ahamed

CEO
Institute of Informatics and
Development (IID), Dhaka
Bangladesh

INTEGRATING MORAL VALUES IN EDUCATION

SESSION # 07
AUGUST 2024

Dr Rabia Nauman emphasized the critical role of moral education in Pakistan’s diverse educational landscape. Her session explored the disparities in how moral education is approached across different types of schools and proposed an integrated approach to address these challenges.

Key Insights

- Moral education in Pakistan is often narrowly focused on religious teachings, leading to inconsistent moral guidance for students.
- Traditional teacher-centered classrooms hinder the holistic development of ethical and critical thinking skills.
- A balance between religious and secular perspectives is essential for preparing students for a globalized world.

Recommendations

- Teacher training Programmes should emphasize the importance of inclusivity and critical thinking in moral education.
- Schools must adopt a holistic approach to moral development that recognises diversity and promotes ethical behavior beyond religious frameworks.

Conclusion

Dr Nauman’s session highlighted the urgent need for reform in moral education to foster well-rounded, ethical individuals. Her insights provided actionable strategies for educators to create a more balanced and inclusive approach to moral development in Pakistan’s schools.

Speaker



Dr Rabia Nauman

Director
Bachelor of Education
Programme, AKU-IED
Pakistan



EXPLORING EDTECH: INVESTORS' IMPACT ON EDUCATION

SESSION # 08
SEPTEMBER 2024

This session, led by Dr Janja Komljenovic and Dr Ben Williamson, delved into the growing influence of investors in shaping the EdTech industry. The speakers explored how venture capital and platforms like Khan Academy and Coursera are reshaping education, raising critical questions about equity, access, and power dynamics.

Key Insights

- EdTech investors act as both economic and political influencers, promoting visions of education that align with their financial interests.
- Platforms such as Coursera and Khan Academy have disrupted traditional education models, offering innovative solutions but also consolidating power in the hands of private entities.
- Social networks and carefully crafted narratives are key strategies used by investors to position themselves as leaders in education reform.

While EdTech has democratized access to learning in some ways, it also raises concerns about the centralization of influence and potential inequalities in access and quality.

Recommendations

- Further research is needed to understand the long-term implications of EdTech investments on education systems globally.
- Policymakers and educators should critically assess the role of private investors to ensure balanced development in the education sector.

Conclusion

This session highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of the interplay between education, technology, and finance. By urging stakeholders to examine these dynamics critically, the speakers provided valuable insights into the future of education in an increasingly digital world.

Speakers



Dr Janja Komljenovic

Lecturer
University of Edinburgh
United Kingdom



Dr Ben Williamson

Lecturer
University of Edinburgh
United Kingdom

CONTEMPORARY STAGED SUFISM: POETRY, PERFORMANCE, AND MUSIC

SESSION # 09
OCTOBER 2024

This session traced the evolution of Sufi traditions, focusing on their transformation from intimate spiritual gatherings to global staged performances. Jonas Otterbeck and Dr. Walid Ghali explored the commercialization of Sufi music and its impact on cultural and spiritual heritage.

Key Insights

- Sufi poetry and music, deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, have adapted to modern contexts, blending spirituality with commercial viability.
- Performers like Sami Yusuf and groups like The Awakening exemplify the integration of traditional practices such as zikr (remembrance) into contemporary music.

The session highlighted the resilience of Sufi traditions despite their commercialization. By preserving core elements like spiritual chants, performers maintain strong ties to classical Sufi tariqas (spiritual paths).

Conclusion

The speakers concluded by discussing the educational potential of sound and music in creating meaningful connections with learners. Their session provided a nuanced understanding of how Sufi practices continue to evolve while retaining their spiritual essence.



Speakers



Jonas Otterbeck

Professor
AKU Institute for
the Study of Muslim
Civilizations, London



Dr Walid Ghali

Professor
AKU Institute for
the Study of Muslim
Civilizations, London

READING THE CLASSICS: BLURRING FACT AND FICTION

SESSION # 10
OCTOBER 2024

Dr Anum Tariq Dada delivered a captivating session exploring the fusion of history and narrative in classical and medieval literature. By examining works from Arabic, Persian, and European traditions, she highlighted the interplay between historical facts and artistic storytelling.

Key Insights

- Premodern texts like Ibn Munqibh's Biography and Qazwīnī's Kitāb 'Ajā'ib blend supernatural themes with cultural symbolism, challenging modern perceptions of factual accuracy.
- These works serve as cultural records, reflecting the intellectual and societal values of their time rather than strict historical accounts.

Dr. Anum shared images of original manuscripts, offering a vivid glimpse into the historical contexts of these texts. She encouraged critical evaluation of classical literature, urging readers to appreciate its narrative depth while questioning its historical reliability.

Conclusion

Dr. Anum's session emphasized the value of classical literature as a window into cultural and intellectual traditions. She inspired educators and students to engage deeply with premodern texts, fostering a nuanced understanding of history and storytelling.

Speaker



Dr Anum Tariq Dada

Assistant Professor
Institute of Business
Administration, (IBA), Pakistan



INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION 4.0 (TAYLOR AND FRANCIS) - EDITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

SESSION # 11
NOVEMBER 2024

Dr Muhammad Mujtaba Asad's session focused on the transformative impact of technology in reshaping higher education. He discusses key insights from his newly published edited book, *Innovative Pedagogical Practices for Higher Education 4.0* (Taylor and Francis), exploring the transformative role of technology in 21st-century education. The concept of Education 4.0, emphasizing a shift from traditional teaching methods to technology-driven, student-centered approaches.

Key Insights

- Education 4.0 integrates self-paced, experiential, and collaborative learning, leveraging digital tools to enhance engagement and outcomes.
- The role of educators has evolved from instructors to facilitators in technology-rich classrooms.
- Effective implementation of Education 4.0 requires robust digital infrastructure and institutional support.

Dr. Mujtaba highlighted the importance of digital policies and innovative pedagogies in creating adaptive learning environments. Ongoing assessments and collaboration foster deeper engagement, preparing students for the demands of a rapidly evolving job market.

Recommendations

- Prioritize investment in digital infrastructure to enable widespread adoption of Education 4.0 practices.
- Develop training Programmes to equip educators with the skills needed for tech-enabled classrooms.
- Encourage institutions to adopt flexible learning models tailored to diverse student needs.

Conclusion

Dr. Mujtaba concluded that Education 4.0 represents a revolutionary shift in higher education, aligning learning practices with the demands of the 21st-century workforce. He called for collaborative efforts among educators, policymakers, and institutions to implement these innovative approaches effectively.

Speaker



Dr M. Mujtaba Asad

Assistant Professor,
Sukkur IBA University
Pakistan

PALESTINIAN EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK IN GAZA: A REPORT BY CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

SESSION # 12
NOVEMBER 2024

Dr. Yusuf Sayed presented a report of Cambridge University highlights the devastating effects of conflict on education in Gaza. His session detailed the systematic destruction of educational infrastructure, the displacement of millions, and the tragic loss of lives, emphasizing the role of education as a form of resilience and resistance.

Key Insights

- 1.9 million Gazans were displaced by July 2024, with over 1 million seeking refuge in UNRWA shelters, including schools.
- The conflict left 94,000 injured, including 15,394 students and 2,411 teachers.
- Education infrastructure suffered a 90% loss, and many schools were repurposed as shelters.

Despite the devastating circumstances, the Palestinian community demonstrated extraordinary resilience. Education remained a symbol of hope and a means of preserving identity, even amid immense adversity.

Recommendations

Dr. Sayed proposed several critical steps to rebuild Gaza's education sector:

- Increasing budget allocations for education.
- Providing psychological support and foundational learning opportunities.
- Enhancing child protection and teacher well-being.
- Expanding the availability of trained teachers and counselors.

Conclusion

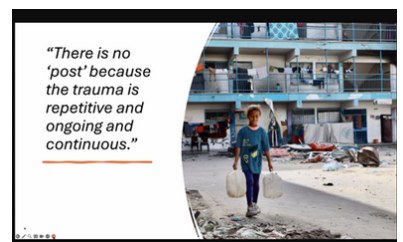
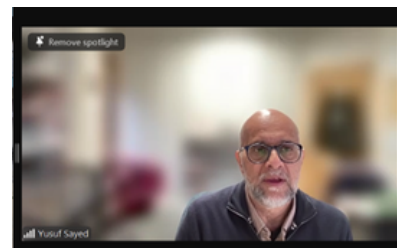
Dr Sayed ended his session with a powerful call to action: "We are complicit if we don't act. We owe it to the children of Gaza to protect and promote their right to education." His message resonated deeply with the audience, highlighting the urgency of global efforts to safeguard education in conflict zones.

Speaker



Dr Yusuf Sayed

Professor
Cambridge University



FROM PRESCHOOL TO LIFELONG SUCCESS: HOW QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION TRANSFORMS LIVES

SESSION # 13
DECEMBER 2024

Dr Iram Siraj delivered an insightful session on the long-term benefits of high-quality preschool education. Highlighting data from her extensive research, she emphasized how early education serves as a transformative force, shaping academic achievement, social behavior, and economic outcomes.

Key Insights

- Students who attended high-quality preschools achieved GCSE scores equivalent to seven grades higher than their peers with no preschool experience.
- Preschool attendance positively impacted lifetime earnings, with individuals earning an estimated £27,000 more over their lifetimes compared to those without preschool exposure.
- Girls outperformed boys in language and literacy skills, reflecting gender differences in early learning development.
- Parents' employment and mothers' educational qualifications significantly influenced children's progress and learning outcomes.

Some Findings from the Research

Professor Siraj identified several characteristics of effective preschools:

1. Skilled teachers who balance structured and child-led activities.
2. Encouraging home environments that support character building.
3. Interactive and supportive learning atmospheres that promote problem-solving, initiative, and peer collaboration.

Recommendations

To maximize the benefits of early education, she suggested:

- Expanding access to high-quality preschools, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
- Enhancing teacher training Programmes to improve instructional quality.
- Strengthening family-school partnerships to support children's learning at home.

Conclusion

Professor Siraj concluded by underscoring the profound impact of early education on lifelong success. She advocated for policymakers and educators to prioritize investments in early learning, calling it a cornerstone for academic and personal growth.

Speaker



Dr Iram Siraj

Professor
Oxford University

UPCOMING SESSIONS - YEAR 2025

Session	Date
<p>What should Educators know about Darwin? Dr Kulsoom Ghias Aga Khan University</p>	<p>Wednesday, January 15, 2025</p>
<p>Students' Skills, Teaching Practices & Teacher Status in Pakistan Dr Meher Rizvi, Dr Takbir Ali, Dr Sadia Bhutta Aga Khan University</p>	<p>Thursday, February 20, 2025</p>
<p>A "so what?" template for Spiritual Education in Schools Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce University College London, UK</p>	<p>Thursday, March 20, 2025</p>

<p>Session details will be announced near to dates</p>	<p>Thursday, April 17, 2025</p>
	<p>Thursday, May 22, 2025</p>
	<p>Wednesday, June 18, 2025</p>
	<p>Wednesday, July 16, 2025</p>
	<p>Wednesday, August 20, 2025</p>
	<p>Wednesday, September 17, 2025</p>
	<p>Wednesday, October 15, 2025</p>
	<p>Wednesday, November 19, 2025</p>
	<p>Wednesday, December 17, 2025</p>

MEET THE TEAM

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For KBRS recordings and further details please visit our website

www.aku.edu/iedpk/research

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