District Report Cards
TA24

Feedback from Districts Lahore, Gujrat, Attock and Rajanpur
September 2013
District Report Cards

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Background

The Project Appraisal Document (PAD) for Second Punjab Education Sector Project (PESP-II) states that “an important information tool to be developed and delivered to district education administrations and schools with increasing coverage and periodicity is district and school performance cards. These performance cards will include information on, say, teacher absence, teacher on-task, student achievement both in absolute terms and benchmarked against comparable schools”. The PAD further states that “delivery of information of any kind across the government school system is ad-hoc and piecemeal, and the presentation and content of delivered information are weak, impairing evidence-based decision-making to improve system and school performance”. Therefore “provision and use of system and school performance information” was made a disbursement linked indicator (DLI) in PESP-II with the objective of “regularly feeding relevant and reliable information to various levels to improve evidence-based school performance management”.

The provision of performance information is made through district and school performance report cards, following agreed format and contents, prepared and delivered to district education administrations and schools and school councils, and openly displayed at schools. Indicators in the report cards include student achievement from the Punjab Examination Commission student tests and teacher absence, student absence, and progress and performance in selected subprograms from the CMMF school inspections. It is worth noting that, at present, only information collected through PMIU and CMMF monitoring activity is included in the report cards.

In order to meet the above DLI, the services of an international consultancy organization were acquired for developing the design and content of the district and school report cards. The international consultant paid several visits to Pakistan, and held numerous meetings and discussions with the stakeholders including PMIU/SED personnel, district education authorities, members of school councils, and teachers/head teachers. The design and content of the district and school performance report cards was prepared, shared with PMIU/SED and the development partners, and in the case of school report cards, field-tested in 80 schools in two districts. After final approval by PMIU/SED, the district and school report cards were prepared and distributed to the districts and schools (Annexure A). The cards are to be updated on a six-monthly basis.
Purpose of the study

The Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU) is required to gather feedback on the District Report Cards (DRC) from selected districts as part of the process of revisiting the design of the cards for districts for the next round. This task was suggested in the Aide Memoire for the most recent World Bank and UK Department of International Development (DfID) implementation review and support mission (June 4–11, 2013).

3 Methodology/Design of the study

Four districts, one from northern, two from central and one from southern Punjab, were identified as a sample for gathering feedback on the DRC from the respective district management officials. The selected districts were Attock, Gujrat, Lahore, and Rajanpur. The regional importance and representation as well as wider provincial coverage and spread served as the basis of the selection of the sample i.e., farthest in North and South, and center most in Punjab.
The district education authorities selected for gathering feedback comprised District Coordination Officer (DCOs), Executive District Officers (EDOs) Education, and District Monitoring Officers (DMOs) of the four sample districts, i.e., Attock, Gujrat, Lahore and Rajanpur. It is worth mentioning here that though the DMOs were not envisaged to be the users of the District Report Cards, yet their feedback was required as they were the sole providers of the education monitoring data against the indicators shown on the cards.
To gather the required feedback, a comprehensive questionnaire was designed by the same international consultancy organization that was involved in the development of the initial design and content of the district and school performance report cards (Annex B). The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather feedback from the selected officials (DCOs, EDOs and DMOs) from the sample districts regarding the usage and utility of DRCs in policy and decision making, operational effectiveness, and future planning, and to solicit suggestions for improvement of the cards.

The questionnaire was emailed/ faxed to all the identified district education officials for feedback followed by telephone contact for further explanation of the purpose of the activity and instructions on how to fill the questionnaire and its timely submission to the concerned focal
Further contacts were made with officials to entertain their queries and give any clarifications required to fill the questionnaire completely and correctly. The completed questionnaires were collected electronically and the information complied and processed as per agreed plan for data collection, processing, and analysis.

4 Findings and recommendations

The responses to the questions asked in the survey were as follows:

4.1 General feedback: Questions 1-3

Q1: Are you aware of the concept/ rationale of the DRC? How can this be improved?

All answered in the affirmative.

Q2: Are you satisfied with the content information provided in the DRC?

All but one answered in the affirmative. One respondent commented that the information should be disaggregated at tehsil, rather than district level.

Q3: Are you satisfied with the design of the DRC?

Suggestions included that the card should be translated into Urdu to facilitate understanding by the community (see further discussion in section 5 below); that the numeric information should be justified to the right with comas to make it easy to understand and compare, and that the colour scheme should be reviewed to make it visually more appealing.

4.2 Feedback from DCOs: Questions 4 – 8

Q4: Has DRC helped in policy formulation for improved education planning and implementation in your district?

The DCOs responded that they had found the DRC to be a useful tool in that it provides a readily available and easily accessible summary of the data collected. Two DCOs claimed that this had helped them in resolving issues surrounding provision of free textbooks; another had found it useful in pinpointing areas for introduction of English medium learning, while another asserted that the card had prompted him to investigate the percentage of teachers using teachers guides.
questioned more closely, it appeared that the very fact of having a summary of district performance against various education delivery indicators so close to hand and so visible, has had the effect of triggering discussion of these issues and has provided the spur to further investigation and action.

Q5: Has the DRC triggered any changes in the financial, structural and/or human resource settings in the district education set-up for better education delivery?

One of the DCOs questioned responded that a meeting had been convened to discuss the contents of the DRC and its implications. This triggered a wider discussion of missing facilities which in turn revealed that some of the schools were badly affected by recent rains and floods. A survey of affected schools was commissioned and reference made to the provincial government for separate resources, together with a submission to MNAs and MPAs for provision of funds. Another DCO observed that the sections on teachers' presence in schools, together with information on sanctioned versus vacant posts had helped to focus the minds of officials on teacher allocation and rationalization.

Q6: Have you ever received any observations/comments/suggestions from the local community on the DRC?

All responded that no comments/suggestions had been received.

Q7: Have you ever made reference to the DRC in your meetings with district education staff for any purpose; reviewing progress, identification of issues, and future planning for the uplifting of schools?

DCOs maintained that they had used the card as a reference for a number of directions issued by the DCO (but not specified), and that the data given was generally referred to in meetings with education officials. However, of primary concern to them is how their districts are performing with regard to the performance of other districts, as district ranking is of paramount importance to them. This information is not currently available on the card.

Q8: Any further comments?

There were no further comments.
4.3 Refl

4.4 Feedback from EDOs: Qs 9 – 13

Q9: Have you ever taken an operational level decision based on the DRC?

Decisions mentioned included the following:
- prioritizing education development schemes and reform interventions;
- taking corrective steps to improve teacher/student attendance & enrolment gap;
- regularizing education managers' visits to schools;
- assessing the level of missing facilities.

One EDO said: “Teaching staff presence in schools is a good performance indicator of school management. A number of disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against inefficient teaching staff.”

Q10: Does the DRC depict a comprehensive picture of the education indicators in order to carry out the operational responsibilities effectively?

One EDO was of the opinion that more qualitative, rather than quantitative information should be included on the card. Other EDOs suggested that Information regarding free textbooks, uniforms and school classrooms (availability and utilization) should be included.

Q11: Has the information provided on the DRC been shared with line managers for planning, development or improvement of education delivery?
responded that information given on the cards was discussed regularly with their teams, and had proved to be a good tool for improving discipline and administrative efficiency. However, one EDO requested that the information be disaggregated to show performance at the markaz level.

**Q12: Have you ever received any observations/comments/suggestions from the local community on the DRC?**

All EDOs responded ‘no’.

**Q13: Any other comments?**

One EDO responded that: “DRC is a highly effective tool, allowing matters related to education indicators and missing facilities to be discussed and priorities set.” Another EDO was of the opinion that: “It is a useful tool for improvement in the education sector. Each and every true picture reflects in DRC showing performance of each line manager.”

### 4.5 Reflections on feedback from EDOs

The EDOs were generally of the opinion that DRCs provide a snapshot of the status of education in their respective districts for easy reference, and are a comprehensive and effective tool for operational decision-making. The question of whether or not there should be separate tehsil cards is discussed in section 5 below, together with EDOs’ suggestions for additional information to be included.

### 4.6 Feedback from DMOs: Qs 14 - 16

**Q14: Have you ever received any comments or observations from the EDO office regarding accuracy and reliability of the data in the DRC? What were the main concerns, and what actions have you taken?**

Mostly DMOs have been requested to verify information which may appear inconsistent to district officials. This mainly concerns the recording of teacher attendance, which, in the opinion of the DMOs, is not accurately reflected on the cards, nor is it recorded properly in the schools. The system of teacher attendance should be reviewed to make it more meaningful by adding the teachers’ attendance and authorized leave indicator to it. The information should also take account of sanctioned as well as working strength. (This is discussed further in section 5 below.)
Q15: Is the information provided on the DRC sufficient for the education authorities to take necessary actions/decisions for the improvement of education?

The DMOs were satisfied with the level of information provided.

Q16: Do you think that the existing DRC can be improved?

On spite of the previous answer, one DMO was of the opinion that further information on free textbook distribution and school uniforms should be added. These points are discussed in section 5 below.

4.7 Reflections on feedback from DMOs

The DMOs interviewed generally showed satisfaction regarding the design, concept and contents of the DRC. Their concerns mostly centred on data management methods maintained in the schools, which, according to them, were not very helpful for the DMO office staff in the effective and accurate monitoring of some of the indicators detailed in monthly monitoring proforma. (These issues are, in any case, to be dealt with under those PESP activities aimed at improving the monthly monitoring mechanism in schools.)

5 Summary and conclusions

It is evident from the gathered information that the end users are more concerned about the utility, accuracy and reliability of the information rather than the actual design and content of the card. Therefore it may be deducted that as far as these latter points are concerned, there is a general degree of satisfaction among the users and stakeholders. With regard to utility, all expressed satisfaction. However, based on the above feedback, some changes and additions to the cards may be required, particularly with regard to their scope, coverage and distribution. The main points which now require further deliberation and agreement during the re-designing process are as follows:

Widen the distribution of DRCs to tehsil level

This would be a relatively simple solution relative to the benefits for education officials making decisions at sub-district level. Some 135 extra cards would need to be printed and distributed to cover all of the tehsils. However, if separate cards are required for the offices of DEO (M) and (W), then this number will be doubled.
tehsil-level version of the card

Currently, most of the information given on the DRC is already disaggregated tehsil-wise, so that officials and other users of the cards can clearly see the information relevant to their tehsils. Furthermore, the current format shows the performance of each tehsil relative to all the others, which in itself is desirable in terms of developing a healthy motivation to ‘be the best’. It is therefore suggested that the issue of separate tehsil level cards is not a priority, and could be re-considered once the district cards are finalized and embedded.

Teacher attendance information should be made more meaningful

Feedback showed that teacher attendance information was too generalized to be of much use. In fact, data collected under the monthly monitoring mechanism allows for differentiation between absences of teachers due to the following factors:

- sanctioned posts being unfilled
- teachers being absent on sanctioned leave
- teachers being absent on unsanctioned leave
- teachers being absent but on official duty

Consideration may be given during the re-design of the card to ways in which these different types of ‘absence’ may be reflected.

The card should include further information

Respondents to the survey suggested the inclusion of the following indicators on the report cards:

- availability of free textbooks
- availability and utilization of school classrooms
- proportion of students wearing school uniforms

Since all of this data is available under routine monitoring activities, there is no barrier to the inclusion of these indicators. However, the sheer volume of information displayed on the cards needs to be carefully balanced against the effectiveness of the cards in communicating that information. The re-design process needs to take careful account of these factors. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether the same information is included in the school (as opposed to district) report cards when they are re-designed later in the year.

The card should be translated into Urdu so that it can be understood by the community
suggestion also relates to a question in the DCO and EDO sections of the survey (Have you ever received any comments observations or suggestions from the local community on the DRC?). In re-designing the card, the question of target audience needs to be considered. Is this card really for the community? Or is for management? It may be decided that the school report cards serve the purpose of delivering information to communities, and these indeed are translated into Urdu.

There should be information given concerning non-salary budget

One further recommendation which was made, that information should be given regarding the utilization of the new non-salary budget, also requires attention. As and when this budgetary system is phased into the various levels of school education, the indicators relating to school council expenditure may need to be revised to include information regarding utilisation of this budget, both from the point of view of how much is utilized, and on what it is spent.
Annex A

District report card
A: District report card
Annex B

List of officials interviewed
Annex

B

List of people interviewed

Lahore:
DCO: Not Available
EDO: Ms. Tahira Shafiq
DMO: Mr. Rauf Ahmed

Rajanpur:
DCO: Not available
EDO: Mr. Malik Nadeem Masood
DMO: Mr. Ghulam Yasin

Attock:
DCO: Mr. Mian Shakeel (Ex-DCO)
EDO: Mr. Mehmood Hussain Malik
DMO: No one posted

Gujrat:
DCO: Muhammad Asif Balal Lodhi
EDO: Ayaz Tariq
Annex C

District performance report card questionnaire
Annex C: District performance report card questionnaire

Name:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

District:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Designation:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Contact information:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

1. Are you aware of the concept/rationale of the DRC? Yes/No
   How can this be improved?

2. Are you satisfied with the content and information provided in the DRC? Yes/No, how can this be improved?

3. Are you satisfied with the design of DRC? Yes/No, how can this be improved?
District Coordination Officer (DCO)

4. Has DRC helped to improve education planning and implement education in your district? Yes/No

If yes, please state when and how?

5. Has DRC led to improvements in the financial, structural or human resource processes in your district? Yes/No

If yes, please share with examples.

6. Have you ever received any observations/comments/suggestions from the local community on the DRC? Yes/No

If yes, what were they? What actions did the suggestions lead to?

7. Have you ever made reference to DRC in your meetings with District Education Staff for any purpose? This might include reviewing district progress, identification of issues, and future planning for the uplifting of schools and improving the governance and quality of education? Yes/No

If yes, please cite the instances and the actions taken.

8. Do you have any other comments/feedback about the DRC?
District Officer (EDO) Education

9. Have you ever taken an operational level decision based on DRC? Yes/No
If yes, please share the details.

10. Does the DRC provide the comprehensive education indicators you need to carry out operational responsibilities effectively? Yes/No
If no, what further information is needed?

11. Have you ever shared the information provided in the DRC with the line managers (DEO, Dy.DEO, AEOs etc.) for planning, development or improvement of education delivery? Yes/No
If yes, which indicators did you use and what were the outcomes?

12. Have you ever received any observations/comments/suggestions from the local community on the DRC? Yes/No
If yes, what were they? What actions did the suggestions lead to?

13. Do you have any other comments/feedback about the DRC?
District Monitoring Officer (DMO)

14. Have you ever received any comments or observations from the EDO office regarding the accuracy and reliability of the data in DRC? Yes/No

If yes, what were the main comments or concerns, and what actions have you taken?

15. Is the information provided in the DRC sufficient for the education authorities to take necessary actions/decisions for the improvement of education? Yes/No

16. Do you believe that the existing DRC can be improved? Yes/No

If Yes, how? And which additional indicators should it include?

17. Do you have any other comments/feedback about the DRC?