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**Article**

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## **Problems in Universalization of Primary Education in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

“Education for all” is a global slogan and government of Pakistan is committed to achieve the goal of Universalization of primary education. For this government is establishing new schools in remote areas so that more and more children can get access to school. Public-private partnership and collaboration with non-government organizations are the steps to attain the level of Universalization of primary education. Government is trying to make schools attractive for children, and is introducing schemes to attract parents as well. There are number of problems like poverty, ignorance, low quality teaching, which affects the government efforts. The aim of the study is to highlight the problems in universalization of primary education in Pakistan. A questionnaire was developed on five point Likert scale for knowing the opinion of teachers about the problems in the universalization of primary education. Each statement of the questionnaire was checked by using chi-square technique. It was found that poverty, lack of awareness about importance of education, cultural values are the main problems in achieving universalization of primary education. On the basis of findings it is recommended that awareness about education may be created among the parents, Public schools play their role in decreasing the dropout rate, School Curriculum may design as which match the work place, teachers may be appointed in the far flung areas, Local Community may be involved. It is also considered by people that public institutions are not catering quality education, this notion may be abolished.

**Keywords:** Primary education, universalization, Pakistan.

### **1. Introduction**

Education is considered a right of every child without differentiation of race, sex, region and religion. Education plays very important role in the development of a child's personality. It is also considered that education is vital for nation development and there is a strong correlation between education and economic development of a country. It [Education] plays a critical role in building human capabilities and accelerates economic growth through knowledge, skill and creative strength of a society (Pakistan Economic Survey 2007-08).

Educated people are more crucial for the nation building, then ever, in the present globalization. Every nation in the world is trying its best to educate maximum people through all possible modes of education. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are being used to reach the peoples who are living in remote areas of the country. Access to primary education is taken to be a basic right of every citizen. All citizens need

to be literate to function productively and to make their full contribution to society as well as to realize their own potential (Shah, Bari and Ijaz, 2005).

The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) confirms the right to education in the following words:

We re-affirm the vision of the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien 1990), supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be.

Universalization of primary education remains a major objective of all the government of Pakistan since its inception. For achieving Universalization of primary education, the committee of the primary and secondary education (1947) considered it is essential that a national system of education should be based on the strong foundations of free and compulsory primary education. The Government of Pakistan is putting all its resources to achieve this target but till today it has not been possible. There are some hurdles in achieving the target of Universalization of primary education. On one hand education is considered as a key to secure future and on the other hand lack of awareness in the parents, School distance from home, market situation, strict atmosphere in schools, non-availability of teachers and lack of basic facilities are some common issues, which kept children away from schools.

## **2. Literature Review**

The nations which have been given priority to Education are at the top in the present scenario. It is a recognized fact, that the key to success and prosperity is education and to get education is the right of every child. In 1990, one hundred and fifty five countries from all over the world and some 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (5-9 March 1990) agreed that primary education will be accessible to all the children by 2010. The goals of this conference included:

- Universal access to learning.
- A focus on equity
- Emphasis on learning outcomes
- Broadening the means and the scope of basic education.
- Enhancing the environment for learning.
- Strengthening partnerships by 2000.

(<http://www.unesco.org/en/efa/the-efa-movement/jomtien-1990/>)

Dakar Framework for action (2000) claims that

Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization.... The basic learning needs of all can and must be met as a matter of urgency.

On the other hand Report on “Education for All -2010” shows the following facts about the condition of children in the world:

- There were 72 million children out of school in 2007. Business as usual would leave 56 million children out of school in 2015.
- Around 54% of children out of school are girls. In sub-Saharan Africa, almost 12 million girls may never enroll. In Yemen, nearly 80% of girls out of school are unlikely ever to enroll, compared with 36% of boys.
- Literacy remains among the most neglected of all education goals, with about 759 million adults lacking literacy skills today. Two-thirds are women.
- Millions of children are leaving school without having acquired basic skills. In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, young adults with five years of education had a 40% probability of being illiterate. In the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Guatemala, fewer than half of grade 3 students had more than very basic reading skills.
- Some 1.9 million new teacher posts will be required to meet universal primary education by 2015

United Nations (2008) in its report entitled “The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008” pointed out that in almost all regions, the net enrolment ratio in 2006 exceeded 90 per cent, and many countries were close to achieving universal primary enrolment. The report mentions that the number of children of primary school age who were out of school fell from 103 million in 1999 to 75 million in 2006. The report further says that in sub-Saharan Africa, the net enrolment ratio has only recently reached 71 per cent. Around 38 million children of primary school age in this region are still out of school.

Pakistan is one of the most populated countries in the world. National Education Policy and Implementation programme (1979) declared that a minimum level of education for all citizens is not only a basic human right but also is imperative for conscious participation of the masses in the development process of sovereign nation. To educate maximum mass government of Pakistan announces in the Education Policy (1972, :3) that education will be made free and universal up to grade 10. National Education Policy (1992) documented that Universalization of primary education has remained a desired goal of successive policies and plans. The policy highlighted the following limitations which have obstructed Universalization:

- Low female participation
- Rapid increase in the population of 5-9 age groups.
- Drop out rate of up to 50 %.
- Lack of access to primary Schools.
- Resource availability.
- School hours
- Opportunity cost.

UNESCO (2003) states:

Pakistan is a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and many other declarations down to the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the World Education Forum: Dakar Framework for Action 2000, the Recife Declaration of E-9 Countries 2000 and the Beijing Declaration of E-9 Countries on ICT and EFA 2001. But Pakistan, despite policy statements and target setting in various education policies and five-year plans is still far below universal primary education access and retention.

Almost all the governments launched different campaigns for awaking awareness about education among the parents and offer different rewards for sending children to schools.

National education Policy (1992) recognized the following strategies to meet the challenge of Universalization of primary education:

- About 265,000 new primary school teachers will be trained and recruited.
- As far as possible, female teachers will be recruited for primary schools.
- The upper age limit for appointment as primary teacher will be relaxed.
- The non-government organizations (NGOs) will be encouraged to set up resource centres for the in-service training of teachers.

National education Policy (1998-2010) states that in 1996-97, out of total 19.22 million primary school age (5-9 years) population, only 13.72 million were in school and 5.5 million were left-out, who were never enrolled. The policy highlights the following strategies for achieving the Universalization of primary education:

- National Literacy movement will be launched on emergency basis in every village, tehsil and district.
- Mosques, wherever feasible, will be utilized as one of the means to provide non-formal basic education to increase literacy.
- In unreached areas 25000 NFBE (Non-Formal Basic Education) community schools will be gradually upgraded to the middle level, over the policy period.

UNESCO (2000)<sup>a</sup> in its Country report “The Education for All: Assessment (2000)” highlight the following situation about the primary education in Pakistan:

Investment in primary education has increased from Rs.9563 million in 1990-91 to Rs 38674 million in 1998-99. It is a record increase of 304% in a short period of 9 years. ... In spite of these achievements net enrolment /participation rate could not exceed 60% against the Jomtein target of 100% net enrolment by the years 2000. It shows that around 8 million children of 5-9 age group are never enrolled in school and half (50%) of those (12 million enrolled) may drop out before completing primary education. At this rate total number of out of school children may reach 14 (8+6) million by the year 2002.03.

(Here Rs is the basic unit of Currency in Pakistani system)

According to Economic Survey of Pakistan (2009)<sup>a</sup>, literacy rate is 56 % (69% for male and 44% for female) in 2007-08. Literacy remains higher in urban areas (71%) than in rural areas (49%) and more in men (69%) compared to women (44%). High population growth, cultural and socio- economic barriers have kept literacy rates depressingly low in

Pakistan (Mohammad & Bregman, 1998). Federal and Provincial Governments are introducing projects with the aid of foreign countries and Public-private partnership to increase the net enrolment at primary level. Government also, collaborating with non-government organizations (NGOs) to provide education in the far flung areas of the country. One of the reasons of not sending children to schools or drop out in the mid way is the children labor. To meet the expenditures, parents send their children to workplaces. These children are unable to join the formal institutions. To attract such children to schools is a challenge for the government. The result of the formal institutional structure is that millions of children have been deprived of elementary education because institutional facilities did not exist but primary education clashed with their jobs (National Education Policy, 1998-2010).

Shami and Hussain (2005) conducted a study entitled “Basic Education in Pakistan” and found the following reasons of low enrollment in primary schools in Pakistan:

Majority of boys and girls could not be enrolled in the schools because of Expensive education, Non-availability of schools, Remote schools, No facility for further education, Providing help at home, Teachers’ harsh behavior and Less conveyance to remote schools. The reasons for leaving school during the academic year were expensive education, Lack of parents’ interest, large family size, Remote schools, Security problems, Non-availability of good teachers, harsh behavior of teachers and corporal punishment.

### **3. Statement of the problem**

Education is considered as a key change agent for a nation. It is education which opens the windows of opportunities for individuals who ultimately play his/her role for his country as well as for the whole world. Every government of Pakistan gave much importance to education, but Pakistan is one of the countries which remain failed in universalization of primary education. The present study tried to find out the root causes due to which Pakistan did not accomplish universalization of primary education.

### **4. Significance of the Study**

The present study:

- Is valuable for government organizations.
- Highlight the root causes in the way of universalization of primary education.
- Primary teachers’ opinion about the problems about primary education.

### **Research Questions of the Study**

The Research questions of the study were:

1. What are the problems in achieving the Universalization of primary education?
2. What are Strategies of government of Pakistan to overcome these problems?

### **5. Methodology**

It was a descriptive study in nature. The population for the study was the primary school teachers. A total of 100 primary school teachers from rural areas of District Bahawalnagar were selected as sample, among them 50 were male teachers and 50 were female teachers. A questionnaire consisting nine items was developed on five point Likert scale (Strongly

Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree and Strongly Disagreed) and delivered to the sample by the researcher. The sample was asked to select one option. Each option was assigned a number in the following way:

Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Uncertain = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagreed = 1

After collecting the data, each statement was checked by using chi-square technique at significance level 0.05.

## 6. Analysis of Data

Table: 1. Statistical Analysis of Data

Item No	Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	$\chi^2$
1	Parents do not send children to schools due to poverty.	54	25	10	5	6	85.1
2	Lack of awareness about education is the main reason of low enrolment in primary schools.	35	46	9	3	7	74.0
3	Children left school due to strict environment of the public schools.	15	26	25	19	15	5.6
4	Parents hesitate to send children to schools because they feel there is a gap between the school activities and work place.	37	29	17	9	8	32.2
5	Cultural situation is a hurdle in the way of girls' education.	23	28	31	11	7	22.2
6	Shortage of Teachers is a cause of low enrolment in primary schools.	14	29	23	24	10	11.7
7	Community can play an important role in increasing the enrollment of primary level.	17	45	12	14	12	39.9
8	Enrollment in primary may be increased through high level educational efficiency of public schools.	12	38	10	23	17	25.3
9	Evening shifts can increased the enrollment in primary schools.	15	34	14	35	2	40.3

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Pakistan is facing the challenge of Universalization of primary education. Government of Pakistan is trying to increase the net enrollment in primary education, but there are lot of issues and problems in this regard. Poverty is a main problem of Pakistan and the teachers confirm that parents do not send their children to schools because they think; child is more productive for them if he/she becomes an earning hand, even government is providing free education. It is a common view of the peoples that in public schools corporal punishment is a common practice. Teachers disagreed with the statement that “Children left school due to strict environment of the public schools”, because “Mar Nahe Piyaar”) is the slogan of the government educational institutions. Teachers corroborated that parents hesitate to send children to schools because they think what they will be do after completing primary education, if they have not resources for further education. Why not child got a skill in these five years which will be an asset for further life. Teachers are of the orated that Cultural values, shortage of teachers are the reasons of low enrollment at the primary level, they speaks out that role of community and high level efficiency of educational are very important for accelerating the number of students in primary. Teachers orate that Evening shifts in schools can accommodate those schools who remain busy in some work in the morning time.

## 6. Findings and Recommendations

The questionnaire was distributed to male and female teachers. No major difference was found in the opinion of male and female teachers.

1. Poverty is a hurdle in the way of Universalization of primary education.
2. Lack of awareness is one of the reasons of low enrollment in primary schools.
3. There is no strict atmosphere in the public schools.
4. There is a gap between school curriculum and workplace.
5. Cultural situation and shortage of teachers are some other reasons.
6. Quality education of public institutions can play an important role in accelerating the enrollment rate.
7. Evening shifts in schools can play a positive role in educating those children who remain busy in work in the morning time.

Government of Pakistan is providing all the facilities to ensure the universalization of primary education, it is needed that awareness about education may be created among the parents so that they may send their children to schools. Public schools may play their role in decreasing the dropout rate. Curriculum may design in such a way that it may be helpful for the students out of schools. In addition, teachers may be appointed in the far flung areas so that people send their children. Local Community may be involved after providing special training about importance of education. It is also considered that public institutions are not catering quality education, this notion may be abolished.



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