

AN ANALYSIS OF PARTICIIPATION RATE OF GIRLS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE PAKISTAN: PROMISE AND REALITY

Prof. Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, Dr. Wasal Khan PhD
Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, KPK, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

From the day of its independence in 1947 till date, the implementation strategies of several National Education Policies in Pakistan targeted the universalization of primary education for girls by different years. However full participation of primary school children could not be achieved simply by opening of schools, particularly in rural areas, where enrollment of girls compared to boys remained for several years only about one third at the national level. Rural primary schools were beset with problems of shortage of trained and qualified teachers and the incidence of absenteeism of female teachers, in rural areas. The teachers were posted in rural areas without providing them extra benefits and incentives. Among the major obstacles to the quantitative expansion of education were the indifference of communities and parents to girls' education. The scattered population, which lived in rural settlements and were marginalized in educational planning posed another problem to the covered of uncovered population of children. The lack of physical facilities evidently beyond the resource envelop of the provincial government was yet another hurdle in promoting elementary education in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.. Consequently access to primary education for girls was not improved significantly. The problem of access received further setback due to lack of adequate rural drop outs in some areas, which remained for several years up to 50 per cent of those enrolled.

The study took cognizance of all those issues by analyzing the participation rates of girls and identifying causes for low profile, which could be addressed for implement able solutions if sincerely addressed in educational planning.

Key words: girl child, access, coverage, incentives, poverty, family economics, and social taboos

INTRODUCTION

The public sector's responsibility in education begins with primary school (Grades 1-5). Children normally are admitted in these schools at the age of five and there is progression with internal examination up to grade 5 unless the child drops out of his /her own accord. There are two main types of schools: those run by the public sector and those run by the private agencies including commercial schools, foundation schools and mission schools. The medium of instruction at this stage is the mother tongue, which are Urdu at the national level and Pashto at the level of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.

In spite of targeting universalization of primary education since creation of Pakistan on the map of the world in series of five-year plans and public policies, its achievement remained a dream. The primary schools lacked physical facilities and, for many years, those schools were run with a single primary school teacher particularly in rural areas. The target of one teacher and one classroom for every class, which was the minimum essential requirement for improving access and quality of primary education, remained difficult achievement for some time. Most of the teachers lacked dedication, motivation and interest in their profession. Simply opening schools, especially in the rural areas, could not achieve full participation of primary school children. The illiterate parents also did not value the education of girls and there was obvious need for their social mobilization.

Apart from designing the curriculum relevant to the local environment, a very strong motivational campaign was proposed to be launched in the Seventh Plan Period (1983-88) .to convince parents to send their children to schools. In most of the rural primary schools the bare minimum facility of chalk and "tat" was not available for small children, who suffered the inconvenience of sitting on the floor in all seasons.

The World Bank Education Sector Strategy Review Report on Pakistan (No.7110-PA

May, 1988) addressed itself, among other things, to the issue of low participation rate of girls at the primary level particularly in the rural areas. The Report indicated that the low participation rate of girls at primary level was supported by the argument that in 1985 only one-third of the five-year old girls in rural areas were in school; one in six completed five-year of education; and fewer than one percent remained in school, until age 14. The Report gave a detailed analysis of the different issues and made a number of recommendations to remove barriers to the access of females to primary education.

Pakistan is a developing country predominantly dependent on agriculture. More than 50% of the civilian labour force is employed in the agriculture sector. Two-thirds of the land is arable. Nearly 35% of the land is irrigated by the largest canal irrigation system in the world and by tube wells. The major crops are wheat, rice, cotton and sugar cane. Manufacturing is the second largest sector of the economy. There was hardly any industry worthy of the name at the time of independence.. The country is now self sufficient in consumer goods, cutlery, stainless and plastic industries. The biggest industries are textiles and mining. Pakistan's major exports include raw cotton and fabrics, rice, sport goods, carpets, and leather goods

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan, 1988-89, Pakistan's economy experienced a serious decrease and recorded a growth rate of 5.1% as compared to a target of 6.9% for 1988-89 and an achievement of 6.2% during 1987-88. The GNP, by the year 1989, recorded a higher growth rate during the year at 4.1 compared to 3.3%, the previous year. The survey indicated in absolute terms the deficit financing planned for 1988-89 at Rs.3.75 billion against the actual of Rs.13.94 billion during 1987-88.

The study was delimited to Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda districts in the Province. This province has always been an important area due to its strategic location, lying between Central and West Asia to the South Asia subcontinent, and various passes, especially the Khyber. The borders of this province are close to China, USSR and the disputed territory of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to the North and Afghanistan to the West all along from the Pamirs to the rugged terrain of South Waziristan. The barren hills and passes of the province have seen many well-known conquerors and adventurers, such as Alexander, Timur, Babur, Nadir and Abdali. The province is divided into the tribal and "settled" areas for the purpose of administration. The study is about the settled areas of the North-West Frontier Province.

Peshawar is the capital of the North-West Frontier Province. It has long been known as the Frontier Town. Standing right at the mouth of the world famous Khyber Pass, it holds the key to the gateway of the subcontinent.

The study reviewed vast volumes of local and global literature on planning, development and, plans and educational policies in chronological order and family economics. A meta-analysis approach was made for integrating the findings from several studies, selected journal articles, books, theses and researcher's own generated databases. The review also included a description of the priorities and outcomes of a sizable number of educational projects in the area of the study. The National Education Policies and Five-Year Educational Plan of the country were reviewed which indicated government's priority to primary education and their evident will to universalize primary education the status of primary education was also reviewed in global perspective particularly in India, Bangladesh, Korea, Canada, Serilanka, China and UK

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to determine the current status and causes for the low participation rate of rural girls at the primary level so that recommendations for improving possible coverage of uncovered children could be made. The methodology suited the purpose of the research as it described systematically the facts and characteristics of the given population and the area of interests. The key questions posed in the study collected information on the status of participation rate, causes of low coverage, the needed motivational incentives for teachers, parents and students, and suggestions that could help improve the coverage through policy changes.

POPULATION

The population of the study included all the primary girls' schools in the rural areas of Peshawar District that formerly included the present Charsadda, Nowshera and Peshawar districts of the North-West Frontier Province. Of the population of 338 rural girls' primary schools, 67 were studied. The interviews included 17 educational

planners and administrators, 67 headmistresses, 03 male heads of families and five religious persons. The data were both quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary, based on the records and documents. The whole range of National Education Policies and Five-Year Plans of the Government of Pakistan was reviewed in addition to the global literature that was related to the study.

SAMPLING

In order to look for the subgroups of the population, as a whole, the purposive sampling technique was chosen as Miller (1983, pp. 62-63) stated, "When practical considerations preclude the use of probability sampling, the researcher may seek a representative sample by other means." The study also used external and internal criticism and pilot testing to assure that the data were accurate, reliable and valid and served the purpose and intent of the study.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study made use of three basic types of data :the quantitative, the qualitative and the cost data. The quantitative and cost data were analyzed with the help of tables, charts and figures. The qualitative data were obtained from interviews held with educational planners, administrators, headmistresses of rural girls' primary schools, male heads of families and some religious persons and were placed under different categories and patterns for discussion and interpretation. In addition, planning techniques were used for projection of population and development data.

OUTCOM OF THE STUDDY

- The participation rate of girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan 85% including 67% (74% for boys and 59% for girls) in government schools. There were many causes that hampered universalization of primary education particularly for girls. It was found that the universalization of primary education for girls in rural sector was possible with certain initiatives that public policy may recommend for implementation in future.
- Poverty, family economics, social taboos, inadequate physical facilities, shortage of trained local teachers, irrelevance of curriculum, lack of incentives for teachers, parents and students, imbalances in teachers' allowances, and the system weaknesses were the primary causes of low coverage..
- That intrinsic and extrinsic incentives for teachers, restructuring of Primary Education Service, free textbooks and uniform for students, skill-oriented curriculum, strengthening supervision, motivation of parents, improved infrastructure and organizational reforms could help improve the participation rate

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

- The traditional efforts of the government for targeting the universalization of primary education during the previous plans and policies were not entirely successful, which fact was repeatedly acknowledged by the government in its successive plans and policies.
- Educational plans in Pakistan have, through many years, suffered from many handicaps such as lack of foresight and lack of funds.
- The educational goals have been changing with the change of every political government. These goals have never been thoughtfully worked out despite recommendations of several Educational Reports and Reforms.
- Education is unfortunately still looked upon as unproductive for the purpose of allocation of resources.
- The curriculum designed for girl students seems to have no relevance to their environment.
- The education system is traditionally isolated from the general public. It has never been clearly realized that problems like access to schools in the case of rural population living below

subsistence level and issues of dropouts could be effectively resolved without the active participation of all those whose stake is involved in the process of education and without the effective participation of communities.

- The treatment of school processes has been seriously neglected in educational planning. There is dire need to study the processes of school management to identify the weaknesses of the system and the relationship of the employees with the management.
- The planners and administrators do not consider it necessary to learn through their transactions what the public values and what are the styles of their communication. There is a need to couch the educational plans in such a way that not only the public but all those involved in the process will understand them, will see them as necessary, and will fit them into their value orientation.
- There are advantages to giving more responsibility to consumers of education to construct remedies and define social problems provided their support is sought for the universalization of girls' primary education in the rural areas.
- The strategy that prevailed for the universalization of primary education in Pakistan over several years was seemingly revolutionary, which envisaged the achievement of ambitious targets through the five-year plans, but, essentially, this top-down decision-making mechanism did not fit into the value-orientation of the public. The result was a limited participation, a limited use of reliable knowledge, information and expert advice, and a limited search for alternatives. Even the efforts of the public media were no more than a fashion show, which was intended to impress rather than enlist public support for education in the rural sector
- There appears a need to bring about changes in the education system by a set of policies issued over time, with careful regard to priorities of the different regions, gender issues and the development of the education system as a whole.
- The public policy should provide better incentives to teachers working in rural areas, restructure their service to ensure their upward mobility and remove all types of disparities.

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