

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS: Women Development through Non-Formal Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

Main purpose of the study was to evaluate the challenging role of Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) in eliminating the poverty and gender disparities in the rural areas of Punjab. Problems and issues pertaining to the NFBE were also assessed in this study. 750 students, 250 teachers and 50 administrators were taken as samples systematically. An inventory sheet and three questionnaires were used as research tools for data collection. Main findings of the study revealed that NFBE schools are playing a dynamic role in national development by uplifting socio-economic status of masses in the rural areas. NBFE schools were also playing a vital role in discriminating gender disparity by providing equal opportunities of education to male and the female as well. Teachers' remuneration was insufficient and there was a lack of physical facilities (lack of buildings, electricity and furniture, etc.) in these schools. Syllabus of NBFE was informative, easy, interesting and illustrated with diagrams. Motivational campaigns may be launched through media to mobilize community for maximum participation in the NBFE schools.

Keywords: Non-formal basic education, women development, poverty elimination.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the population explosion and swiftly increasing demand for education even developed countries are unable to overcome the prevailing challenges through the formal system of education. Most of the developing countries are in a miserable situation regarding the level of education and literacy. Attacking poverty has become an international concern for placing in the paradigm of 'education and learning for sustainable development' in consideration of the reality that almost half of the world's population live in poverty. Pakistan is the sixth populous country in the world and unfortunately, more than half of the population is living below the poverty line. Educated and well off urban population lives not so very differently from their counterparts in other countries of similar income range, or even of their counterparts in Western countries. However, the poor and rural inhabitants of Pakistan are being left behind (World Bank, 2002). Due to scarce resources and financial constraints developing countries are unable to cope with the drastic demand for education and consequently, non-formal education (NFE) seems blessing to meet this challenge of poverty alleviation.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal education is an organized educational activity outside the established formal system, whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity that is intended to serve identifiable learning clients and learning objectives. (Combs as quoted by Rashid 2000, p.21) The major advantage of non-formal education in the training of teachers or instructors is its relative cheapness. Formal education being

institutionalized, need a cadre of professionally trained full-time teachers and has long cycles of general education, which add to its operating costs.

Non-formal education being capable of mobilizing resources from a variety of sources, using building and facilities that are not used in the evening and employing voluntary help cuts down on its costs. It is basically for this reason, that the developing countries can mobilize support for a sizeable enlargement of rural non-formal education, provided that the political climate it's favorable and the leaders and people are strongly determined to build a better life. From the above it is concluded that existing formal system of education especially in developing countries obviously cannot cope with the drastic demands of trained personnel.

The demand for the trained personnel in Non-Formal Education as an alternative of formal education is being increased throughout the world. NFE consists of assortment of organized and semi organized activities operating outside the regular structure and routine of the formal system, aimed at serving a great variety of learning needs of a different sub-group of population both young and old. NFE consists of assortment of organized and semi organized activity operating outside the regular structure and routine of the formal system, aimed at serving a great variety of learning needs of different sub-groups of population, both young and old.

There are more than 9500 personnel involved in the human resource development through the non-formal system of education in Punjab. At this stage formal system of education is unable to cope with the challenges of drastically increased demand for education. In this scenario non-formal education seems the only cure for the development of human resources in rural areas. It has begun to play a dramatic role in the elimination of poverty by educating those who have long been ignored in Pakistan; the country's rural and its poor.

REVIEWS AND ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES 1947 -2010

In 1947, only a few months after independence, Pakistan Education Conference was convened. This conference recommended that free and compulsory education should be introduced for a period of five years, and it should gradually be raised to eight years. The commission on National Education (1959) recommended compulsory education for all children between five and ten years of age. However, the New Education Policy (1970) fixed 1980 as a target date for achieving universal Primary Education. Whereas, the National Education Policy (1972-80) aimed at free and Universal Education until class X to be achieved. The free education was extended to class IX and X in 1974.

The National Education Policy (1979) phased the target dates 1987 for boys and 1992 for girls. Similarly, during the 1990's two education policies,

- the Education Policy of 1992, and
- the Education Policy (1998-2010) were announced.

Regarding UPE through community participation former policy expressed 100% participation by 2002 Restructuring the existing Education System While later policy (1998-2010) expressed Enhancing participation rate from 71% to 90% by 2003 and 105% by 2010. The summary of all education policies is given below:

Table 1
 Summary of targets and strategies of education policies

Policy	Targets	Strategies
Pakistan Education Conference 1947	Free and Compulsory Education UPE within two decades by 1967	Free and Compulsory Levying a special Tax to finance primary education Primary schools age group between 6-11 years. Encourage private sector to open primary schools
National Education Commission 1959	UPE within a period of 15 years by 1974	Compulsory and Universal Primary Education. Compulsory Religious Education. Female teachers for primary education. Resource mobilization for additional funds.
The Education Policy 1970	Universal Enrolment up to class V by 1980	Attractive schools to eliminate dropout. Rapid expansion Emphasis on female enrolment Female teachers for primary education.
The Education Policy 1972	UPE for boys by 1979 for girls by 1984	Free primary education. Priority to rural areas Emphasis on female enrolment Standardized low cost school buildings
National Education Policy 1979	UPE for boys by 1986-87 for girls by 1992	Rapid expansion of female education with opening of mosque and Mohalla schools. Efforts to reduce dropouts.
National Education Policy 1992-2002	UPE through community participation. 100% participation by 2002 Restructuring the existing Education System	Training and recruiting new primary teachers. Active participation of Community for UPE. Special programme to retain female students Provision of special Federal Fund for Primary Schools.
National Education Policy 1998-2010	Enhancing participation rate from 71% to 90% by 2003 and 105% by 2010. Reduction of disparities by 2010 Opening of 45000 New Formal Primary Schools	Revision of service structure of teachers. Uniform curricula for public and private schools. Political will for objective achievement and resource mobilization of Primary schools. Free and compulsory primary education. Act shall be enacted and enforced in phased manner. Revision of the examination and assessment system.

Source: Shami, P.A and Hussain, K.S. (2005) *Basic Education in Pakistan*, Islamabad: Academy of Educational planning and Management, Ministry of Education.

The table below depicts a gradual rise in achievements in plan-wise participation rates at primary level of education but still Pakistan is far behind as compared to its neighboring countries, i.e. India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, etc. There is a need of judicious plans and policies so that Pakistan can survive in a respectable manner on this planet.

Table 2
 Plan-wise participation rates at primary level of education

Five year Plans	Bench Mark	Target	Achievement
First Plan 1955-60	52	58	36
Second Plan 1960-65	36	56	45
Third Plan 1965-70	45	70	46
Non Plan 1970-78	46	65	54
Fifth Plan 1978-83	54	68	48
Sixth Plan 1983-88	48	75	64
Seventh Plan 1988-93	64	79.7	68.9
Eighth Plan 1993-98	68.9	87.7	72.4
Ninth Plan 1998-2003	72.4	90	75

Source: Shami, P.A and Hussain K.S. (2005) *Basic Education in Pakistan*, Islamabad: Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Education.

Education, as a fundamental human right, is considered very important and strategic for developing their human resources.

Table 3
 Plan-wise participation rates at primary level of education

Domain	Year	Sex	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchistan
Literacy rate (10 years & above)	2005-06	Male	65	66	67	64	54
		Female	42	47	42	30	20
		Total	54	56	55	46	38
	2007-08	Male	69	70	69	68	66
		Female	44	48	42	33	23
		Total	56	59	56	58	46
Enrolment (Net Primary) (NER)	2005-06	Male	56	60	54	51	39
		Female	48	53	47	42	27
		Total	53	57	50	49	34
	2007-08	Male	59	62	55	55	47
		Female	52	59	46	41	35
		Total	55	61	51	49	41
Completed Primary or Higher Level Education	2005-06	Male	54	54	57	53	36
		Female	33	37	35	23	11
		Total	43	45	47	37	25
	2007-08	Male	58	58	60	54	46
		Female	37	42	36	24	15
		Total	47	50	49	38	32

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08, Economic Survey of Pakistan 2007-08, Pakistan Education Statistics 2006-07 and Pakistan Statistical Year Book, 2008).

The right to education imposes an obligation upon countries to ensure that all children and citizens have opportunities to meet their basic learning needs. Pakistan, the second largest country in South Asia, is the sixth most populous country in the world with a population of 176 million, of which approximately 61 percent lives in rural areas. Literacy rate of Pakistan is nearly 54 percent: 65.25% for men, and 41.75% for women. In fact, the rural (44% overall, 58% for men, and 29% for women) literacy rate indicates the alarming situation of the rural population. Embarrassing situation of literacy, especially in rural areas of Pakistan, is the result of low financial priority to education as well as ill-conceived non-consistent policies in the past.

It is evident from the table 3 that although literacy rate has approached to 56% yet it is far behind for respectable survival on this globe in the knowledge driven economy era. Especially the alarming female literacy rate of Baluchistan (23) and it is questioning how a massive illiterate segment which is nearly 50 % to the population (Coleman, 2004) will contribute in the national stream of progress. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) is 55 percent in 2007-08, substantially increase as compared to the NER of 2005-06 but very low in the 21st century where nations like USA, UK, Japan and France with knowledgeable masses are heading fast while nations like us are lagging behind in the race progress and prosperity on this planet. Similarly embarrassing situation as only 37% female have passed their primary or higher level of education while in Baluchistan situation is worsening where only 15% have completed the same level of education.

Many factors lead to low enrolment and retention rates of students. These factors include poor quality of teaching, high teacher absenteeism, low remuneration for teachers, and long distances to schools. Based upon interviews with parents, community members, and other stakeholders, the task force believes that with effective school management and improved teacher motivation, the quality of reaching improves, and a greater number of parents is motivated to send their children to school.

For Pakistan to meet its education targets, the formal primary education system may undergo long-term reforms to reduce drop-out rates and increase access and quality of education. However, a short-term solution is also needed to ensure educational opportunities for children who have either dropped out or never joined the formal education system. To this end, the National Commission on Human Development establishes a network of community based non-formal schools. These non-formal schools are working as a support system addressing the immediate needs of the education sector while the Ministry of Education builds its own capacity to cover all of Pakistan. Children who graduate from the NFBE programmes can either join formal schools or vocational training programmes.

The commission is implementing the Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) programmes through selected NGOs. The human development incubators in each district are funding support and building capacities of NGOs delivering non-formal education. Incubators are provided with hired services such as school budgeting, account management and teacher training. The NFBE programmes are helping Government of Pakistan to achieve its primary education goals. In the rural areas of Gujranwala region 500 NFBE schools were being run by NGOs for the elimination of poverty and gender discrimination.

These schools provide equal opportunities of education to male and female but virtually; all the teachers and students of these schools were female District wise break up is given below:

Table 4
 Students and teachers in the NFBE Schools Gujranwala Region

Sr. No.	Name of District	NNFBE Schools	Total Students	Total Teachers
1.	Gujarat	85	1205	85
2.	Mandi Baha-ud-Din	95	1520	95
3.	Narrowal	115	1625	115
4.	Hafiz Abad	90	1315	90
5.	Gujranwala	105	1535	105
6.	Sialkot	10	300	10
7.	Total	500	7500	500

It is evident from Table: 1. that more about 8000 females (7500 students and 500 teachers) were enhancing their socio-economic standard by imparting and getting education in these NBFBE schools.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

Main objectives of the study were to:

- Assess the role of Non-Formal Basic Education in women empowerment in Punjab.
- Evaluate the problems and issues of Non-Formal Basic Education in Punjab.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The focus of the study was to evaluate the existing non-formal basic education in rural areas of Gujranwala region (Gujarat, Mandi Baha-ud-Din, Narrowal, Hafiz Abad, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts). The study used survey approach of the descriptive research to find out the opinion of various personnel (students, teachers and administrators) of these NBFBE schools.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of 7,500 students, 500 teachers and 100 administrators of Non-Formal Basic Education Schools. Therefore, 10% of the students (750), 50% of the teachers (250) and 50% (50) administrators were taken as samples of the study. The samples were drawn from the master list of the respective populations using systematic random sampling technique.

Instruments and Their Development

Keeping in view the nature of the problem, descriptive, i.e. survey type study was carried out to collect the data. Therefore, to elicit the opinions of the respective respondents, three questionnaires were developed on a five-point scale.

1. Questionnaire for students.
2. Questionnaire for teachers.
3. Questionnaire for administrators.

All the statements of the questionnaire were close-ended except the last one, so that respondents could write a free response in his/her own words. Main focus of the questionnaires was on:

- Physical facilities like electricity, furniture and toilets, etc.
- Availability and utilization of educational technologies
- Teaching methodologies

- Evaluation of schools and the programme
- Community needs and participation
- Experience of NFBE
- Facilities for students and the teachers
- Gender disparities, and
- Problems and issues pertaining to these schools

Analysis of Data

Data collected through the questionnaires were presented in a tabular form and analyzed by applying percentage and mean score formulas.

Table 5

Opinion of students, teachers and administrators about physical facilities, availability and usability of audiovisual aids (AV Aids)/educational technologies and teaching learning environment are given below.

Area	Theme	Students			Teachers			Administrators		
		f	%	\bar{x}	f	%	\bar{x}	f	%	\bar{x}
Physical facilities	Availability of electricity	348	67	2.49	175	73	2.2	34	74	2
	Availability of furniture	391	75	2.13	203	85	2	37	80	1.9
	Availability of toilets	362	69	2.22	202	85	2	35	76	1.8
A.V. Aids/ Educational technologies	Availability and usability of black board, charts and pictures	467	90	4.20	150	67	3.4	44	96	4.2
	Availability and usability of radio, ETV, computer and Internet.	349	69	2.34	204	86	1.9	34	74	1.9
Teaching learning environment	Friendly behavior of teacher	493	95	4.26	196	82	3.9	31	67	4
	Individual learning	398	76	3.83	203	85	4	36	78	4.2
	Regularity of students	461	88	4	192	81	3.88	28	61	3.9
	Punctuality of teachers	406	78	3.87	187	79	3.9	38	83	4.1
	Checking of home work	435	83	4.03	166	70	3.5	27	59	3
	During course evaluation	432	82	3.79	231	97	4.4	45	98	4.5
	After course evaluation	398	76	3.97	237	99	4.5	45	98	4.5
	Regular supervision of NFBE schools	434	83	4.14	194	82	3.98	32	70	3.4
	Language of course (easy)	490	94	4.23	180	76	3.7	45	98	4.5

Community participation	Campaign through media	485	93	1.5	19 8	83	1.8	26	52	2.4
	Interest of community	364	70	3.5	15 1	63	3.2	30	65	3.5
	Help from eminent persons	392	75	3.6	18 3	77	3.5	31	67	3.5
	Organization of motivational campaign	378	73	3.4	13 8	58	3.4	26	52	2.4
	NFE programmes are income generating	387	74	3.6	16 4	69	3.5	32	70	3.5 8

f= frequency of the respondents, %= percentage of the respondents and \bar{x} = mean value of the responses. To derive the mean score, scale value for this table was SA= 5, A= 4, UNC= 3, DA= 2 and SDA= 1

It is evident from table 5 that about 70% (students 67%, teachers 73% and administrators 74%) of the respondents are disagreed with the statement that physical facilities like electricity, toilets, classrooms and furniture are available at the NFBE schools (mean score is respectively 2.49, 2.2 and 2). Majority of the students, teachers and administrators are of the view that black board, charts and pictures are used during teaching learning process in these schools (mean score is respectively 4.2, 3.4 and 4.2)..Regarding availability and usability of AV Aida and educational technologies like radio, computer and the Internet 90% students 67% teachers and 92% administrators opined that these devices are neither available nor used at these schools (mean score is respectively 2.3, 1.9 and 1.9).. Dominant majority of the respondents are satisfied with teaching learning process, teaching learning environment, teaching methodologies, regularity of teachers and students, checking of home work, evaluation of students and teachers work, supervision of schools and the language of course as frequency of students, teachers and administrators agreed responses are more than 70% in all the statements of this theme and mean score is also more than 3 in all the statements of this theme as well. Similarly, a dominant majority of the respondents (students, teachers and administrators) opined that community participation is active and positive as about all the statement agreed frequency ratio is more than 70% except disagreement regarding motivational campaign arrangement where negation rate is more than 60% from the respondents.

In open-ended statement regarding problems and issues of NFBE schools 99% students opine that books were not provided well in time, 87% are of the view that classrooms were not available and there was no arrangement of co-curricular activities.

Insufficient remuneration is the major problem for teachers as 89% opine their stipend is not sufficient. Teachers are not briefed about their duties and responsibilities, and orientation workshops are not arranged for them (87%). 7% opined that non availability of class rooms is another problem for them. Administrators describe a lack of field staff (54%), insufficient remuneration of teachers (74%) and inadequate resources (84%) were major problem in this literacy campaign for them.

For the improvement of quality of NFBE schools (95%) students suggested that free note books and writing material should be given to them. &1% they should be given incentives and 98% opined that games should be arranged for them. 89% teachers suggested their remuneration should be revised and enhanced, and orientation meetings should be conducted for them. Further, they suggested (91%) literacy campaign should be run media for the improvement of quality in these schools. Administrators (84%) suggested field staff should be appointed for enhancing the quality of these NFBE schools. Further, 74% suggested an increase in teachers' remuneration and resources for the improvement of quality of these schools.

RESULTS

Main results of the study are given below:

- NFBE schools are playing a dynamic role in national development by uplifting socio-economic status of masses, especially in the rural areas.
- NBFE schools are also playing a vital role in discriminating gender disparity by providing equal opportunities of education to male and the female as well.
- Virtually, all teachers and students of these NBFE schools were culturally restricted female.
- Teachers' remuneration was insufficient. It may be increased and students may also be provided incentives.
- Motivational campaigns were not conducted to create awareness and mobilization of community for maximum participation in the NBFE schools. Hence, motivational campaigns may be conducted through media.
- Students were provided free textbooks but not free notebooks and other writing material. Therefore, students may be provided free notebooks and other writing material.
- Provision of budget was insufficient hence; budget may be increased and used appropriately.
- The GOs and NGOs can run NFBE programmes more effectively. Therefore, the NFBE schools may run through the collaboration of GOs and NGOs.
- Timings of NFBE schools were unsuitable. Timing of the NFBE Schools may be increased and adjusted in accordance with students' availability.
- Syllabus of the NFBE was informative, instructing and illustrated with diagrams.
- The language of NFBE courses was easy and syllabus of the NFBE was informative, instructing and illustrated with diagrams.
- Physical Facilities (electricity furniture, classrooms and toilets) may be provided in NFBE schools.
- Teachers may be briefed about the objectives of the course in orientations' sessions and they may be provided opportunities of refresher courses.
- All the schools of NFBE may be equipped with latest teaching aids and teachers may be provided the training to use these aids.
- Locally, community may be involved in mobilizing the local resources.
- Follow up programmes may be started for literacy graduates.

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