



A CRITICAL STUDY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION SITUATION IN AJK STATE

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Abstract

AJK (Azad Jammu & Kashmir) government is a small administrative unit under overall sovereignty of Pakistan. It has a total area of 13297 sq kilometers with a population of about 3.8 million. This study critically examines the problems of primary education system in AJK State specifically in govt. primary schools in Pakistan administrative Kashmir, a part of former princely state called Azad Jammu & Kashmir. For this purpose a significant review of on hand literature was passed out. On the basis of deeper and critical investigation into the literature, the study found that primary education is the most neglected, poorly financed and poorly managed. There is political interference in the system which breeds corruption, favoritism and nepotism. The system of supervision is weak and traditionally characterized having no effective mechanism for teacher training with poor system of accountability, teachers are underpaid and successive educational policies have failed to bring any positive changes in the system due to poor implementation. The curriculum of the primary education is outdated. Assessment is based on the memory of the students rather than their performance. On the basis of this study it is recommended that the problems can be solved by robust system of accountability, eradication of corruption, quality assessment system, non political interference, and quality curriculum and teachers motivation.

Keywords: Primary education, causes of problems, foundation of education, recommended solutions

Introduction

In addition to being a right, basic primary education underpins the success of a society. Every year of primary education increases a person's productivity and reduces their dependence on social resources. The goal of education is to enable children to learn, realize their full potential, and participate meaningfully in society. In spite of increasing enrolment rates, too many children are learning far less than what they are taught about or what they ought to learn in school. This low learning achievement is most frequently due to a combination of factors that include inadequate learning environments, inappropriate teaching methods and frequently unmotivated teachers, and the malnourishment and unhealthy environment. Enhancing the quality in education, there must be based on developing educational systems that are integrated and responsive to the multiple obstacles of children's learning. Quality education redresses gender and other inequalities; children's health and nutrition; issues of parental and community involvement; and the management of the education system itself. The benefits and impact of quality education also make invaluable contributions to all areas of human development, improving the status of women and helping to alleviate and eventually eradicate poverty.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes the right of every child to education and requires States to provide free and compulsory basic education (article 28). It further calls on governments to ensure that education leads to the fullest possible development of each child's ability, and to respect children's parents' cultural identity and for human rights (article 29). The CRC obligates both national governments and the international community to promote cooperation and ensure that the rights of children are met. The World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien Thailand sponsored by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank marked a



significant shift in the world's collective approach to education, broadening notions of quality in basic education and understanding its delivery focusing special attention on the world's poorest citizens. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) emerged from the United Nations (UN) Millennium Declaration in 2000, and are arguably the most politically important deal ever made for international development. They identify specific development priorities across a very broad range, including poverty, education, gender health, environment, and international partnerships. These goals have substantially shaped development dialogue around the world. Some development agencies judge all their activities on the contributions to achievement of the MDGs. The MDGs are also important for providing general framework for channelizing the public sector development efforts. Governments of both the developed and under developed countries have made certain commitments in the Millennium Declaration in order to achieve the goals within given time frame. The developed countries promised to enhance their contribution up to 0.7 per cent of their GDPs. The G8 Finance Ministers agreed in June 2005 to provide enough funds to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the African Development Bank (AFDB) to cancel an additional \$40 to \$55 billion in debt owed by members of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) to allow impoverished countries to channel the resources saved from the forgiven debt to social programs for improving health, education and poverty. Second MDG envisages the achievement of universal primary education as a goal to be achieved till 2015. Government of Pakistan has committed to allocate 7% share of its GDP in order to achieve the said target. Since its independence, Pakistan lagged behind in national development and progress due to weak education system. The primary system of education could not make progress due to many factors such as parochial feudal and state politicians, corrupt bureaucracy, authoritarian regimes, fragile civil society and weak democracy. The system of primary education was deliberately neglected in the country. Instead of developing the nation on the basis of free and quality education, the system was hijacked by so-called monsters of democracy and development (Zafar, 2003). On the other hand, the education sector seems to be in good in Pakistan administered Kashmir (AJK) although the gaps still exists. The Pakistan District Education Rankings 2015' report produced jointly by Alif Ailaan and Sustainable Development Policy Institute has revealed that AJK is way ahead of national Pakistani average in Pakistan (Alif Ailaan Report 2015).

Geographical Status of AJK State

This article focused on Azad Jammu & Kashmir AJ&K (Free Kashmir or Pakistan administered Kashmir), consists of an arc-shaped stretch of remote territory, lies west of the Indian-occupied state of Kashmir and in the North-east of Pakistan has an area of 5,134 mi² (13,297 km²), about 4.5 million population having a self-governing system under control of Pakistan. The State has a parliamentary form of Government having its own elected president, prime minister, legislature, high court, and official flag. Kashmir has very significant geographical distribution among ten administrative districts which having mountainous ranges with valleys and stretches of plains. It comprises foothills of the Himalayas rising to Jamgarh Peak (4,734 m) with the Northwestern reaches of the Pir Panjal Range (3,753 m) to the South. This area lies between 300 and 350 North latitude and has subtropical highland climate with 150 cm average rainfall. The area is full of natural beauty with wide, thick and deep forest, speedy flowing rivers and winding streams. The major rivers are, Neelum, Jehlum and Poonch.

AJK Primary Education Status

AJ&K is considered to be an underdeveloped state with low income where public education is a big sector. Although major portion 28 percent of the budget of the territory is being spend on education but still it is not sufficient to provide the adequate physical environment for provision of quality education. The general education system in the state is structured, as same as Pakistan, into pre-school (02 years), primary level (05 years), Middle level (03 years), Secondary level (02 years) and higher secondary (02 years). With context of primary education sector in AJK, the state department of



education school consists of 4202 government primary schools with 9589 available primary teachers and 43% children out of school with 35% dropout rate and teachers absent rate from school is 12%, language outcomes are very poor with wide regional disparities. 41% schools are without buildings 87 % without electricity, 73% are without availability of drinking water and 82% are without boundary walls. Shabbir, M. & Wei Song 112-125(2014).

AJK Investment for education

The fact is reflected by pattern of resource allocation for education in terms of percentage of GDP. Pakistan has the lowest allocation for education in South Asia which is 2% of GDP in 2009-10. Most interestingly allocation for education shows a decreasing trend for the duration 2006-10. But expenditure on education in AJK makes a major portion (28.14%) of the total budget. However 99% of this money goes to pay and allowances and one per cent is left for the operational expenditures, the other hand share in developmental budget is only 09%. According to Chief Economist of AJK, out of this developmental budget only 1.15% is contributed for primary education. Whereas percentage shares of other sectors middle, secondary, higher education are 09.25, 23.73, and 9.46 respectively. For current financial year share allocated for primary education amounts to 10.234 million rupees only. This shows that presently primary education is not a priority area in AJK. Under the NEP the government of Pakistan had committed to increase the share of allocation for education to 07% of GDP. The allocation was 2.24% in 2001-02 after which it is showing a decreasing trend. Present year it is 2.00% of the GDP. Since AJK is dependent on Pakistan in financial matters any increase and decrease in financial allocation have direct bearing on it.

AJK Comparative status of MDG-2 with Pakistan (Achieving Universal Primary Education) UPE

Indicators	In %	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Baluchistan	AJK	FATA	GB	ICT
NER at Primary	MDG Target	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Actual	56	61	53	51	47	91.5	28.3	72	76
Completion/Survival rate grade 1-5	MDG Target	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Actual	55	59	43	71	41	92	16	89	96
Literacy rat 10+	MDG Target	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
	Actual	58	60	59	50	41	64	21.4	38%	82
Gender Parity Index (GPI) at Primary	MDG Target	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Actual	1	0.96	1.36	0.69	0.76	1	0.52	0.84	0.98

Sources: PSLM 2010-11 and Pakistan Educational Statistics 2010-11.

Statement of Purpose

AJK primary education problems can be marked out to the very beginning of the country when the newly independent state inherited an already defined system of education. This system was really weak, not very good managed and categorized. Although AJK literacy rate is higher than all provinces of Pakistan but still there is high alarming situation in AJK primary education which needs to be improved. According to ASER (2014) data report 43% children are out of school. Due to this AJK is



still suffering with not very highest literacy rate. Many children in AJK do not continue school beyond the primary school level and it's found that 35% dropout in primary level there.

School facilities and conditions are not very good as found that, 41% schools are without buildings 87 % without electricity, 73% are without availability of drinking water and 82% is without boundary walls. Therefore, the Learning outcomes are very poor with wide regional disparities. This study attempts to analyze the causes of diverse problems which affect the highest literacy rate of primary education in AJK State.

Objectives of the study

Following were the main objectives of this study.

1. To identify the major problems of AJK primacy education system.
2. To critically examine the main causes of that discussed problems.
3. To offer sustainable solutions of these problems on the basis of the study to improve Primary education system in AJK State.

Research Methodology

This research study tries to look at the main causes of the problems of primary education system in AJK. For this purpose, a vast literature was critically examined. In terms of data; secondary data have been used. Data has been searched from AJK Planning and Development Department, Education and Finance Department and other relevant departments who working for education in state. The main numeric findings collected form AJ&K (P&D) Planning and Development Department, (ASER) - The Annual Status of Education Report, (NEMIS-AEPAM)-Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Alif Ailaan and the (SDPI) Sustainable Development Policy Institute. The analysis of the problems and its causes is presented below.

Critical Review of Literature

Free and quality primary education is the basic right of every citizen as cited in the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Musarrat et al., 2012) In this regard, primary education level should be considered more important for good quality and free education provision in the country. However Pakistan inherited a poor system of education. Since its independence no significant changes have been brought about in the overall education system generally and primary education particularly. As a result, the country stands in the lowest rank in terms of literacy rate in the region. Pakistan has less than 50% literacy rate. Out of this male literacy rate is 68% and female only 57% which is the lowest among other countries in the region like Sri Lanka and India. AJK government is a small administrative unit under overall sovereignty of Pakistan. The state depends on Pakistan for its outlet to the rest of the world. The aim of the paper is to analyze the progress on Millennium Development Goal-2 in order to find the factors hindering progress and suggest policy measures for improvement especially at primary level. In 1947 laid down the target of free and compulsory primary education within the decade. In 1952 National Commission on Education Formation was formed which resulted in an education policy. The education policy introduced in 1959, focused on character building through religious education, revision of curricula and primary educational for all within 15 years. The country continued to see a shift in the education policies in the years to come. 1972 saw a dramatic shift in policy with the emphasis on nationalization. Barber (2010) noted that in 1972, more than 3,000 schools were nationalized during Bhutto's regime which resulted in declined quality of education due to resource scarcity and management issues. After the nationalization died its own death due to huge increase in government expenditures, the policy makers finally came up with the first National Education Policy in 1979 which was revised in 1992. However both policies failed to achieve their desired outcomes (Khan and Mahmood, 1997). The



policy makers started the review of the previous education policies in 2005 which resulted in the first white paper being published in 2007. This working paper laid the foundation of National Education Policy (NEP) of 2009. The new NEP described the challenges, identified causes of performance deficiencies with suggestion for way forward, provision of Islamic education reforms and policy actions to be taken at the sub-sector level, and framework for Implementation of the Action Plan (GOP, 2009). The policy recommended several reforms and policy actions to be taken at sub-sector level. Despite many international and national efforts, Pakistan is still behind the targets of primary education. However our area of focus (Azad Kashmir) has shown better results over the years. National Plan of Action research suggested that in Azad Kashmir there are 2,259 public schools for girls as compared to 2,027 boys' schools (GOP, 2013). AEPM (2014) statistics also show several good indicators for the region, the female to male enrolment ratio at primary level is highest in Gilgit Baltistan province while FATA observes the lowest ratios. Azad Kashmir has a female to male ratio of 0.95 which is close to 1 indicating there is not much difference between them. Within Azad Kashmir the highest ratio can be seen in Muzaffarabad that is 1.17 while the least can be seen in Neelum Valley. Now moving to the net intake rate (NIR) that shows "the total number of new entrants in the first grade of a given education level". The other provinces observe difference in this ratio whereas Azad Kashmir has equal NIR of girls and boys. The female to male enrolment ratio at primary stage public schools in Azad Kashmir is 1.02 where male are 163,687 in number as compared to 167,774 females. AEPM research also concluded that 54% of primary school children go to public schools in Azad Kashmir whereas rest goes to Private schools (42%). National Education Policy (NEP) is a comprehensive document issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE) Pakistan. NEP 2009 document is the review of the previous education policies with recommended reforms and policy actions at sub-sector level of education. The new policy was introduced due to the failure of previous policies and inability to achieve the desired outcome. The main document discusses the challenges, fundamental causes behind the deficiencies in achieving desired outcomes, provision of Islamic education, and reforms and policy actions to be taken at the sub sector level. The reforms and policy actions majorly deal with raising the quality of education focusing on improving teachers quality, curriculum reforms, quality of textbooks and learning material, students assessment, learning environment, extra circular activities, and matching with the employment market. Due to limitations of time and resources we have selected some reforms of quality (Improving teacher's qualification and training, quality of learning environment including infrastructure, and quality of books and learning material) (GOP, 2009) . We have also added two factors of our own; Access, and Affordability. The factors of access and affordability are chosen as they are considered very important in achieving high enrolment at primary level (Chaudhury and Parajuli, 2006, Gulbaz Ali Khan and Shah, 2011). The factors have also been selected because of AJK geographical hilly area situation, in which access is an important issue due to its difficult terrain. The affordability factor plays a considerable role in primary enrolment in Pakistan as the finances required to support the children basically define the choice of school (Sarmad Ishfaq 2014). The fact is reflected by pattern of resource allocation for education in terms of percentage of GDP. Pakistan has the lowest allocation for education in South Asia. But in AJK situation is comparative different. Expenditure on education in AJK makes a major portion (28.14%) of the total budget of AJK. However 99% of this money goes to pay and allowances and one per cent is left for the operational expenditures. On the other hand share in developmental budget is only 09%. According to Chief Economist of AJK, out of this developmental budget only 1.15% is contributed for primary education. Under the NEP the government of Pakistan had committed to increase the share of allocation for education to 07% of GDP. The allocation was 2.24% in 2001-02 after which it is showing a decreasing trend. Since AJK is dependent on Pakistan in financial matters any increase and decrease in financial allocation have direct bearing on it (Zaheer Ud Din Qureshi, Muzaffarabad 2012).



Analysis of the Problems of Primary Education System in Pakistan: National Education Policy (NEP)

NEP is a comprehensive document issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE) Pakistan. AJK is administered by Pakistan so AJK also follow the Pakistan Education Policy which needs to be reform. NEP 2009 document is the review of the previous education policies with recommended reforms and policy actions at sub-sector level of education. The new policy was introduced due to the failure of previous policies and inability to achieve the desired outcomes. Over the years, the education policies have not been properly and effectively implemented. There are many reasons behind the slow or poor policy implementation such as political manipulations, corruption, systemic issues and poor management and supervision (Rehman, 2002). Another reason is political instability and poor economy of the country. In the poor implementation of education policies the role of poor governmental successive policies cannot be ruled out. Every successive government comes up with new policy on the expulsion of the policies of the previous government. Thus the repercussions of the successive governmental policies have marred the structure of the education system since 1947 (Hoodbhoy, 1998).

Non availability of special administrative set up

In all over the state there is no special administrative setup to analyze the problems of primary education. In order to co-ordinate the realization of important task as universal primary education even there is no special cell in education department to co-ordinate the activities with regard to MDGs, create awareness and arrange periodic assessment of progress on goals and to make policy adjustments according to the feedback from the field. NCHD (National Commission for Human Development) was working on this task in support of education department on enrollment enhancement, dropout control, and quality education of primary education but now they are working separately on their own CBFS (Community Based Feeder Schools).

Earthquake destruction and International factors

The 2005 earthquake in Pakistan left more than 7,000 schools and educational institutions fully or partially destroyed. More than 900 teachers and 18,000 school children in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Pakistan Administered State of Kashmir (PAK) lost their lives. In 5 affected districts of AJK, approximately 80% of TVET institutions and 65% of public sector education had either been destroyed or badly damaged. As the damage is massive, a lot of reconstruction work is made done and a lot more is left behind and need to be done (SERRA-2007). Across AJK 40% of school still without buildings and average 52% students are taught within a one classroom with no facilities, so the education outcomes are very low. Research suggests that lower students per classroom tend to have higher chance of contact with teachers, hence better learning outcomes (ASER 2014). Commitments made by the international community were of critical importance for realization of these goals. Especially resource commitments were very important. The committed level of international aid by the developed countries was 0.7% of GDPs of the developed countries. Although developed countries' aid for achieving the MDGs has been rising over recent years, the target of 0.7% was never achieved. Moreover this aid has never been free of strings and has not been MDGs specific. More than half of the aid is diverted towards debt relief owed by poor countries, with much of the remaining aid money going towards natural disaster relief and military aid which do not further development. Moreover, AJK is also relying on the international donors for their assistance in the education sector in achieving various universal targets but the problem is that most of the donors take away major chunk of the financial assistance in the shape of heavily paid consultancies and various equipments which remain shelved throughout.



Accessibility Problem and Lack of Financial Resources

This is the major factor need to be discussed here that is accessibility issue. The total area of AJK is 5134 Sq. Miles, children in poor rural neighborhoods in most deprived districts they not have opportunities to get the education in schools. Some of them are lacking to schools because of geographically accessibility issue in this AJK State, because all area is hilly and there is still more remote areas where no schools available for children. Government of AJK State not has enough financial resources to build new schools to remove this gap of accessibility. Somewhere schools are available but no proper facilitation provided for the good quality education which meets the standards (including instructional material, uniforms, etc.).ASER Report (2014) shows that AJK ranks the lowest among all territories and provinces in term of school facilities and conditions, across AJK 40% of schools are without buildings 9 out of 10 schools are without electricity and 3 out of 4 schools have no drinking water facility. According to the Ministry of Education National Plan of Action 2013-16, the problems regarding the access to education comprised of “in school” and “out school” factors. The “in school” factors include shortage of teachers, absenteeism, missing the basic facilities, lack of friendly environment, teachers’ harsh attitude. Whereas the “out school” factors include shortage of schools, distance, insecurity, poverty, and cultural norms (GOP, 2013).

Low enrolment and literacy statistics affect learning outcomes

This high level of dissatisfaction stems partly from deficits in access, literacy and student/teacher ratios. ASER (2014) data report presented that 43% children are out of school. Due to this AJK is still suffering with not very highest literacy rate. Many children in AJK do not continue school beyond the primary school level and it’s found that 35% dropout in primary level there. School facilities and conditions are not very favorable as found that, 41% schools are without buildings 87 % without electricity, 73% are without availability of drinking water and 82% are without boundary walls. Therefore, the Learning outcomes are very poor with wide regional disparities. In 2013/14, the net enrolment rate for primary education was only 58% (compared with more than 68% in Pakistan) in some specific places girls are more disadvantaged. Pupil teacher ratio and quality education standards are also very low,19% of schools operates with a single classroom, on average 52 students are taught within one classroom and average two teachers are appointed to teach for primary schools which consist of at least five classes.

Regional Disparities and Quality Education Problem

Education has been a priority of the Govt. of Azad Jammu & Kashmir as about 27% of its total recurring budget besides 10% of the total development budget is allocated to this sector. As a result of this substantial investment, the literacy rate in AJK is 72 percent (compared to 58 percent across Pakistan). Primary school enrolment is 95 percent for boys and 88 % for girls which is higher than any other region of Pakistan (ASER 2014).Together with this; the gap between the enrolment rates of boys and girls is much lower in AJK as compared to rest of Pakistan where wide gender disparities exist. But there are significant variations between districts in enrollment retention, attainment, gender parity and learning outcomes according to the (Alif Ailan 2014 District Ranking Report) Poonch ,Sudhnuti and Bhimber Districts of AJK are on Top Level but Muzaffarabad ,Haveli and Hattian are on Bottom Level ranking. Independent studies indicate that AJK is failing to deliver quality education. According to ASER 2014 39% of class five students cannot read a simple story in Urdu meant for class two, and 41% of class five students cannot read a simple sentence same as 47% of class five students cannot do simple two digit division.



The Appointments and Role of Teachers

The quality of teachers, which is a key factor in any education system, is poor in AJK. The main reason is the low level of educational qualifications required to become a primary school teacher, which includes ten years of schooling and an eleven-month certificate program. It has been established through various studies that pupil achievement is closely related to the number of years of formal schooling of teachers. Thus, students of teachers with 12 years of schooling perform better than students of matriculate (10 years education) teachers, who in turn perform better than students of teachers with only grade eight qualifications. The second factor relates to the quality of teacher certification programs, which suffers from the lack of adequately trained master trainers, little emphasis on teaching practice and non-existence of a proper support/monitoring system for teachers. In the absence of any accredited body to certify teachers, the mere acquisition of a certificate/diploma is considered sufficient to apply for a teaching position. In addition, teacher appointment in schools is subject to interference from local interest groups seeking to place teachers of their choice within their constituency. This has opened the system to graft and rent seeking leading to high levels of teacher absenteeism accentuated by the absence of an effective supervision system. The appointment of teachers especially in primary schools is subject to the political influence or paying huge money.

Private School Teachers Quality Affects

The quality of Primary education imparted by the majority of private schools is questionable owing to an acute dearth of properly trained and qualified teachers, and any kind of support mechanism for these teachers. Except for large school systems like Beacon-house, City Schools, Fuji Foundation, Pearl Valley and others, which constitute a small percentage of the existing private schools the majority of others have appointed teachers who are qualified up to intermediate (12 years of schooling) or BA level (14 years of education), and are paid much lower salaries compared to their counterparts in the government sector in addition to no job security. The large schools and school systems have instituted their own teacher training programs or access specialized private institutions. There is less inclination in these schools to hiring teachers who have previously been trained by government institutions and hold degrees in B. Ed or M. Ed; their preference is for those fluent in English language. Thus, very few teachers hired by the private schools have had any pre-service training, so they affect the quality of education. There is a felt need to enhance the professional skills of those who are currently working through various inset programs.

Quality of Learning Environment and Infrastructure

ASER (2014) clearly recognizes that the quality of learning environment in AJK is very poor in most of the public schools. The learning environment includes toilets, library, teaching aid material, extra circular activities and school's infrastructure is really very terrible. The document states that 09 out of 10 public schools have no electricity, while 04 out of 05 schools have no boundary walls, and 03 out of 04 schools have no drinking facilities, 03 out of 05 schools have unsatisfactory building conditions. A research surveyed the infrastructure facilities of the public and private primary schools in Azad Kashmir shows that only 52.5% public schools had basic useable drinking water facility. The toilet facility was only available in 30% public schools while 56% private schools enjoyed this luxury. The playground and boundary wall was available to hardly 25% public schools. The important component of infrastructure, library, was available to merely 6% public and 11% private schools. Computer lab was not available in any government school while only 1% private schools had it.

Quality of Books and Learning Materials

Quality of textbooks and learning material is an integral part of good education provision. In this case Pakistan and AJK are on same situation, Education in Pakistan used to be federal's provision which



meant that Ministry of Education working under the federal government would design the curriculum and choose text books and learning material for public schools. Private and NGO schools were free to choose the curriculum subject to approval of the ministry of education (Barber, 2010). After the 18th Amendment education has become a provincial provision giving more autonomy to the provinces to cater to their own needs. Now the provinces' Ministries of Education are in charge of the curriculum, textbooks and learning material. The public schools are not allowed to use any other texts books and learning material than the ones ministry of education recommends. So, the curriculum is not the same at every level. NEP discusses that with the involvement of all stakeholders 'National Textbook and Learning Materials Policy and Plan of Action' was issued in June 2007. The objective was to improve the quality of textbooks and learning material while maintaining them at an affordable price. The policy action recommended a well regulated system for publication of textbooks, increased investment in school libraries, and curriculum improvement. The quality of curriculum varies in different types of schools. Private and NGO schools follow mix of national and foreign curriculum while Public schools follow the national curriculum (Arif and Saqib, 2003). It was tough to judge the quality of the books and learning material is not very same which affects quality of education specially the discussed primary group of education

Increased Drop Outs

It is very important to have student friendly environment at the school to boost NER and to discourage drop outs. Steps envisioned in the NEP to create friendly environment at primary level schools were recruitment of female teachers at primary level, provision of basic facilities, change in teacher attitude through training and abolition of corporal punishment etc. But these steps have not been taken so far. Non- friendly environment at school has emerged as a very strong reason for low enrollment and drop outs.

The poor teaching and learning standards, weak management and supervision has led to increased drop outs at primary level in AJK. Consequently the parents are reluctant to send their children to those schools (Shahzadi and Perveen, 2002). There has been continuous decrease in the enrolment of primary education in the country. This is an alarming situation in the country which has propelled other problems such as child labour, child abuse, and child trafficking and so on (Khalid, 1998).

Outdated Examination System and Ineffective Communication

The standards of examination in the education of primary level in Pakistan and AJK are the lowest in the world. The system of examination is outdated. It does not meet the needs of the national and international standards. Assessment and evaluations are conducted to check only the memory of students rather than quality of performance. Examinations supervision is very poor and influenced by institutional politics. The quality of paper setting and checking is poor which affects the overall performance of the students (Farooq, 1993).

Communication is the backbone of any system or organization. It connects the various parts of a system and develops sound coordination (Borman and Kimball, 2005). It has been observed in AJK that teachers in the primary schools often remain indifferent to the developments in the overall system of education due to poor system of communication. There are grave examples of absenteeism from duties in schools (Khan, 1980). The system of checks and balance is very poor due to weak administration and coordination. Primary teachers are at the bottom of the whole system of education. Most of the time teachers remain uninformed about the policies and plans framed at the governmental level due to poor communication. All this affects the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools (Zafar, 2003).



Lack of Professional Development and Learning Resources

Teaching is a professional activity. Teachers need to be continuously abreast with latest theories, research and new knowledge (Siddique, 1990). Teachers who are not professionally sound cannot solve their professional and social issues. Teachers who acquire latest knowledge and develop their skills teach effectively (Farooq, 1990). There are less training facilities available to teachers at primary level in AJK. Due to lack of latest knowledge and skills the teachers are found weak in solving the problems of students and cannot manage the behaviors of maladjusted students and use corporal punishment as tool. This attitude of teachers discourages students and results in drop out. Those students who graduate from the primary schools have poor communication and social skills (British Council, 1988).

Primary education in AJK is faced with acute problem of lack of learning resources. This trend is more chronic in government schools where even schools do not have boards, textbook, library and other related learning resources to help teacher and student in the process of teaching and learning (Muhammad, 2002). Due to lack of teaching and learning aids in schools teacher face many problems during teaching process. Teachers are forced to cover the syllabus within the given period of the year. In these conditions teachers fail to create meaningful learning environment in schools (Hussain, 2001).

Curriculum Issues and Issues of Text Books

The primary school curriculum in AJK is outdated not cater to the needs of the nation in the present age. Students are required to memorize the content and reproduce it in the examination. The current curriculum does not improve the thinking abilities of students. It is useless and impractical for student development (Hoodbhoy, 1998). Teachers asked to cover the given syllabus and prepare the students only for examination results. This practice has left the teachers ignorant of many aspects of the curriculum which ultimately affects not only their own performance but also the process of teaching and learning in schools. In many cases teachers are not aware of the aims and goals of curriculum. This creates gaps between understating of the curriculum and its effective implementation. Primary school teachers also face problem of instruction due to non-availability of quality textbooks. There is a culture of multi-medium of instructions in schools. This confuses both the teacher and the student. Besides, there is lack of training of teachers on how to facilitate or explain concepts from different textbooks (Hussain, 2001). The lack of training and orientation has created confusion among teachers which is reflected in their poor teaching performances.

Findings and Conclusions

The study find out that primary education is the most mistreated sector in the whole education system. The whole system is badly administered and poorly managed. Political interference prevails in the system which breeds corruption, favoritism and nepotism. The system of coordination and supervision at primary level is weak and traditionally characterized. The system of accountability at primary level is very poor in schools. There is no valuable mechanism of teacher training and even not on continual basis. Parents are dissatisfied with the quality of education in government primary schools. Primary school teachers are underpaid and less motivated to achieve the successive results. The dynamic educational policies are failed to bring any positive changes due to poor implementation and evaluation mechanisms. The assessment and curriculum of the primary education is outdated which does not cater to the needs of the child nor meet national and international standards. It encourages cramming of the content and deprives students from critical thinking, reflection, analysis and creativity.



Recommendations

On the basis of this study the following recommendations are presented.

- Primary education system needs special consideration as basic pillar of education and need to treat as well managed manners.
- Primary education system should be supported financially by government special budgetary allocations.
- In order to reform the primary system of education, number of teachers per schools needs to be increased and to train effectively on continuous basis.
- To enhance the capacity of the system to work effectively tough system of accountability need to be introduced.
- Corruption needs to be completely eradicated especially at the primary level. For this purpose rules and policies need to be implemented efficiently and monitored effectively.
- Examination system needs to be improved and made effective as per international standards.
- Political interference in the system needs to be completely exterminated.
- Curriculum needs to be revisited, evaluated and revised keeping in view the needs of the child and the demands of the current age.
- Medium of instruction in the schools is needed to be improved. Teachers could be trained in the languages especially in English and Urdu.
- Teachers are needed to be encouraged through financial and other social benefits. The financial support to primary schools needs to be increased. Resources of teaching and learning need to be increased at the primary level.

Reference

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