

Teacher as Community Mobilizer: Case of Primary School Teachers in Punjab (Pakistan)

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the role of Primary School Teachers (PSTs) for mobilizing community to achieve the target of Universal Primary Education (UPE). Objectives of the study were to investigate existing role of PSTs as community mobilizers to achieve UPE and to explore in-service trainings and arrangements to prepare PSTs for acting their role as community mobilizers. Recommendations for refining PST's role for mobilizing community to achieve UPE were also aimed in the study. The study was delimited to only two districts of Southern Punjab; Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur and survey method was used to gather data. A questionnaire was developed and administered to 210 PSTs of all seven *tehsils* of the two districts. Findings of the study disclosed that there was no in-service training for PSTs which enabled them to mobilize community for achieving UPE targets. Roll of higher offices was, also, found ineffective in this regard. Special trainings for PSTs which can enable them to organize and mobilize community and parents to improve enrollment and reduce dropouts were recommended at the end of the study. Empowerment of PSTs and enhanced participation of higher offices of Education Department in UPE campaign were also suggested.

Key Words: Education for All; Universal Primary Education; Teacher Training

Introduction

Universal Primary Education (UPE) is an important target adopted by Pakistani government to achieve by 2015 in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and World Education Forum, Dakar (2000). The Government further committed and elaborated the concept and demands of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Education Sector Reforms (ESR) Action Plan 2001-2005, Education for All (EFA) Action Plan 2001-2015, and Medium Term Development Framework 2005-2010. Provincial governments also launched different

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programs on their sides. Medium Term Development Framework 2006-2009, and Provincial Action Plan 2003-2015 in Punjab, Balochistan Education Support Projects, 03 phases 2006-2009, and Increasing Primary School Participation for Girls 2001-2003 in Baluchistan, North West Frontier Primary Education Program 2001, in Khyber Pakhtoonkha, and Sindh Primary Education Project 2001, in Sindh are the examples of such initiatives. But regardless of all efforts, according to Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan (2007), only 13.3 million children of age group (05-09 years) could be enrolled out of over 19.634 million with the 31.3 percents dropout.

Academy of Education Planning and Management (2008) in Pakistan Education Statistics 2006-07 provides, to large extent, comprehensive data regarding educational institutions, teachers and enrollment of students in the country, provinces and other administrative areas. According to statistics there were, in Punjab, 44,684 primary and 5,759 mosque schools in the years 2006-07. In which 1,45,073 teachers were appointed. World Bank (2009) admits that there is improvement in enrollment and retention between the years 2001 and 2006-07 in Punjab but still 38 percent of school-going age children are out of school. Net Enrollment Rate (NER) is also improved from 45 percent in 2001 to 62 percent in 2006-07. Similarly, Federal Bureau of Statistics (2008) in Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2006-07) discloses the primary completion rate only 49 percent in Punjab for the years 2006-07.

Teacher's role is vital at any educational level. She is not only responsible for good teaching but creation of friendly and attractive school environment is also included in her duties. For this purpose, she has to perform challenging role inside and outside the school. Ministry of Education (2009) has formulated ten National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan with consultation of different national and international agencies. These standards are adopted and implemented by the ministry at national level.

Eighth professional standard adopted by Ministry of Education, Pakistan is Collaboration and Partnership. This standard demands the teachers to identify and utilize family and community resources to foster students' learning. It insists to create respectful and

productive relationship and partnership with parents, families and community members. The important point here is that these professional standards demand all above to improve students' learning rather than students' enrollment. Evaluation and Documentation of Universal Primary Education Project Sialkot (UNICEF, 2002) stresses the teacher's role as community mobilizer. The project claims teachers' training and frequently teacher-parents meetings to enhance enrollment and reduce dropouts.

A recent study urges community and parents participation to increase enrollment and reduce dropout (Farooq, 2010). More than 1.5 *Lakh* Primary School Teachers (PST) are working in primary schools scattered across the province. The current study investigates role of Primary School Teachers to mobilize parents and community to achieve the targets of Universal Primary Education. Teachers' training and other arrangements to enhance teachers' this role are also discussed.

Districts Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur are located in Southern Punjab having significantly low literacy rates. District Dera Ghazi Khan has the population of 20,62,000 and the area of 11294 square kilometers. Net Enrollment Rate (NER) for the district is 57 percent with the literacy rate of 46 percent for the year 2006-07. District Rajanpur comprises the area of 12,873 square kilometers with the population of 13,63,155 . Net Enrollment Rate (NER) of the district is 47 percent and literacy rate is 31 percent. Data presented by Government of Punjab reveals that there are 1752 primary schools (800 for boys, 456 for girls, 496 boys *Maktab* Schools) in district Dera Ghazi Khan whereas this number is 1122 (530 for boys, 432 for girls, and 160 boys *Maktab* Schools) for the district Rajanpur.

Though, as discussed, there are significant numbers of studies regarding status, struggle and outcomes of UPE but such studies are rarely conducted in Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur districts except of national and provincial surveys. The two districts are located far from national and provincial headquarters. Population of the districts especially in rural areas is tribal oriented. The need to examine the role of PSTs in such different environment leads to conduct a research in the context of these two districts. This paper

will be helpful to initiate further research work and to explore specific position and environment of the districts concerning teachers' role for literacy and UPE.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers play varied and multi-dimension roles in and outside the school for the sake of education and literacy. They are guides, counselors, educators, administrators, and community mobilizers. Their pre-service and in-service trainings prepare them to perform these duties effectively. Current study will assess their preparedness only as community mobilizers. Their successful role as community mobilizer is essential for high enrollment and low drop-out rates. The statement of the problem was;

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Objectives of the Study

Major focus of the study was to explore the existing situation of teachers' role in mobilizing community to increase primary school enrolment and decrease drop-out rates. The study will attempt to achieve following research objectives.

- To investigate current role of Primary School Teachers (PST) for mobilizing community to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE)
- To explore in-service trainings and department arrangements to prepare PSTs for mobilizing community for UPE
- To present recommendations to refine PST's role as community mobilizer to achieve UPE

Delimitations of the Study

Considering the time problem, the Study was delimited to only two districts of Punjab i.e. Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur which are lagging behind the UPE target having 57 and 47 percent Net Enrollment Rate respectively for the years 2006-07. Although teachers have different roles in educational contexts but the current study focused only on primary school teachers because these are direct involved in UPE campaign. PSTs worked in

different layers to increase enrollment and decrease drop-outs of the students. A major direction of their role is their relationship with parents and community. Another delimitation of the study was that it explored only the PSTs role to mobilize community for achieving UPE.

Research Methodology

Since the objectives of the study focus on the investigation of a current scenario, Fraenkel & Wallen (2007) describe such type of study as descriptive and proposed survey method to collect data. District Dera Ghazi Khan comprises three *tehsils* (Dera Ghazi Khan, Taunsa Sharif and Tribal Area) and district Rajanpur four *tehsils* (Jampur, Rajanpur, Rojan, and Tribal Area). Two hundreds and ten primary school teachers were selected from the seven *tehsils* of both districts to collect data using two-stage sample method. In first stage the population was divided in seven strata and in second stage total 210 PSTs were randomly selected according to the population ratio in each stratum. Though it was difficult to approach remote and tribal areas of the districts however representation of all *tehsils* and genders in the sample was made possible. Detail of the sample is given below.

Table: 01. Detail of the Sample

Gender	Dera Ghazi Khan			Rajanpur			
	DGKhan	Taunsa	T.Area	Jampur	Rajanpur	Rojhan	T.Area
Female	20	15	05	20	20	10	03
Male	20	15	15	20	20	20	07
Total	40	30	20	40	40	30	10
Grand Total:				210			

A questionnaire was developed, administered and collected from the sample PSTs. Focus of the questionnaire was on gathering information regarding teachers' practices for community mobilization to achieve UPE, their existing capacity and trainings to enhance their capacity and role. Participation of higher authorities of Education Department in this regard was also pursued in this regard. SPSS was used for data analysis. Findings and recommendations were drawn to accomplish research objectives.

Findings of the Study

Data collected from the PSTs are tabulated and presented here.

Table: 02. In-service trainings of primary school teachers (N=210)

Question	Answers			
How many times did you get in-service training in last three years?	No	One Time	Two Time	More than two Times
	09	27	147	27
Percentage	04	13	70	13

Table 02 discloses a solid system of trainings for PSTs in the districts Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur. According to the data, extreme majority of PSTs got in-service training two to three times in last three years. A significantly small proportion joined such trainings only one time in last three years.

Table: 03. Objectives of in-service trainings (N=210)

Question	Answers			
What was the major objective of these in-service trainings?	To Improve Teaching	To Enhance Enrollment	To Reduce Dropout	Do Not Know
	189	05	11	05
Percentage	90	03	05	03

Table 03 describes about the objectives of in-service trainings of PSTs. Data revealed that according to 90 percent of respondents major objective of in-service trainings, they joined in last three years, was to improve teaching methodology of teachers. Very small proportion of respondents (only eight percent) described that objectives of these trainings were to enhance students' enrollment and reduce dropouts at primary level.

Table: 04. Organizers of in-service trainings (N=210)

Question	Answers			
Who has organized these in-service trainings?	Education Department	NCHD	Any Other NGO	Do Not Know
	187	08	08	06
Percentage	89	04	04	03

Table 04 explores the efforts of Education Department and other Government and Non-Government organizations in organizing in-service trainings for PSTs. Data reveal that according to 89 percent of respondents, Education Department is chief organizer of in-service teachers' trainings in the districts. Eight percent of respondents opines in favor of National Commission for Human Development NCHD and other eight percent supports other NGOs for said functions.

Table: 05. Data compilation of dropouts & out of school children (N=210)

Question	Answer			
How many times did you collect data of dropouts and out of school children of areas near to school?	No	One Time	Two Time	More than two Times
	74	59	42	38
Percentage	35	28	20	18

Table 05 indicates PSTs' concerns about the gathering of required information of dropouts and out of school children. Data reveal that although a small but significant proportion of respondents (thirty five percent) never compile the data of dropouts and out of school children but sum of two, three and four choices disclose strong documentation of dropouts and out of school children in the districts.

Table: 06. Action on compiled data (N=210)

Question	Answers		
What type of action did you take on the compiled Data?	Try to Convince the Parents	Send the Data to Higher Authorities	No Action
	120	00	90
Percentage	57	00	43

Table 06 discloses action of PSTs on the collected data of dropouts and out of school children. Simple majority of respondents, according to their opinions, tried to convince the parents to enroll their children in schools whereas a significant proportion of respondents revealed that they took no action in this regard. No PST described that (s)he sent data to higher authorities for further policy actions.

Table: 07. Action of higher authorities (N=210)

Question	Answers		
What type of action did higher authorities take on your compiled data?	Legal Action Against Parents	Try to Convince the Parents	No Action
	00	53	157
Percentage	00	25	75

Table 07 is about the actions taken by higher authorities of education department on the compiled data of dropouts and out of school children. No respondent opines that higher authorities use this data to take legal actions against the parents of such children. Though a significant proportion reveals that on the basis of compiled data, their officers meet the parents of these children to convince them for enrollment however an apparent majority discloses that they (higher authorities) take no action in this regard.

Table: 08. Organization of community meetings (N=210)

Question	Answers			
How many times did you organize community meetings to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts in last three years?	No	One to Three Times	Four to Six Times	More than Seven Times
	127	50	06	27
Percentage	60	24	03	13

Table 08 describes the PSTs' efforts for community mobilization to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts. An evident majority of respondents admits that they organize no meeting for this purpose in last three years. A small but significant segment of respondents discloses one to three meetings in last three years for this purpose.

Table: 09. Participation of higher authorities (N=210)

Question	Answers					
Who did, from higher authorities participate in these meetings?	No	One	AEO	DDEO	DEO	EDO (Edu.)
	168	32	06	04	00	
Percentage	80	15	03	02	00	

Table 09 reveals participation of higher authorities of education department in the community meetings organized by PSTs to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts. An apparent majority of respondents denies participation of any higher officer in such meetings. A very small proportion discloses the participation of Assistant Education Officers (AEOs) in these community meetings.

Table: 10. Cooperation of different organizations (N=210)

Question	Answers			
	NCHD	Literacy Department	Other NGOs/GOs	No Organization
The cooperation of which organization is available to you to increase enrollment and reduce dropout?	74	00	00	136
Percentage	35	00	00	65

Table 10 indicates cooperation of different organization available to PSTs to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts. An evident majority denies the cooperation of any government and non-government organization in this concern whereas a less but significant proportion admits the cooperation of National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts at primary level.

Table: 11. Pace to MDG target of UPE (N=210)

Question	Answers		
	No	Yes	Do Not Know
Is the cooperation of different organizations and education department is enough to meet the UPE targets by 2015?	126	32	52
Percentage	60	15	25

Table 11 unveils the PSTs opinions regarding worth of available cooperation of Education Department and other organizations. Majority of respondents is of the opinion that it is impossible to meet the UPE targets by 2015 with available cooperation. A less but significant proportion of respondents state themselves unaware and a very less segment optimistically accept that they will achieve UPE by 2015.

Discussion

Data reveal a better trend for the frequency of in-service trainings of Primary School Teachers (PSTs) but there is very need to widen the objectives of these trainings. Focus of trainings, as described in data, is to improve teaching methodology and other teaching related matters. There is no training for PSTs to impart them community mobilizing skills so that they may make efforts to change masses' mindset effectively.

Though less but a significant proportion of PSTs denies any compilation of data of dropouts and out of school children in the nearest areas of school however majority claims collection and documentation of the data of dropouts and out of school children by themselves. Now here is a problem. Primary School Teacher (PST) is unaware to take effective steps and action concerning this data. Significant numbers of PSTs admit that they took no action after compiling this data whereas simple majority of PSTs tries to convince the parents of out of school children and dropouts to re-enroll their children. Weak results of enrollment and retentions reveal that the efforts of PSTs to convince the parents could not prove fruitful. Reasons may be the absence of training to organize community meetings and mobilize and influence the people. Assumed reason gets strength when majority of PSTs admits that they have no community meeting in nearest areas of schools in last three years.

There is, also, an interrogation sign on the role and performance of higher authorities of education department in the districts. According to the 3/4th majority of PSTs, higher offices took no action regarding their compiled data of dropouts and out of school children. And more than 3/4th of the PSTs reveal that no education officer participates and attends any community meeting to mobilize and convince the parents to enroll their children. Very small proportion of PSTs reveals the attendance of Assistant Education Officers in such community meetings.

The data disclose the limited role of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Government Organizations (GOs) to increase enrollment and reduce dropout in the

districts. An apparent majority denies the role and cooperation of any NGO and GO in this regard however a significant segment admits the role of National Commission for Human Development (NCHD). Majority of PSTs negate the satisfaction regarding UPE campaign. According to them it is impossible to meet the target of UPE by 2015. Very small proportion of PSTs hopefully describes it possible.

Conclusions

After detail discussion it is concluded that;

- Mechanism of in-service trainings for Primary School Teachers (PSTs) is working and organizing in-service trainings frequently in the districts Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur.
- Objectives of in-service trainings for PSTs are limited and confined only to improve teaching skills of the teachers.
- Primary School Teachers (PSTs) collect and document the data of dropouts and out of school children.
- They, informally, meet the parents and try to convince them to enroll their out of school children in schools.
- Primary School Teachers (PSTs) avoid organizing formal community meetings with parents and other influential persons of the society for mobilizing them to increase enrollment and reduce dropout rates.
- Higher authorities take easy concerning this aspect of UPE. No Education Officer participates and attends any community meeting organized by PSTs. Only there is a small evidence of the contribution of Assistant Education Officers (AEOs) in such meetings.
- National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) is working in the districts to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts but its efforts are not enough to meet the UPE target by the year 2015.

Recommendations

The study recommends following steps to boost the UPE campaign and make the efforts fruitful.

- It is recommended to expand the realm of in-service trainings for Primary School Teachers (PSTs). Current in-service trainings aim to improve teaching skills of PSTs. The study recommends trainings for PSTs for organizing community meetings as well as parents' mobilization and preparation for their children enrollment.
- Department of Education has a good in-service training infrastructure for professional trainings. To train PSTs for organizing community meetings and mobilization, special training should be arranged through the organizations which have experience and expertise in this field.
- Empowerment of PSTs is also mandatory. Teachers gather data of dropouts and out of school children but they have no authority to take any legal action against the parents of such children. Parents should be compelled to enroll their children of age group 5-9 years in schools otherwise should face legal pursuit.
- Systematically collection and documentation of data of dropouts and out of school children is vital for any further step to improve retention and enrollment. Though there is a tradition of collecting such information but the absence of scientific method of gathering record and ineffective supervision have decrease the worth of collected data. Higher offices of education department should be fully involved in this process at school level and it should be given weightage in district education policy making.
- Primary School teachers (PSTs) are working individually for UPE in the community. Higher authorities of education department should, not only, provide time and space for PSTs to work in community but their physical and departmental presence will improve the outcomes of the teachers' struggle as well. Officers should be made responsible to participate with PSTs while organizing community

meetings and mobilizing parents and community members to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts.

- Further research is recommended at provincial level to determine the PST's role as community mobilizer. Another need is to develop training modules for PSTs which enable the teachers to work easily and effectively in community to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts.

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