



BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP: IMPROVING GIRLS SCHOOLING THROUGH NONFORMAL BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT KHUSHAB

ABSTRACT

The nonformal basic education has never been remained Pakistan's national priority for basic education because its importance has not been felt in its real sense as an alternative, flexible and affordably accessible primary education. Current study examined the gender gaps left by the public sector in primary school enrollment and to assess the successes achieved by Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department in District Khushab for improvement in girl's access to primary education. And the relative impact of such programs on the lives of the girl's in eliminating gender disparity and gender gap of school enrollment at primary level in the rural areas of District Khushab. The main focus is to highlight the challenging role being played by the Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department to evaluate its impact in terms of quantitative improvement in girl's primary school enrollment and qualitative improvement with reference to community level awareness or motivation which brought a change in societal attitude towards girl's education. In order to attract the attention of policy makers to strengthen Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department for enhancement of education that would make them more effective and attractive as an alternative and affordable system for accessible free primary education especially to girls. These gender gaps at primary level were already identified by the survey conducted in 2005 by Lit.MIS (Literacy Management Information System) & JICA.

Study has been conducted through quantitative and qualitative research methods by analyzing the data collected through questionnaires containing open ended and close ended questions which were validated after pre testing, interviews and extensive literature review. Collected Data was tabulated, quantitatively analyzed by using simple percentage frequency and qualitatively interpreted. 35 NFBE Schools were selected in 15 union councils from each of 3 Tehsils of district Khushab for collecting data from 30 parents, 105 NFBE School's teachers 3 literacy Mobilizers and DO, Literacy.

The results revealed confirmation of the pivotal role played by the Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department which satisfactorily fulfilled and provided primary education to rural girls who are either not-enrolled/never attending or dropped out of school. Enhancing present primary participation rates of girls by reducing the gender gap and future illiteracy through its progress it have bridged the gender gap to some extent at primary level of education left by the public sector in district Khushab.



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INTRODUCTION

Primary education the fundamental human right is the base of the educational pyramid. It has several significant social and economic effects on development of a country. Provision of primary education like most of the other services delivered by the public sector in Pakistan also suffering deficiencies in coverage due to lack of sufficient economic resources thus ultimately alternative system direly needed to fill to gaps.

Primary education is the core of the schooling system. It builds the bedrock for human capital development (Lassibille and Tan, 2003). According to Khan (1993) South Asia have gender gap with low literacy of female which indicates enormous challenges in female literacy. School access has been an important factor inhibiting girls' enrollment, particularly in rural areas. According to UNDP report 2007-08 Pakistan is placed at 136th out of 177 countries by having the lowest literacy rate 54.9 % in terms of Human Development Index with literacy and enrollment in education among the factors used as a basis for this ranking. More than half of the school age girls, i.e. about 2.7 million in the province of Punjab are never enrolled in school. The primary school age 9 – 5 populations in Pakistan is estimated as 18 million, but only 12 million are currently enrolled. The total number of left-outs is approximately 6 million. Presently, half of the children (50%) who enroll in class one dropout before completing primary education. The dropout rate among girls is more i.e. 54% than boys is which 45%. These include working children, girls, and children with disabilities and children from the poorest families.

Education also increases women's ability to secure employment, manage basic child care and health care. Children of educated mothers have a greater growth potential. Educated mothers are more likely to send both girls and boys to school and keep them there to longer (Human Development in South Asia, 2000). Besides so many other issues in formal education system 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. One of the principal reasons which keeps many girls out of the school system especially in the rural areas is that they are required to work at a very young age in various domestic chores they collect firewood, fetch water from near and far, take food and water to parents in their places of work, look after their younger siblings besides being responsible for many other activities. (Kumar, 2000).

Non-formal education, which is a cost-effective way to reach those who have not benefited from the formal education provisions, comprises any organized and semi organized educational activities for school dropouts, for illiterate rural and urban adults, for youth, and by and large for all age cohort, and both sexes (UNESCO, 2001: 6; Bishop, 1989:131; Mani, 1984:53). Non-formal education, which "has only recently gained popular currency", is loaded with different shades of meanings that vary according to the context and one's philosophical views of the role of education in general (Courtney and Kutsch, 1978:1; Bock and Papagiannis, 1983:14). Within the variations, however, there are peculiar characteristics of this sub-sector, inter alia: flexibility and adaptability in terms of organization, schedule, and duration; versatility, intensive instruction using innovative student-centered methods, and utilitarian (MOE, 2000: 4; Prakasha et al, 1986). UNESCO (2000:49) has synthesized the NFE conceptions in such way that supplementary alternative programs can help meet the basic learning needs of children with limited or no access to formal schooling, provided that they share the same standards of learning applied to schools, and are adequately supported

To improve the enrollment and retention rates of girls and rural children, the Bangladesh government had initiated the NGO, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) that in turn created a non-formal type primary education in 1985 (Tietjen, 1991:64). Rural communities find the program implementation appropriate to their demands, and more than 90 percent of the children who started BRAC were graduated and admitted to formal primary schools. With 60 percent of the enrollees were females, the program has succeeded in attracting and retaining learners, specially girls. In general BRAC's program has achieved considerable success and known for its high internal efficiency and retention rates, and high academic achievement of its learners.

The concept of NFBE School is based on the home school idea. The Community provides the room for NFBE School. The NFBE school location is preferably in the areas where primary schools are nonexistent, separate schools

for girls are not available, the female illiteracy is pronounced and dropout rate among female student is very high. The site of the school is demand based and the building is provided free of charge by the community. The teacher is local from the beneficiary community, therefore the chances of absenteeism is reduced

District Khushab consists of 3 tehsils: Khushab, Noor Pur, and Quaidabad having 51 union councils. According

to Literacy and Management Information System (LitMIS 2004-05, JICA-PLPP) the total population of district Khushab is 975780 with 51.52% are male and females are 48.48% of the total population. By age group of (5-14) the total population is 247764 with female literacy rate 29.08% and 54878 female are out of schools while male literacy rate is 69.26%. Overall literacy rate in District Khushab is 49.78% while enrollment ratio in primary education female to male is 0.76%.

Table-1 Gender disaggregated Tehsil wise Literacy Ratios (Khushab)

Tehsil	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
KHUSHAB	74.54	49.88	62.77	71.70	29.03	50.87	72.63	35.68	54.73
NOORPUR	77.34	31.40	55.06	66.25	17.88	42.77	67.13	18.95	43.74
QUAIDABAD	73.38	41.04	57.89	60.89	17.87	39.99	63.02	21.74	43.02
KHUSHAB	74.52	47.18	61.45	67.57	23.50	46.11	69.25	29.08	49.78

Source: LitMIS (2004-05) JICA-PLPP

In District Khushab the gender gap in the education sector at primary level is very prominent, particularly in rural areas that girls' enrollment rates are lower than boys' enrollment rates. All the existing Government Primary Schools extend learning opportunities to hardly 60% of school age population. The gender gap is largely a *rural* phenomenon in district Khushab where 38 union councils out of total 51 are rural union councils.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology which refers to methods employed for collecting data which covers the universe (study area), sampling, tools, pretest, data collection and field experience. Methodology has been chosen in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Universe for the present research is nonformal basic education schools in district Khushab. 35 NFBE Schools were selected from each Tehsil. A survey was conducted of 17 union councils for enumerating data from total 30 parents and 105 teachers of NFBE Schools and literacy & NFBE Department staff.

Interview guide was prepared containing open ended unstructured questions to get respondent's views regarding the importance of role being played by the NFBE Department for provision of educational services at the door steps for females in District Khushab in order to find out its strengths and weaknesses with their solutions and to get valuable insights and valuable information about the gender differences, feelings, beliefs, social attitudes,

behavior and reactions among the respondents. After the drafting of the questionnaires it is pretested through a pilot study to ensure reliability and validity of the questionnaires. The researcher has employed a feminist research methodology in research i.e. based on feminist principle" doing research for women rather than on woman" (Sharlen, 2007). The researcher used convenience sampling and 'Snowball Sampling'.

Two types of analytical techniques were used. First qualitative analysis of the interview guide is done through open coding and the results were theme wise decoded for analysis and the results were described in the narrative form. The second type of analytical techniques used was quantitative that Quantitative data received from the respondents i.e. teachers and parents was analyzed through simple percentages using $P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$ ($P = \%$, $F = \text{Frequency} = \text{Total number of Frequencies}$) and their results were presented in tabular forms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a.Characteristics of the Respondents:

Demographic characteristics include information about gender, occupation, age, educational level and income of the respondents. Socio cultural characteristics of the people is linked with their attitude towards girl's education and the way of life. Parent's perception regarding importance of girl's education & importance of NFBE Schools

Table 2. Percentage distribution of the respondents by Age.

Age Group	Parents		Nonformal School Teacher	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<30	8	26.7	50	48
30-39	17	56.7	45	43
40-49	5	16.6	10	9
Total	30	100.0	105	100

Mostly female teacher are below 30 years of age but majority of the parents were of age group 30-39 years. Overall mostly respondents were of mature age group 30 to 39 years.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of the respondents by Occupation

	Frequency	Percent
Landlord	2	6.7
Farmer	14	46.7
Shopkeeper	5	16.7
Laborer	4	13.3
Govt. Servant	5	16.7
Total	30	100.0

Overall the people were poor and belonging to labor work therefore only concerned to their daily income rather being well aware about the importance of education or even cannot afford cost of schooling for their child.

Table 4 Percentage distribution of the respondents by Income

	Parents		Nonformal School Teacher	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
>2000	2	6.7		
2001-5000	16	53.3	105	100.0
5001-10000	5	16.7		
10001-15000	4	13.3		
>20000	3	10		
Total	30	100.0	105	100.0

Although mostly teachers are not satisfied with their monthly pay and usually they receive monthly pay after the gap of 3-4 months. Household income of the family affects parents' decisions to prioritize expenditures on the education of their children. So most of the children leave home to earn money for their

families. Economic factors, Gender discrimination, social and cultural values, household chores, lack of resources and financial limitations that are generally perceived to be the reasons behind the parent's decision for not sending their girls to schools.

Table 5 Percentage distribution of the respondents by education

	Parents		Nonformal School Teacher	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	14	46.7	-	-
Less Than Primary	2	6.7	-	-
Primary	4	13.3	-	-
Middle	4	13.3	-	-
Matric	5	16.7	48	46
F.A	1	3.3	35	33
Graduate	-	-	20	19
Master	-	-	2	2
Total	30	100.0	105	100.0

Majority number of the parents were illiterates in fact literacy level of the parents has a great relation with the education and care of their children. Mostly respondents (Teachers) were Matric and F.A

b.IMPORTANCE OF GIRL’S EDUCATION AND NFBE SCHOOLS

Table 6 Parent’s attitude to educate their daughters

	Frequency	Percent
Most Positive	75	71.4
To Some Extent Positive	27	25.7
Discouraging	3	2.9
Total	105	100.0

The majority of the parent considered the daughter’s education best for a successful life which has immense contribution in the development of the country.

Table 7 Formal primary school’s accessibility.

	Frequency	Percent
At door step/near	2	6.7
Less than 1 km	13	43.3
More than 1 km/not easily accessible	15	50.0
Total	30	100.0

Majority Parent were those who are still not provided with opportunity to that their children could be enrolled in public sector Primary Schools because schools are not easily accessible therefore they preferred to enroll their daughters in easily accessible NFBE schools having

female teachers. Major reasons for establishing NFBE schools are reluctance of parents in sending girls to such school where there are male teachers teaches, school’s location (long distance from house), school facilities and less favorable external environment for girls

Table 8 Attitude of Local Community towards non formal basic education schools.

	Frequency	Percent
Most Positive	95	90.4
Discouraging	10	9.6
Total	105	100.0

Mostly teachers expressed that 10 years ago they had faced many problems as majority parent’s behavior to educate their daughter was discouraging but now with the changing socio-economic issues overall the parent’s behavior to educate their daughters has become most positive, now they want to educate their daughters. Overall the parent’s behavior towards nonformal basic education schools was not positive in early years of nonformal schools

in 2000 because in the beginning teacher has confronted many problems regarding persuading parents towards nonformal basic education schools. Now attitude of local community towards nonformal basic education schools has been changed and their attitude is most positive now so they cooperate to the teachers that make girl’s enrollment annually to be increased.

Table 9 Teachers confronted problems in Persuading Parents for their daughter’s education through NFBE Schools.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	75	71.43
No	30	28.57
Total	105	100.0

Overall the parent’s behavior towards nonformal basic education schools was not positive in early years of nonformal schools in 2000 because in the beginning

teachers have confronted many problems regarding persuading parents towards nonformal basic education schools.

Table 10 Girl's enrollment increased through NFBE Schools

	Frequency	Percent
To Great Extent	77	73.3
To Some Extent	28	26.7
Total	105	100.0

Table 11 Annual Performance of nonformal schools.

	Frequency	Percent
good	85	95.24
Not satisfactory	5	4.76
Total	105	100.0

A case study of NFBE school teacher Kalsoom Khatoon working since 01-02-1999 of a remote UC Shimar is here presented when she told that her school got affiliation with Literacy & NFBE Department, Khushab in 2002 as it was already established under Federally funded nonformal schools in 1998. This school provided free access to educational opportunity to 632 girls and 428 male since its establishment up till primary level as there in a Govt. Primary school at a distance of 1-2km of vicinity near to village shimar and elementary schools do not exist. Unfortunately in March, 2010 this nonformal school was closed by the department which widened the gender gap already bridged by this school to certain extent in an extensive efforts of a decade. But the community mutually

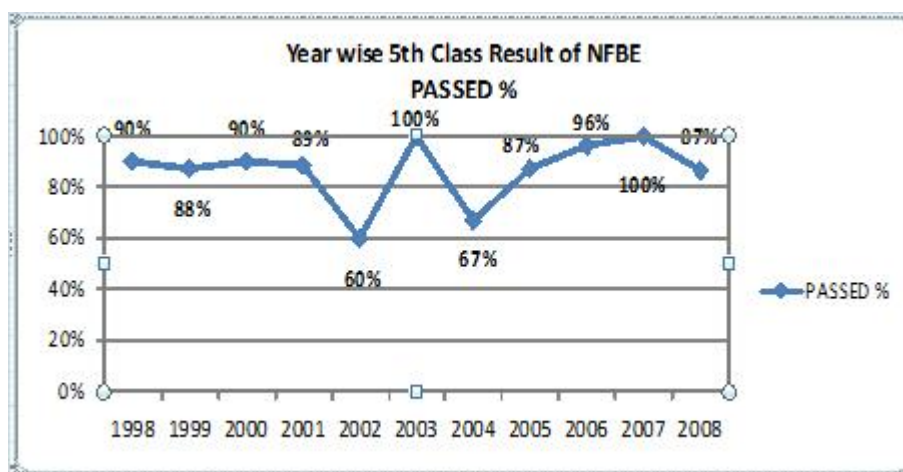
decided with the local NGO to open a private school in this area when public sector school is still not established. Mostly dropout occurred in gender dimensions because parents cannot afford fees as well cost of books, uniform etc

IMPROVEMENT IN CONDITIONS, ENVIRONMENT AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF NFBE SCHOOLS

Literacy & NFBE office, Khushab has provided essential data and detailed year wise 5th class result of NFBE schools in district Khushab. From 2003 -2011 total 7552 NFBE learners qualified 5th class exam out of total 8600 NFBE learners who appeared in 5th class exam. Female beneficiaries are 2893 while male is 1246.

Table: 12 Enrollment of Non Formal Basic Education Schools District Khushab in 2010

No. of NFBE Schools Running	No. of Learners Enrolled Total	Male	Female
492	15726	4961	10765



Above figures show better pictures of these NFBE schools in terms of increasing girl's enrollment as well as their annual progress. Performance of NFBE schools in terms of teacher or students attendance and 5th class result. Annual progress of NFBE schools remained satisfactory as enrolments show annual increase with less number of left out/drop outs. Majority number of the respondents are found satisfied with the whole process of NFBE Schools. Which is making a change in attitudes of parents and community toward girl's education.

Although the Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department, District Khushab has introduced the uniform culture for their NFBE schools in order to create proper school environment same as formal schools. Functional NFBE schools lack basic facilities i.e. safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, furniture and basic learning material. Almost all classes have to be seated in a single room. In some of the schools children sit on the ground under trees or on the floor. These NFBE schools are provided with teacher's chair, Teaching aids like black boards, charts, mats, etc, Books, slates etc for students and Black Board by the Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department, District Khushab free of cost once a year. Delivery of books is usually delayed to the students which de-motivate them for education as stated by most of the parents and teachers.

Most of the Parents are satisfied with the attitude / behavior of NFBE school's Teachers to their children because Teacher's behavior with the learners both for male and female was very sympathetically. Teachers are hardworking and are found their self regular and made their students regular as well as punctual. they are they know that co-curricular activities increase the learner's interest in their studies but unfortunately nonformal schools are not provided with such opportunities for co-curricular activities therefore mostly teachers organized by their own self. Performance of these schools in terms of attendance of teacher and students is also better than formal schools because teacher being a local resident and school is located within the reach of students. Majority of the respondents are satisfied with teaching learning process, learning environment, Friendly behavior of teacher, regularity of teachers and students, checking of home work, evaluation of students and teachers work, supervision of schools. The quality of teaching is low; since teachers are not trained and teacher training is not sufficient therefore poorly qualified and skilled NFBE school's teachers cannot contribute to a good quality of learning. Learners' achievements have to be regularly assessed bimonthly and quarterly. Graduates of Non

Formal Basic Education Schools are eligible for admission in 6th class at formal Public sector schools.

The teachers are found professional in teaching practices with good command on content they deliver and enjoying their work with affection for their learners. The Department has adopted all measures to cope with the issue of drop out or to make it functional school i.e. motivational or awareness campaigns, involving the local community through VECs in planning, management, decision-making, and advocacy efforts has a positive effect on girl's education..

NFBE schools which are providing free and easily accessible primary educations to the especially adults and children of most vulnerable and neglected groups of society including drop outs, left outs and those never been to school especially for the girls otherwise without NFBE they would have been unable to get basic education at all in these inaccessible sites. Schools access created more opportunities for girls to ensure their participation in primary education. t These primary pass students especially 2893 girls must have today be included in either illiterate or dropouts because they have no other option besides NFBE schools to study in these rural remote areas of district Khushab. Non-Formal Primary schools are providing Primary Education in inaccessible areas of Khushab especially to the rural girls to continue education up to Primary level to ensure linking to the secondary education.

Major issue is that these NFBE schools had always been considered as a project therefore 570 NFBE schools working since 2000 have been closed in April,2011 thus creating a wide gender gap at primary level of school enrollment and made large number of students dropout .although these gender gaps were itself successfully tried to be bridged by the Literacy & NFBE department by continuous efforts made in 2000-2010. Mostly 10530 girls are affected. Formal schools have still not been established in majority of the areas where 570 NFBE schools were closed. Therefore community has motivated their teachers and parents for the establishment of private primary schools for their dropout children of these closed NFBE schools.

CONCLUSION

The gender gap left by the public sector primary schools in District Khushab due to socio-cultural barriers and the increase in girls' primary enrollment rate is found to be the role being played by the NFBE Department through non-formal schools. The results show that the involvement of non-formal schools significantly increases the probability of rural girls being enrolled in NFBE

primary schools. Finally it is found by the researcher that in the rural and non-urban areas of district Khushab the non-formal schools have strong and significant role in increasing girls' enrollment.

The most prominent school characteristic that encourages girls' enrollment is the accessible schools and the percentage of female teachers in non-formal schools. Non-formal education is an innovation aimed to reach the poorest children who did not have a chance to attend formal school, and has many characteristics that differ from formal education in order to suit the needs of the rural poor as an alternative educational opportunity. The results here confirm that the involvement of non-formal schools has significantly contributed to the increase in the enrollment rate of girls in Khushab in last 10 years thus reducing gender gap at primary level.

RECOMMENDATION

Here recommendations are presented as strategies which can be implemented for the promotion of girls education in rural areas of district Khushab.

- ✓ Make NFBE Schools an institution not a project.
- ✓ Capacity building Plan.
- ✓ Permanent status of NFBE Schools teachers.
- ✓ Scholar ships or incentive for NFBE students especially girls.
- ✓ Further research on the topic.
- ✓ Nutrition and Health Education in nonformal schools.
- ✓ In time Delivery of books and other AV learning materials.
- ✓ Establishment of Nonformal Elementary Schools for girls
- ✓ effective monitoring and evaluation system

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