RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (RAG)

Terms of Reference (ToRs) – Final Draft

As on 12th March, 2024

PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (PIE)
Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training
Government of Pakistan

Table of Contents

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (RAG)

1. Background and Rationale

The Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) was established in December 2021 as an Executive/Attached department of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MOFEPT) vide Notification No.3-13/2020(AEPAM)(IC-I). It was formed through the merger of AEPAM and NEAS[1] to produce quality data and evidence-based research. PIE serves as a premier institute guiding policy analysis and resource allocation in Pakistan's education sector. It functions as a distinguished national level "Think Tank," conducting research to support education policy formulation through evidence-based decision-making. The department basically comprises three wings: Management Information System (MIS) Wing, National Assessment Wing (NAW) and Policy Research Wing (PRW). These wings are working together to collect, organize, share data about education, assess how well education is going, and do different types of research based on qualitative and quantitative data for policy reforms. Our flagship reports, PES and NAT, give us a lot of information about schools, students, teachers, student learning achievements, education budgets, and research on important education sector issues.
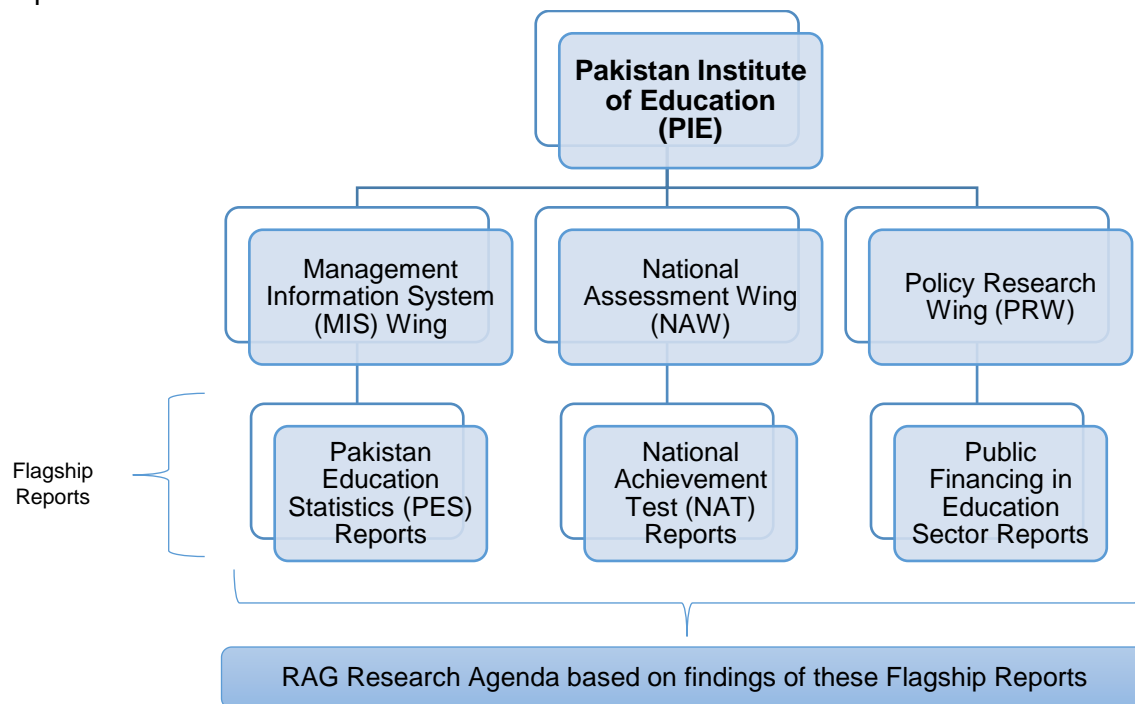

Figure 1: PIE's Structure

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[1] Academy of Educational Planning & Management (AEPAM) and National Education Assessment System (NEAS)

Following are the key functions of the Policy Research Wing (PRW) of PIE:

1. Set up a Research Advisory Group (RAG) consisting of leaders in education policy research	2. Develop a research agenda for PIE	3. Organize the implementation of research agenda by harnessing the research knowledge and skills of the public/private sector.
4. Liaise with the MIS and Assessment Wings for optimal use of data for research purposes	5. Develop and implement strategic research communication initiatives to optimize the use of policy research conducted at the PIE.	6. Organize a fellowship programme for short to medium term research projects aligned with the research agenda

The establishment of the Research Advisory Group (RAG) aligns with the strategic vision of PIE to harness expert insights and steer its research endeavors. The RAG is envisioned as a representative body providing supportive counsel on educational research and its application in Pakistan. Its role extends to guiding PIE in setting research agenda priorities, enhancing the quality of research outputs, and contributing to impactful policymaking.

Given the diverse challenges in Pakistan's education landscape, a consultative and expert-driven approach becomes imperative. The RAG is poised to play a pivotal role in prioritizing focus areas for research efforts in addressing these challenges. By leveraging the expertise of established thought leaders, professionals, and academics, the RAG aims to fortify PIE's capacity to commission and conduct impactful research that resonates with the needs of the education sector.

2.   Context and Mandate of RAG

The Research Advisory Group (RAG) will be representative of a wide range of individuals with an interest in promoting and supporting educational research, who bring deep and nuanced understanding of Pakistan, its research and operational landscape, who are associated with academic institutions, professional organizations and research institutions. The RAG will provide independent expert advice to the MOFEPT and particularly to the PIE on the prioritisation of research topics. PIE will be the custodian of the research whereas RAG will provide inputs to enhance the quality of both the research process and findings to ensure its translation into relevant policy, through dialogues, briefing and other machinery of government.

RAG is established with a comprehensive mandate to serve as a representative voice on education research and its application in Pakistan. This mandate aligns with the broader objectives of the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) to function as a national think tank, supporting evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation in response to educational challenges. The core mandate of RAG includes:

- **Advisory:** The RAG commits to support and advise PIE in prioritizing research areas aligned with the pressing needs of the education landscape in Pakistan.

- **Quality Assurance:** It pledges to elevate the quality of both research processes and findings, ensuring that the outcomes are robust, reliable, and directly applicable to policy formulation.

- **Policy Recommendations:** The RAG positions itself as a bridge for creating and strengthening the network of PIE with public, private, academic, non-profit and development partners to ensure seamless transitions of research insights into actionable policies. Through dialogues, briefings, and other government mechanisms, it aims to facilitate the practical integration of research into the policymaking discourse.
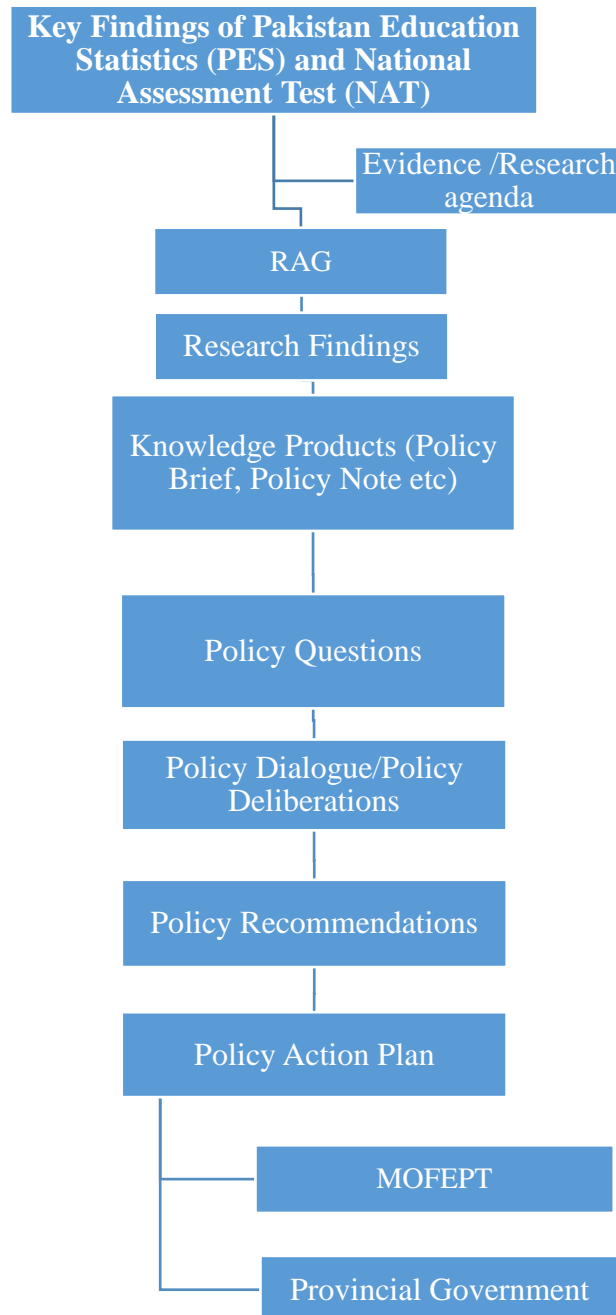

Figure 2: Research Process Mapping at PIE

3.   RAG Structure with Roles and Responsibilities

3.1   Composition and Selection Criteria

A criteria based selection of 11 members of RAG forms the foundation of the RAG's effectiveness. The membership criteria is designed to ensure diversity and depth of expertise required in the field of educational research.

RAG, being a component of national level policy institute i.e. PIE, carries adequate representation of the federation, provinces & regions.

3.2   Role of RAG Secretariat (Policy Research Wing, PIE)

The Policy Research Wing of PIE assumes the overarching role of the Secretariat to the RAG. DARE-RC will collaborate with PIE to establish and optimize the operations of the RAG during the initial period. This encompasses:

- **Access to Research Data:** The Secretariat ensures that RAG members have seamless access to relevant research data, fostering an environment where evidence-based discussions can thrive. This includes the PIE's existing data evidence emerging from MIS and Assessment wings in the form of summary & granule data of PES and NAT reports as per requirements of research.
- **Funding Support:** Recognizing the financial requirements of the RAG, the Secretariat plays a pivotal role in securing the necessary funding for the bi-annual meetings and other related expenses. DARE-RC will provide financial and technical support to PIE during the initial period of its establishment.
- **Administrative and Logistical Support:** Administrative functions, ranging from coordination of meetings to logistical arrangements, fall under the purview of the Secretariat. The Secretariat will arrange all logistics for RAG meetings and facilitate the provision of necessary facilities required for the efficient functioning of the RAG. This includes physical spaces for meetings, virtual infrastructure for remote participation, and other essential amenities.

(RAG can form sub-committees as and when required)

3.3   Role of RAG Secretary

The RAG Secretary (Director, Policy Research, PIE) assumes a key role in ensuring the seamless functioning of the RAG. Their multifaceted responsibilities encompass:

- **Agenda Development:** Serving as the planner of RAG meetings, the Secretary is responsible for developing comprehensive meeting agendas. These agendas, circulated one week in advance, provide members with the necessary preparation time.
- **Meeting Notes and Action Points:** The Secretary diligently develops meeting notes and action points, capturing the essence of discussions and decisions. These documents are circulated for approval within one week of the meeting, ensuring that the momentum of actionable items is maintained.
- **Record Management:** The RAG Secretary, supported by the Research Wing of PIE, ensures that all records related to RAG activities are appropriately stored and

accessible to RAG members. This commitment to efficient record-keeping is essential for the sustained effectiveness of the RAG.

3.4   Role of RAG Members

- **Advisory Role in Research Agenda Development:** RAG members play an advisory role in research agenda development by assessing the evidence landscape, critically analyzing research themes, and offering guidance on resource allocation for impactful research. Advisory role include:
  o Deliberation on RAG's research agenda
  o Identify and suggest new thematic areas for policy research.
  o Recommending research agenda for final approval
  o Highlight key challenges within each thematic area.
  o Prioritize challenges or problem areas for targeted and effective research.
- **Feedback on Research Progress:**
  o Review the 'Research progress report' presented by the RW secretariat during the RAG's scheduled meetings.
  o Offer recommendations and guidance to refine the research process based on the evolving research landscape and the feedback from the progress report.
- **Annual Review:**
  o Participate in an annual review based on the report presented by the RW secretariat regarding the progress of research.
  o Offer Feedback and Recommendations for future directions and improvements based on the report.
- **Duration & Membership:**
  o Members, excluding ex officio, will serve a term of 2 years, renewable based on contributions and the institute's needs.
  o Membership changes or replacements will follow the established criteria.
- **Chairperson:**
  o The RAG will be chaired by the DG, PIE responsible for overseeing the group's activities like approval of agenda, minutes etc.
- **Networking & Advocacy:**
  o Facilitate networking and advocacy efforts by fostering connections between PIE and stakeholders in education.
  o Actively engage in knowledge dissemination through participation in academic events, contributing as speakers, moderators, and discussants, thus enriching the research ecosystem and promoting research impact.
- **Commitment and Integrity:**
  o Success of RAG relies on members' unwavering commitment and integrity.
  o Uphold the highest standards of ethics in deliberations and decisions.
  o Active participation in meetings ensures meaningful engagement and collaborative decision-making.
  o Confidentiality is paramount, fostering an environment of trust for candid discussions.
  o Ethical advocacy is core, promoting rigorous research standards and integrity.
  o Members must disclose conflicts of interest to uphold impartiality in recommendations.

      o   Timely action on agreed points drives continuous progress and impact.

Overall, members' dedication shapes a culture of excellence in educational research in Pakistan.

4. Operational Details

4.1 Meetings

4.1.1	Frequency	The RAG may convene its meetings quarterly in the first year to come up with the research agenda, and eventually progressing to a regular biannual (and emergency based) meeting frequency.
4.1.2	Format	Meetings will be conducted in person at the premises of the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE). Virtual participation options will be available to accommodate diverse geographical locations and scheduling constraints.
4.1.3	Agenda Preparation	The RAG Secretary, is responsible for developing meeting agendas and its timely circulation.
4.1.4	Chairperson Role	The DG, PIE will preside over the RAG meetings.
4.1.5	Quorum	Presence of one third RAG members in the meeting should be necessary to initiate the meeting's proceedings.
4.1.6	Minutes and Documentation	Meeting minutes will be diligently recorded by the Secretariat and circulated within seven working days post the meeting.

4.2 Budgets

4.2.1	Funding Source	For the initial year, DARE RC will bear the expenses associated with the bi-annual RAG meetings. Subsequently, the budget for RAG-related expenses, encompassing meetings will be incorporated into the PIE budget from the fiscal year 2024-25 onwards.
4.2.2	Transparent Allocation	Budget allocations will be transparently delineated, specifying the utilization of funds for various purposes, including meeting logistics, travel expenses, and any other pertinent requirements.
4.2.3	Accountability	To ensure fiscal responsibility, the RAG Secretary, in collaboration with the Secretariat, will provide annually budgetary updates to RAG members. This practice ensures accountability and allows for adjustments based on evolving needs.
4.2.4	Financial Oversight	DG PIE will exercise financial oversight to guarantee that allocated funds are judiciously expended. This collaborative approach ensures transparency and instills confidence in the financial management of RAG operations.

5. Proposed List of Members

Ex-Officio Members

1. Director General, PIE (Chairman, RAG)
2. Joint Secretary/JEA, MOFEPT
3. Director, Policy Research Wing, PIE (Secretary, RAG)

Renowned Education Researchers

4. Dr. Irfan Muzaffar, Senior Education Advisor, World Bank
5. Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, VC AIOU
6. Dr. Farid Panjwani, Dean IED, Agha Khan University
7. Dr. Mohammad Nizamuddin, Former Chairman PHEC
8. Dr. Fauzia Baloch, Assistant Professor, BUITEMS, Quetta
9. Ms. Neelofar Javed, Education Development Center (EDU), KP
10. Mr Peter Jacob, Executive Director, Center of Social Justice (CSJ)
11. Dr. Jamila Razzaq, Director Research, DARE-RC, OPM

Co-opted Members

RAG may opt member from any other field as per need of research agenda.