



POTENTIAL OF NON FORMAL BASIC EDUCATION IN PROMOTING WOMEN EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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The present study aimed to assess the performance of a non-formal basic education (NFBE) schools project initiated in the province of Punjab with the assistance of the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA). The study was conducted in 120 NFBE schools in four districts of Punjab and it lasted for a period of three months. It was a survey study in which data were collected from female teachers, officers of NFBE, students and their parents. 100 NFBE school teachers, 20 officers of NFBE schools and 500 students and their parents participated in the study. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. It was found that the project is achieving its targets as planned. It also found that students' drop-out rate was higher in NFBE schools and the teachers were not satisfied with job structure. It was further found that a proper media campaign might usefully be initiated to mobilize the community to participate in NFBE projects. The study recommended that learning materials be developed in different local languages.

Key Words: non-formal basic education, NFBE, women education, education in Pakistan,

INTRODUCTION

Non-Formal Education

The notion of non-formal education (NFE) has been a significant feature of policy debates around education in many countries for three decades. It has drawn attention to the importance and potential of education, learning and

training that takes place outside recognized educational institutions. The term non-formal education is broad and loosely defined to include all education outside the school system with no parameters of time and space (Shiror, 1995). It includes all learning and training that takes place outside recognized educational institutions.

The idea of non-formal education (NFE) is an innovation of 20th century. It derives its origin from the expression of formal education. It refers to a sequential structure of learning experience, which take places outside the formal system but is generally part of some other organization or program (Farooq, 1993). Similarly, the Khawaja and Brennan (1990) have characterized non-formal education as an international movement that emerged particularly in the second half of 20th century as a result of problems of general economic, political and social development with regard to nations and individuals. Non-formal education may range from day care for children of working others to adult education classes. Shiror (1995) stated that need for non-formal education arises due to limitations in financial resources, within contexts of rapid population growth where there is a perceived need to provide education for all to increase human development. Non formal education gaining popularity due to its low costs and its nature of adaptability with the needs and requirements of its clients. Shiror further elaborated that NFE includes literacy classes, apprenticeships, in-service training schemes and extension services in e.g. health, agriculture, women's interests and community. In today's society, the concept of non formal education includes computer literacy also.

Many developing and developed countries are encouraging the spread of education through non-formal means as the formal system of education cannot cope with the demand for education as cited by Daswani (2001, p187) "the formal system has failed to enroll all children of age 5-14 years without dropping them". If the formal system had the ability to enroll all children of school going age then there would have been no need for non-formal education. Fordham (1993, p.53) has described four characteristics of non-formal education. These comprise relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups concern with specific categories of person, focus on clearly defined purposes and its flexibility in organization and methods.

Bishop (1998) says that the majority of people in the developing countries live in rural areas that are deprived of education and other facilities and services. The basic educational needs of most rural people are literacy, numeracy, health education, community improvement, education and technical skills and these can be easily met with NFE. It may be summed up that NFE is consciously

planned or systematically organized learning and training that occurs outside of the formal system.

Emergence of Non-formal education in Pakistan

Pakistan is a developing country with limited resources and a high population growth rate of 2.6% per annum. The increase in the school enrollment rate is not in line with the increase in the rate of population growth in the country and each year millions of children of school going age are deprived from getting admission to formal education due to the shortage of schools. The total number of schools in the country is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Number of schools Gender/Locality wise

	<i>Gender/Locality</i>	<i>Mosque Schools</i>	<i>Primary Schools</i>
Rural	Boys	4,871	19,822
	Girls	48	20,520
Urban	Boys	815	2,057
	Girls	25	2,276
Total		5759	44675

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (2006-07) Islamabad

The above data reveal that number of schools could not be increased sufficiently to enroll all the children. During the 2000s policy has focused on rural areas and the number of primary schools has increased sharply for both boys and girls, although the proportion of girls' school remained constant. The Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (Government of Pakistan, 2006-07) has revealed that every year the dropout rate for girls is increasing. A substantial decline was found in the percentage of girls (aged 10-18 years) who left school before completing primary school as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentages of children that left school

<i>Province</i>	<i>Locality</i>	<i>Percentages of Children that left school</i>					
		2001-02		2005-06		2007-08	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Punjab	Urban	4	8	1	7	8	6
	Rural	19	18	14	15	12	11
Sindh	Urban	14	10	7	5	6	4
	Rural	12	20	11	27	6	16
NWFP	Urban	9	12	8	13	6	10
	Rural	12	28	11	16	8	18
Balochistan	Urban	8	8	6	13	7	8
	Rural	10	12	8	24	9	19
Overall		15	15	11	12	9	10

Source: Academy of Educational Planning & Management (2006-07) Islamabad

If we look around neighboring countries in south Asia it can be seen that at the start of the new millennium, Maldives and Sri Lanka had both achieved a literacy rate of well over 90%, considerably higher than the regional average of 54%. Similarly many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have quite successfully adopted non-formal education and are offering different programs. Developed countries like Japan, Norway, Netherlands, France, UK and USA and developing countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan have seized upon the advantages of NFE to meet pressing educational and social needs (Haq, 2002). A non-formal system of education is being used effectively in different parts of the world in order to solve the long standing problems in mass illiteracy and creating social awareness. It was realized that through the formal system alone, illiteracy and other problems of education cannot be solved. Therefore, many countries of the world, both developed and developing, realizing the advantages of non-formal system have adopted it and made it an integral part of their national system of education. In Pakistan there is dire need to launch a national movement for literacy. The country is far behind the target of 100% literacy as set by Dakar declaration (2000), which clearly states that:

- By 2015 all children, particularly girls should have access to completely free and compulsory primary education.
- 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy would be achieved by 2015, especially for women.
- Gender disparities in primary and secondary education would be eliminated by 2015 with gender equality achieved in education by 2015 (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000).

The need for NFE in Pakistan has arisen because not only is the formal system unable to cope with the rising demand of education in the country with its rigid nature but also because the costs of formal education are higher. Ghafoor (1994) identified two factors for low progress of primary education that include inside school factors and outside school factors. The inside school factors include poor physical facilities, a dearth of teaching and learning materials, a shortage of trained and qualified teachers, inadequate training of teachers, inadequate learning climate, high pupil/teacher ratio, overemphasis on subject matter at the expense of personality development, rigid educational policies and practices and an urban based curriculum. The outside school factors identified included the low socio-economic background of the child, malnutrition among children and socio-cultural problems related to female education. Similarly in a report by UNESCO (1991) the formal system of education was blamed for the

low enrolment of children at the primary level. This is very much evident from table 3:

Table 3. The literacy rates of different groups in Pakistan

<i>Gender/Locality</i>	<i>Literacy rates</i>			
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Male	65	65	67	69
Female	40	42	42	44
Both	53	54	55	56
Rural	44	44	45	49
Urban	71	71	72	71

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey (2006-07)

In the past several non-formal education programs have been initiated. Indeed UNESCO (1999) indicated that a non-formal basic education (NFBE) program was initiated in Pakistan in the 1950 under the title of Adult Basic Education Program. However, while several small non-formal education programs have been started no effort has been made to launch a non-formal education program on a national level.

Establishment of non-formal education schools (NFES) is a clarion call of the day around the world. In Pakistan the practice is going very successfully. Based on the concept of single room, single teacher, multi grades and children at different ages, the non-formal education system is highly successful in promoting universal primary education (national plan of action, 2000). These NFE schools are established in areas where there is a concentration out of school, of working and non-working children. The literature review shows that there are some reasons for the emergence of the non-formal education in Pakistan and these include:

- The lack of adequate formal education schools especially in the far flung rural areas
- Lack of trained teachers
- Improper study hours of formal education
- Problems of accessing to formal schools
- Socio-cultural problems
- Greater number of school leavers/drop-out from formal schools

A major initiative towards “Education for All” were social action program (SAP), education sector reforms (ESR) and the national plan of action (NPA). These plans have specially targeted girls’ education and have allocated significant funds for this purpose. This factor encouraged gender equality in education. The national plan of action (2000), is a roadmap to meet the education for all (EFA) targets. This plan represents the will and determination of the nation to fight against illiteracy and universalize primary education. The national plan of action (2000) was aimed to achieve 100% participation rate in basic education (grade 1-5) by the year 2015 both for male and female as presented in the table 4:

Table 4. Targets of basic education in national plan of action

<i>Participation Rate</i>	<i>Year 2000</i>	<i>Year 2005</i>	<i>Year 2010</i>	<i>Year 2015</i>
Overall	66%	79%	93.5%	100%
Male	82%	90%	100%	100%
Female	50%	68%	87%	100%

Source: The National Plan of Action (2000, pp.6-7)

Non-Formal Basic Education Schools

Non-Formal Basic Education Schools (NFBES) were first established in 1996 under the Prime Minister’s Literacy commission in Pakistan. The concept of (NFBE) schools is based on the philosophy of involving parents, community and the non-governmental organizations in the promotion of education through non-formal means (PMLC 1996, p.7.). NBFES schools have been established all over the country, including urban slums, small towns and remote villages. Some of the objectives of the NFBE schools include the universalization of primary education, to increase inclusion of the community and NGOs, to provide employment opportunities to educated persons and empowerment of rural women. The NFBES are based on the ‘Home school’ model. The government provides funds to the community through intermediary nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The selected community provides a teacher with fixed salary of Rs 1000 per month. The five years primary curriculum is taught in three and a quarter years. The targets of the NFBES schools are the dropouts of formal schooling in the 10 to 14 years age group. The completion period of primary level education is 2-3 years. Children attaining the age of 5-9 years have to complete primary level education in 3-4 years instead of the 5-6 years specified for formal schools. According to the planning commission project document (called PC-1) of the Non- Formal Basic Education Schools (1998) these schools have to complement the formal school by offering education in those areas where regular primary schools do not exist, and where children are out of schools for various reasons. The NFBE model of schools requires fewer

resources. The community provides the school building and manages the school. The teachers of NFBES do not have to worry about transfers and, therefore, work with a missionary zeal. According to PMLC (1996) the program of Non-formal Basic Education Schools is implemented through NGOs and community based organization that identify sites for schools, supervise them, give inputs, teaching aids and pay remuneration to the teachers. These NGOs also arrange to provide training to the teachers, form parent-teacher committees at local levels and hold meeting with the teachers and communities. In turn, they are paid Rs.200 per school per month in addition to earning awards for the best performance.

Presently, a number of schemes and projects have been initiated in the country. In connection with this a five year program for education and skill development for rehabilitation and to provide economic opportunities to illiterates in jails and working in factories has been established. A scheme of literacy under the title “Model Districts for Literacy Campaigns to Achieve 100% Literacy” has been launched with assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in four districts of Punjab. The scheme was approved in 2004. Its major components include establishment of adult literacy centers and non-formal basic education (NFBE) centers and awareness campaigns. The targets of this scheme are to achieve 100% literacy in four districts (Khushab, Khanewal, Mandi Bahauddin and Dera Ghazi Khan) of Punjab as indicated in the table 5:

Table 5. Targets and achievement of NFBE project

<i>Target</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
Model districts for literacy campaigns to achieve 100% literacy in Khushab, Khanewal, Mandi Bahauddin and Dera Ghazi Khan districts	Established 2335 NFBE schools Enrolled 81725 students age group (5-14) Established 1306 NFBE schools and enrolled 39987 adults so far Teacher training is in progress

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey 2007-08 Islamabad.

METHOD

Objectives of the study

The study had the following objectives:

- To investigate the role of non-formal basic education in promoting women’s education.
- To assess the effectiveness of NFBE schools by exploring strengths and weaknesses of the NFBE schools

Design of the study

It was a survey study. It was conducted in the 120 literacy schools of the project entitled “Model Districts for Literacy Campaigns to Achieve 100% Literacy” in four districts of Punjab. Questionnaire and interview were used as tools for the collection of data.

Sample of the study

The sample was selected using convenience sampling method. The detail of the sample is:

- i. 100 female teachers of non-formal basic education school.
- ii. 500 students studying in NFBE centers along with their parents.
- iii. 20 officers of NFBE schools

Instrument of the study

Two questionnaires were developed for data collection. One questionnaire was for female teachers of NFBE schools comprising of 21 items. A second questionnaire was developed for officers of NFBE schools and it included 12 items. A structured interview was conducted with students and their parents. The questionnaires were based on a five point likert scale ranging from “Strongly agreed” to “Strongly disagreed” in which the participants were asked to tick the appropriate box. The instruments were validated with help of experts. Before actual launch, the instruments were pilot tested in the field. The reliability of each item was also calculated and the item with less than a “r value of 0.4 were ignored.

RESULTS

After collection of questionnaires, the analysis of data was made in the form of tables. As the data were of non parametric in nature, a chi square test was used to compare within/among different populations. Table 6 indicates a summary of the analysis for teachers:

Table 6. Summary of the teachers' questionnaire

Statement	Percentages					Mean	χ^2
	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA		
Do you motivate the girls for a new lesson/ activity?	50	20	25	5	-	4.1	15.5 (df4)p<0.05
Do you give homework to the girls?	20	35	25	15	5	3.6	5.0 (df4)p<0.05
Dropout rate is higher in NFBE schools as compared to formal schools?	5	55	20	15	5	3.9	17 (df4)p<0.05
Education of NFBE schools enables girl students to continue their studies	20	55	15	5	5	3.8	17 (df4)p<0.05
Do your students cooperate with each other?	10	50	20	10	10	3.4	12 (df4)p<0.05
Student writing, speaking and communication skills properly develop	20	55	15	10	-	4.0	17.5 (df4)p<0.05
Parents of girls cooperate with you?	40	35	15	10	-	4.1	11.5 (df4)p<0.05
Do you send progress reports to parents?	25	40	15	10	10	3.7	6.5 (df4)p<0.05
Do these schools help in the improvement of women's conditions in their areas?	25	45	15	10	5	3.8	10 (df4)p<0.05
Are the schools inspected monthly?	20	55	20	5	-	4.1	18.5 (df4)p<0.05
The students are punctual.	10	70	15	5	-	4.1	32.5 (df4)p<0.05
The students take interest in the literacy activities	50	20	25	5	-	4.1	15.5 (df4)p<0.05
The students remain full time in the centre	25	45	15	10	5	3.8	10 (df4)p<0.05
Literacy material is easy to teach	25	40	15	10	10	3.7	6.5 (df4)p<0.05
Literacy material relates to everyday life experiences	40	35	15	10	-	4.1	11.5 (df4)p<0.05
Literacy material is supported by teaching aids	20	55	15	10	-	4.0	17.5 (df4)p<0.05
Did you have any training for NFE?	5	5	-	45	45	2.1	21.0 (df4)p<0.05
Teachers use motivational techniques	5	55	20	15	5	3.9	17 (df4)p<0.05
Are you satisfied with physical environment of the school	5	10	15	25	45	1.5	10 (df4)p<0.05
Community attitude is friendly and cooperative	45	25	15	15	5	4.1	9.3 (df4)p<0.05
The school is regularly visited by the supervisor	50	20	25	5	-	4.1	15.5 (df4)p<0.05
School access is easy	50	20	25	5	-	4.1	15.5 (df4)p<0.05
Student progress is regularly assessed	20	55	15	10	-	4.0	17.5 (df4)p<0.05
Are you satisfied with your pay structure?	5	15	15	25	45	2.1	9.3 (df4)p<0.05
Timing of the school is appropriate	10	50	20	10	10	3.4	12 (df4)p<0.05
Non-formal education is an effective mode of education for women in Pakistan	50	20	10	10	10	3.9	12 (df4)p<0.05
Teachers of formal education system are equally beneficial for NFE	20	35	25	15	5	3.6	5.0 (df4)p<0.05
Non-formal education is more attractive and suitable for women	50	15	20	10	5	4.0	12.5 (df4)p<0.05
In present times NFE can play its role effectively in promoting women's education in Pakistan	45	45	5	-	5	4.3	21.0 (df4)p<0.05
NFE material is more comprehensive and helpful for fulfilling the educational needs of women	20	45	20	15	-	3.7	10.5 (df4)p<0.05
Women have positive attitudes about NFE system	20	55	15	5	5	3.8	17 (df4)p<0.05
NFE plays a vital role in uplifting the status of women's education in the society	30	55	15	-	-	4.2	21.5 (df4)p<0.05
Parents are reluctant to educate their girls.	10	50	20	10	10	3.4	12 (df4)p<0.05

The above table revealed some of the important factors about NFBE schools.

- i. Teachers of formal system are not equally beneficial for NFBE as it has different philosophy.
- ii. Parents are reluctant to educate their girls.
- iii. Teachers were not satisfied with the pay structure and physical environment of NFBE schools.
- iv. The dropout rate is thought to be higher in NFBE schools.
- v. Teachers sent progress report regularly but the parents did not agree to it.
- vi. Teachers did not have prior training about non-formal education.

The questionnaire also includes an open ended item about suggestions to improve the working of the NFBE schools. A summary of the suggestions is presented in table 7.

Table 7. Summary of the Suggestions by teachers of NFBE schools

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
1	Proper training for teachers	95
2	School may easily accessible for teacher/students	35
3	Proper community mobilization techniques be used	41
4	Appropriate pay structure for teachers	100
5	Teaching materials in local language	45

Teachers recommended that teaching materials be in local languages.

Table 8. Analysis of questionnaire of NFBE officers

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Percentages</i>		
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>To some extent</i>
1	Needs assessment of students needs is done	40	13	47
2	Teachers provided training before recruitment.	12	59	29
3	Supervisory staff is sufficient	37	26	37
4	The performance of teachers is satisfactory	53	15	32
5	Supervisory staff have had prior training	45	30	25
6	Community participation is adequate	34	48	18
7	Is there any continuous evaluation system of NFE program?	66	-	34
8	A proper strategy is adopted for community mobilization	45	30	25

Without active community participation, success of a non-formal education is impossible. Further needs assessment may be done before launching of NFBE schools.

Table 9. Problems/suggestions identified by officers of NFBE schools

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
1	Community mobilization is difficult	70
2	Non availability of sufficient funds	56
3	Lack of appropriate infrastructure	48
4	Outdated learning materials	64
5	Community resistance	45
6	Less participation of female students	65
7	Development of learning materials in accordance with the needs of the community	80
8	Proper media campaign	75

The officers recommended a proper service structure for NFBE teachers. They also stressed the need for a proper media campaign.

Table 10. Summary of parents' interview

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Percentages</i>		
		Yes	No	To some extent
1	Their girls have learnt new skill/ knowledge in these schools.	48	13	39
2	Girls can express their ideas in a better way because of the education in NFBE schools.	67	10	23
3	NFBE schools play an important role for women development in a society.	80	2	18
4	Education can promote positive behavior in their girls.	90	-	10
5	NFBE creates awareness regarding health and hygiene.	70	-	30
6	Non formal basic education can play a better role in social and economic development as compared to uneducated women.	90	-	10
7	NFBE education develops positive thinking/ tolerance in girls.	85	-	15
8	Progress reports of students	15	65	20
9	NFBE schools have developed confidence in their girls	89	-	11
10	Do you recommend NFBE to other girls	75	-	25

The table 10 shows that the parents were very happy about performance of NFBE schools. They were of the view that their girls developed many skills and now they communicate properly. However, they said that teachers did not inform them about the progress of their girls.

Table 11. Summary of students' interview

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Percentages</i>		
		Yes	No	To some extent
1	School is easily accessible	55	25	20
2	Are satisfied with the facilities at school	43	30	27
3	School environment is good	57	12	31
4	Family members cooperate in attending school	70	15	15
5	Timing of school is proper	60	10	30
6	Teacher attitude is friendly	70	5	25
7	Teacher come to school regularly	67	18	15
8	Teaching material is easy to learn	56	19	25
9	Teaching material is linked with your need	45	32	23
10	Teacher involves you in lesson/activities	58	17	25

The students endorsed majority of the statements about the performance of their teachers, however, there is still need to improve physical facilities in the schools.

CONCLUSION

It is a fact that a country's social and economic development depend on the education of its citizens. Those nations who neglect education lag behind in the march of civilization and suffer the bad consequences. The history of the Hindu-Pak shows that after the downfall of Mughal rule, Hindus turned to education quickly while the Muslims did not give attention to the acquisition of modern education. In the present-day world, countries are increasing their expenditure on education and so are getting advantages from it. Despite the importance of education in the 21st century the third world countries have not achieved their educational objectives. Pakistan is one of those unfortunate countries, which have low literacy rates. To overcome this problem a national educational conference was convened just after the creation of Pakistan to bring reforms to the educational system but the lack of political stability in the initial stage hindered the steps for reforms.

Although overall adult literacy rates are low in the country, with over half the population illiterate, there has been impressive progress over the past two decades, especially in rural areas where literacy rates have doubled for females (Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey 2007-08).

The present study aimed to assess the performance of the NFBE schools project initiated in the province of Punjab with the assistance of Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA). The study was conducted in 120 NFBE schools in four districts of Punjab. The study revealed some important findings. It revealed that:

- Parents were reluctant to educate their girls.
- Teachers were not satisfied with the pay structure and physical environment of NFBE schools.
- Drop-out rates are higher in NFBE schools.
- Teachers sent progress reports regularly but the parents did not agree to it.
- Teachers did not have any prior training about non-formal education.

The study shows that the project is achieving its targets as envisaged. The study recommended that learning materials be in local languages.

Recommendations from the study

In the light of the findings of the study it is recommended that:

- To create awareness among the masses a media campaign for community mobilization be fully utilized.
- Proper training be arranged for teachers of NFBE schools.
- An appropriate service structure be introduced to attract talented teachers.
- Learning materials be in local languages.
- Needs assessment be done before establishing NFBE schools.

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