

Challenges to Promotion of the Fundamental Right to Education in Pakistan

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Abstract

Government of Pakistan believes that education has great impact of overall output of the society. After passing 18th amendment, education has become a fundamental right of every child. Article 37 (b) of Pakistan's constitution states that the state shall endeavor to remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period. To ensure this basic right, government of Pakistan took each and every possible step, joined international voices working for fundamental right to education, and within the country, blend the face and pace of the public and private sectors to work for the promotion of fundamental right to education. In spite of all these efforts, a large number of children who should be in schools are out of school and those who are attending the schools are lacking the quality education. There are a lot of problems with schooling from school end to government level. Shortage of quality teachers, lack of basic facilities, lack of innovative spectrum in education system are some of the problems lie on government end and old fashion teaching styles, believes about modern education, lack of commitment are some of the challenges from school end. The objectives of this paper are to carved out the challenges to the fundamental right of education and suggest some possible ways to overcome these challenges. The sample for the study was education officer and educational managers. A semi structured interview was used for knowing their opinion about the challenges to fundamental right to education. It is found that poverty; lack of basic facilities and lack of knowledge about the importance of basic education are the some major challenges to basic education.

Keywords: Right to Education, Basic Education, Challenges to Basic Education in Pakistan.

1. Introduction

The Article 37 (b) of Pakistan's constitution assures that education is a fundamental right of every citizen. According to this article, government of Pakistan is responsible for providing education to all of its population. Under the article 25-A after passing the 18th amendment education has become a fundamental right of every child of 5-16 years of age. Article 25-A speaks about the fundamental right to education and bound the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law. No doubt, government of Pakistan believes that without education, advancement and progress are only the day dreams. Since its inception, Pakistan is struggling hard to convert its mass into educated citizens.

The Annual Status of Education Report -2011 (2012) conducted a survey in 84 rural districts and 3 urban city districts (Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi), covering 2,502 villages, 97 urban blocks, 49,793 households and 146,874 children and reported of the 6-16 year olds surveyed the rural enrolment trend is 80%, out of the remaining 20%, 15% have never enrolled and 5.0% drop out. In the 3 urban city districts the enrolment was around 90%.

UNESCO (2007) defines basic education as "the education that meets basic learning needs, and can be considered equivalent to the level of education covered up to the end of primary or lower-secondary school". Government of Pakistan is working hard at its own to ensure this fundamental right of basic education to all of its citizens, cooperation of International donor agencies is also a helping hand in this regard, but, still national and international reports depict a poor picture of this fundamental right to basic education.

Two or three decades ago, lack of knowledge about importance of education, missing facilities in schools, shortage of teachers and distance of schools from home town were some reasons which kept the children away from schools. But with the passage of time, government tried to overcome all these variables and take initiatives for providing

the basic education at doorstep. Free admission, free books, scholarships for deserving and intelligent students, food items and some token amount for each girl student are some of the schemes taken by the government for attracting people to education. Currently, electronic media has reached in far flung area of Pakistan; government is utilizing its services for preparing the parents to send their children to schools for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of society. Even today, it looks that all these challenges are as it were and these challenges are hurdles to fundamental right of basic education.

2. Literature

Article 26 (1) of United Nations' universal declaration of human rights (1948) ensure the right of everyone to education. Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Education adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations (1990) states that "there shall be no discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, social group or any other grounds" and article 28 claims the equal right of every child to education.

UNESCO describes the following benefits of basic education:

A good quality basic education equips pupils with literacy skills for life and further learning; literate parents are more likely to send their children to school; literate people are better able to access continuing educational opportunities; and literate societies are better geared to meet pressing development.
(<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/>).

UNESCO (2011) reports that a number of obstacles, including poverty, still keep 67 million children of primary-school age away from school, 53 percent of whom are girls.

Right from its inception, Government of Pakistan is curious about basic education and supposes education a ladder that takes man to horizons of development. Economic survey of Pakistan, (2011) addresses the relationship of education and economic growth as "educated human capital has been found to have strong and consistent positive effects on economic growth and productivity of a country". With this believe, constitution of Pakistan bound the government to provide free basic education to all of its citizens. But the actual situation of education is very poor. In 2011, the overall literacy rate is 57.7 that is very low if it compare with the other countries. National Education Policy (2009) states that "Pakistan's commitment to universal primary education by 2015 under EFA Framework appears elusive on current performance, as participation is low and drop-out rates continue to be high". Pakistan is working hand in hands with the international organizations and treaties for ensuring the fundamental right to basic education. For promotion of Education for All (EFA), Pakistan is the signatory of the following International declarations:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- World Declaration on Education for All, World Conference on Education for All (1990)
- Dakar Framework of Action for Education for all (2000)
- Delhi Declaration and framework of Action
- Recife Declaration of the E-9 Countries
- Beijing Declaration of the E-9 Countries
- Cairo Declaration of the E-9 countries and
- Monterrey Declaration of the E-9 countries.

The Constitution of Pakistan bans child labor with less than 14 years of age in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment. However, approximately 3.3 million children are involved in child labour all over the country (Government of Pakistan, 2008). The report further claims that to deal with this situation, government of Pakistan have adopted National Plan of Action on Child Labor to ensure at least primary education and skill training to the children involved in child labour. UNESCO (2009, p. 182) in its report Asia and the Pacific Education for All (EFA) Mid-Decade Assessment states that:

As the highest priority in the National Plan of Action, the goal of universal basic education is that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls and children in difficult circumstances will have access to compulsory primary education of good quality. Starting from a baseline of 66%, the target is 100% NER for boys by 2010 and for girls by 2015. An intermediate target of 79% NER (68% for girls and 90% for boys) was set for 2006. Starting from a baseline of 66%, the target is 100% NER for boys by 2010 and for girls by 2015. An intermediate target of 79% NER (68% for girls and 90% for boys) was set for 2006.

Khan (2010) conducted a study about the problems of universalization of primary education in Pakistan and found that poverty, lack of awareness, gap between school curriculum and workplace are some of the problems due to which parents avoid to send their children to schools.

3. Methodology

The researcher (first author) makes a discussion with 20 teachers of secondary/elementary schools having primary section (10 from rural areas and 10 from urban areas, were teaching for the last ten years) about the challenges which kept the children of school going age away from school or get drop before completing basic education (Elementary and fundamental education cover under basic education). The researcher took notes while discussing with teachers and after completing the discussion, identified following factors responsible for low enrolment in schools or which push the students away from schools before completing the basic education:

1. Poverty
2. Unemployment
3. Lack of awareness of importance of education
4. Lack of schools in remote areas
5. Lack of basic facilities

4. Sample of the Study

The sample for the study was one education officer of rural area of District Bahawalnagar and four education managers from urban area of District Bahawalnagar, selected through purposive sampling technique.

The purpose of selecting the deputy district education officer of Tehsil Fortabbas (Bahawalnagar District) was to know his views about the factors which are responsible to keep children away from their right to education.

The reasons for selection of the four education managers was that they have experience of school management in rural as well as in urban areas. Currently, they are working in urban area's schools.

5. Instrument of the Study

A semi structured interview was developed keeping in view the factors which were identified after discussion with the teachers. Same interview was used for both the groups, i.e education officer and education managers. At the end, same responses from both groups presented in a combined form and the views where they differ were stated with their references.

6. Limitation of the Study

The sample for the study is very small and therefore cannot be generalized over a large population with the same result. Everyone concerned with it may use it within the scope of the study.

7. Interview

7.1 Question 1: In the current modern era, why people avoid sending their children to school?

Poverty is the main reason due to which avoids to send their children to schools. They think that if their children spend this time on a shop, office or in some workshop will earn some money which ultimately will be helpful for the whole family.

7.2 Question 2: Government offer many schemes like free admission, free textbooks etc, even then why parents avoid for sending their children to schools?

Free admission or free textbooks cannot solve their financial matters. For survival in the society, the most important thing is finance, there are very poor peoples in rural areas, for them education is nothing, they only think about how to manage both ends meets.

7.3 Question 3: People can see that education is the only way that can drag them out of the pool of poverty; this situation does not attract them to education?

Of course, people observe this phenomenon some parents accept this situation and want to send their children to school, but in actual situation, there are many other problems related to education such as supplementary needs of education, initially, they try to fulfill the needs of their children but after some time they feel financial problems and push their children back from schools.

Educational managers, in urban area, literate parents as well as illiterate parents face hard situations and try to manage everything for their child to learn with the opinion that education is the only way that can change them from poor to progressive in future.

7.4 Question 4: Do you think that there are some problems from the government end for promotion of basic education?

Yes, in rural areas, lack of basic facilities, teachers' absenteeism and shortage of teachers especially female teachers are some challenges in the way of promotion of basic education.

Educational Managers: In urban area, public schools are facing challenge from the private sector. Private sector institutions have better buildings with more facilities and parents have capacity to pay fees, so they send their child to private sector schools.

Why community does not play its role to overcome these problems at local level?

As community does not aware about its role for the promotion of education, they think this is the responsibility of the governmental institutions to manage all the functions of schools. Government involved community in the school matters, but in rural areas, community involvement is not fully beneficial.

7.5 Question 5: NGOs and donor agencies are also working for the promotion of basic education; even then the progress is very slow. What are the actual reasons?

No doubt, NGOs and donor agencies are working for the promotion of basic education in Pakistan, but the whole system of education requires overhauling. Parents and teachers who are the most important stake holders are not taken in confidence. The large numbers of teachers from rural areas do not know the objectives and working phenomena of the programs launched by these organizations.

8. NGOs and donor agencies take representatives of teachers from different areas; it is the responsibility of those teachers to guide the other teachers.

This is right; but when these people go back to their areas, do not work efficiently due to passive atmosphere of the school system. It will be more useful if the representatives of these agencies visit the far flung areas of Pakistan and may deliver lectures about the short term and long term fruits of education.

9. Suggestion of Education Officer and Educational Managers for the promotion of basic education:

1. Government, at least at school level, may own the responsibility of all expenses of education.
2. Governmental officials may visit the schools to take the teachers and parents in confidence for creating awareness about importance of basic education.
3. Representatives of NGOs and donor agencies may arrange sessions for community awareness in their local areas.
4. Such curriculum may be taught that will be beneficial at work place after completing the basic education.

10. Conclusion

In Pakistan, there are many challenges to basic education. Every government tried to minimize these challenges, took different initiatives, draw action plans but could not overcome fully. Poverty, lack of basic facilities and passive

atmosphere of schools are some general problems and low level participation from community side, teachers' absenteeism and mismatch between school curriculum and work place are some other challenges to basic education.

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Web Source

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