Role of Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department, Punjab in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Abstract

According to Article 25-A of the constitution of Pakistan, Basic Education is the right of every child and Pakistan is also signatory of Dakar Framework for Action. To achieve Education for All Goals, Government of Punjab established Literacy & Non Formal Basic Education Department (L&NFBED) in 2002, to provide basic education to drop out/ out of school children by opening Non Formal Basic Education Schools (NFBES). The purpose of the study was to identify initiatives taken by the L&NFBED for achieving SDGs, challenges regarding quality education and to suggest suitable strategies for quality education. The population was comprised on NFBES of Punjab. Multi-stage Sample was selected through Census and Convenient sampling. A questionnaire was developed to acquire
quantitative and qualitative data. The obtained data was analyzed and it was found that majority of respondents viewed that before opening NFBES, base line survey is conducted, teachers are hired after interview, Centre Kit and Learner Kit is provided. Induction and cluster training for teachers is arranged. Sixty percent enrollment in NFBES is of girls and poorest segment of the society is enrolled to eliminate gender discrimination, poverty and to give equal access to free education. Midterm and promotional assessment is conducted. Low teachers honorarium, home based schools, single teacher for six classes and non provision of non formal elementary education are challenges to achieve SDGs. It was suggested that Government of Punjab should increase teacher’s honorarium, hire additional science teachers in NFBES and establish Non Formal Elementary Schools.

**Keywords**: Literacy & Non Formal Basic Education Department; Non Formal Basic Education Schools; Sustainable Development Goals

**Introduction**

Literacy rate and educated people are the key indicators of any country to check how much it is developed. The countries which are well developed in the world, the basic reason of their development is literate and educated population. Less developed and developing countries are facing major crises like health issues, economic crunch, unemployment, extremism, terrorism etc, due to high rate of illiteracy (Memon, 2007).

Internationally, first initiative to increase literacy rate and for universal primary education was taken at the platform of World Conference on Education for All in Jomtein, Thailand, in 1990. Participants from all over the world agreed to work on expanding vision of learning, universal primary education and eradication of illiteracy in 10 years. Again in April 2000, more than 1100 participants of 164 countries of the world, including government institutions heads, policy makers, teachers and members of NGOs gathered in World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. All participants affirmed the commitment to achieve “Education for All” by 2015. Six goals were set to fulfill
the learning needs of all children, youth, and adults by 2015. Four out of six goals of Dakar Frame of Action were related to basic education, while two goals were related to youth and adult literacy (Dakar 2000).

Pakistan, along with other 163 countries was the signatory of Dakar frame of Action. Article, 25-A of the constitution of the Pakistan, also provide right of free and compulsory primary education to all children of the country. To achieve EFA goals, Government of Pakistan, took initiatives through formal education, as well as, through non formal educational system to cover out of school/dropout children and illiterate adults. In 2002, Directorate of National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) was established to provide basic education via non formal means (Khan and Niazi n.d.).

Provincial Governments also took initiatives to achieve EFA Goals. In 2002, Government of the Punjab, established new department “Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department” to achieve EFA Goals (Ahmad 2011). L&NFBED worked on two segments, to achieve the goals. Firstly, to achieve goal no.3 and goal no.4 which were related to youth and adult literacy, established Adult Literacy Centers (ALCs) to increase the literacy rate by literating the illiterate adults (Anon n.d.). Secondly, to achieve remaining four goals which were related to early childhood education, universal primary education, gender equality and quality education, established Non Formal Basic Education Schools (NFBES) in far flung and remote areas of Punjab, where no facility of formal education was available (Lewin 2015).

In the light of EFA Goals, different steps were taken by L&NFBED for adult literacy and for basic education; Which are as under,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Name of Project</th>
<th>Gestation Period</th>
<th>Total Cost (Rs. In Millions)</th>
<th>NFB E</th>
<th>ALC</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>NFB E</th>
<th>ALC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Literacy Programme</td>
<td>2005-12</td>
<td>595.8</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>18,600</td>
<td>24,800</td>
<td>186,000</td>
<td>465,000</td>
<td>651,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achievements of Literacy & Non Formal Basic Education Department Since 2005 to 2015
In 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals were set to achieve till 2030. Goal no.04 was related to quality education. Indicators of quality education were consisting upon free, equitable and quality primary education, equal access of girls and boys for quality pre primary education, to ensure equal access of women and men to affordable and quality technical and vocational education, to eliminate gender discrimination in education, to ensure literacy and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Students Enrolled</th>
<th>Teachers Enrolled</th>
<th>Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Girls (%)</th>
<th>Boys (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Total Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Campaign for Enhancement of Literacy in Four Districts of Punjab</td>
<td>2005-14</td>
<td>981,37</td>
<td>3,75</td>
<td>2,475</td>
<td>5,98</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>106,1</td>
<td>61,87</td>
<td>168,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Punjab Literacy and Livelihood</td>
<td>2009-11</td>
<td>135,71</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ALC &amp; NFBE at Brick Kiln at Multan and Khanewal</td>
<td>2009-11</td>
<td>119,89</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>4,125</td>
<td>9,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Community Learning Centers (CLCs) Project</td>
<td>2009-11</td>
<td>93,75</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Punjab Accelerated Functional Literacy Project</td>
<td>2012-15</td>
<td>263,91</td>
<td>5,464</td>
<td>1,028</td>
<td>6,492</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>190,40</td>
<td>295,440</td>
<td>485,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Community Learning Centers (CLCs) Phase-II</td>
<td>2012-15</td>
<td>93,57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14,400</td>
<td>14,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Punjab Work Place Literacy Project</td>
<td>2012-15</td>
<td>514,60</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Punjab Literacy Movement Project</td>
<td>2013-15</td>
<td>182,16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,667</td>
<td>6,667</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>459,640</td>
<td>459,640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tribal Areas Literacy Project</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>59,55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,450</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Aao Parhain Project</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>578,43</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>8,633,57</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,492</strong></td>
<td><strong>46,185</strong></td>
<td><strong>530,50</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,320,38</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,850,88</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
numeracy in adults, to ensure effective learning environment and availability of qualified teachers (Marco 2017).

To achieve SDGs and for the improvement of quality education, L&NFBED took more initiatives to achieve the goal of quality education. DEOs (Literacy) were recruited at district level to administer and supervise the NFEIs and field staff effectively. District Trainers were recruited at district level to train the teachers of NFEIs, and to enhance the quality of education to improve teaching and learning process. For the smooth functioning of NFEIs, Monitors were also recruited and their main assignment was to keep check upon NFEIs according to the requirements/ directions of the department. To check the output of teaching learning process, Assessors were also recruited to measure the quality of education in NFEIs. Midterm and final term exams are also being conducted under the supervision of field staff. Earlier, qualification for NFEI teacher was Matric but after the commitment to fulfill SDGs, teachers’ qualification was fixed up to intermediate at least. For improvement of quality education, Centers Kit and Learners Kit are also provided in all NFEIs. All the system of L&NFBED was digitalize including location of all NFEIs, monitoring of NFEIs and formative assessment of learners (PC-1, 2015).

Initiatives taken and progress of the L&NFBED to achieve SDGs are as under,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Name of Project</th>
<th>Gestation Period</th>
<th>Total Cost (Rs. In Millions)</th>
<th>Number of Schools/Centers NFBE ALC Total</th>
<th>Number of Learners NFBE ALC Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taleem Sab Kay Liay</td>
<td>2015-20</td>
<td>628.5</td>
<td>12 60 19</td>
<td>2 13 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From 2016 to 2022, 91310 learners appeared in 5th class conducted by Punjab Examination Commission (PEC). 88097 learners passed the PEC exams. Ratio of success remained 96% overall (Masood, 2022).

The objectives of the studies are

- To identify initiatives taken by the L&NFBED for achieving SDGs.
- To analyze challenges faced to ensure quality education regarding SDGs.
- To suggest suitable strategies for quality education to achieve SDGs.

**Current Research**

This study was aimed to discuss the initiatives taken by the L&NFBED to enhance quality education in their institutions to achieve SDGs and to analyze challenges faced to ensure quality education in these institutions. This study was delimited to the NFEIs of L&NFBED Punjab, Pakistan.

**Research Methodology**

The population of the study was consisted on all field staff, teachers and officers of districts, and as well as from head office of
L&NFBED working in Punjab. Sample was selected through census sampling and convenient sampling. DEOs (Literacy) and LCs were selected through census sampling, while field staff, teachers and officers from the Head office were selected through convenient sampling.

A questionnaire consisting of three major portions i.e. check list, 5-point Likert scale and open ended questions was developed. Checklist was prepared to measure the initiatives taken by L&NFBED to achieve SDGs. The 5-point Likert scale was developed to investigate the current scenario of non formal education regarding quality education, and open ended questions were included to find challenges and suggestions to improve non formal education and quality of education to achieve SDGs. The research instrument was pilot tested to ensure the validity and reliability. The researcher collected the data from all over the Punjab using Google form.

The collected data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20. Close ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e. frequencies, percentage and mean score while open ended questions were analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings were reported after obtaining the results from the analysis of collected data. Appropriate measures were recommended on the basis of obtained findings.

**Findings**

- Before opening NFEIs in Punjab, base line survey is conducted by the L&NBED to collect out of school children and illiterate adults data.
- NFEIs are established in those localities of Punjab where formal schools do not exist, or cluster of illiterate adults is found.
- NFEIs are mostly established in teachers own home based single classroom with six classes. Single teacher is hired for each NFEI for multi grade teaching.
- Center kit and learner kit are provided in all NFEIs of the L&NFBED all over the Punjab. Free pre primary and primary education is given in all non formal schools of L&NFBED.
• Single national curriculum is followed in all NFBES. Induction and cluster trainings are conducted for all teachers of NFEIs.
• More than half enrollment in NFBES is of girls, and more than 90% women are enrolled in ALCs operated by L&NFBED.
• School councils is notified by the authority to look after the NFEIs, and to ensure quality of education.
• Midterm and promotional assessment is conducted in all NFEIs, and results are shared with learners and parents.
• After passing 5th class, learners are mainstreamed in formal education system.
• Community involvement in NFEIs, for quality education, is moderate. Some parents come to visit the schools, others do not.
• Field visits of the NFEIs, monitoring of NFEIs and continuous assessment of learners are conducted via digital gadgets and reports are sent online to Planning and Management Unit (PMU).
• The data reveals that less number and over burdened field staff, only 8000/- honorarium of NFEI teachers, home based NFEI, single teacher for each NFEI, limited cooperation of community, non provision of non formal elementary education, no stipend for learners are hindrances in quality education. Respondents suggested to recruit more field staff, increment in teachers honorarium, hiring of second teacher, stipend for learners, recognition of NFEIs learners and provision of proper building for NFEIs for quality education to achieve SDGs.

Discussion

Illiteracy is a main problem for developing countries. Developing countries took initiatives to achieve EFA goals and now working to achieve SDGs Bangladesh along NGOs via non formal education worked on early education, adolescent education, adult literacy and on technical and vocational education. L&NFBED, Punjab, Pakistan
is also working on pre primary education, primary education, adolescent education and on adult literacy through non formal education. There is needed to start technical and vocational education for adult via non formal education. Govt. of Bangladesh passed a non formal education act in 2014. Main features are expansion of non formal education, establishment of non formal board for certification of non formal learners, inclusion of technical and vocation education to adults along literacy component. L&NFBED has no separate board for certification, department is taking exams itself till 4th class and PEC is responsible for taking exams of 5th class. L&NFBED should make Non Formal Act and Non Formal Board for certification of non formal learners and adults.

In the research study “Effectiveness of Non-Formal Basic Education Schools for Provision of Primary Education to Out-Of-School Children” following findings were obtained.

Base line survey and identification of dropout/out of school children is done and this task is the responsibility of field staff, 5th class learners are assessed through PEC. Community wants to open NFEIs, more than half enrollment is girls, students are good in math and weak in Science and English(Gull and Sarwar 2020). Similar Findings came from the research work of the researcher which shows the reliability of the research work.

**Recommendations**

Non formal schools of L&NFBED are providing basic education to drop out/out of school children in marginalized and far flung areas of Punjab. On the same time, Adult Literacy Centers of L&NFBED are iterating the illiterate adults of Punjab. Learners of NFEIs belong to poor of the poorest segment of the society, so it is suggested that Government of the Punjab should fix stipend for learners of NFEIs to provide financial assistance to their parents. NFEIs of L&NFBED are operating with single teachers for six classes, that’s why it is suggested that L&NFBED should hire at least two teachers in each NFEI to ensure quality education, preferably, second teacher should be for science and maths.

It is noticed that required qualification for teacher in NFEIs is matriculation or intermediate, and Honorarium of non formal teacher
is 7000/- to 8000/- per month, which is very low, even less than an unskilled worker who is paid 25000/- per month as per labour law of the country. As a result highly educated persons are reluctant to be teachers of NFEIs. Here it is suggested that L&NFBED should increase teachers qualification up to graduate level instead of matriculation or intermediate, to ensure quality education, and Government of the Punjab should increase teachers honorarium up to 25000/- to maintain his/her social status. It has been found that less numbers of seats of field staff are sanctioned by the department for establishing and monitoring of NFEIs, teachers training and for assessment of learners. It is also noticed that most of the sanctioned seats are lying vacant. It is suggested that Government of the Punjab should sanction seats of field staff considering the ratio of 1-20 NFEIs to ensure quality education and L&NFBED should fill vacant seats at the earliest for better functioning of NFEIs.

It is concluded from the data that NFEIs are mostly functional in teachers own homes, and quality of education suffered due to homes environment. It has also been revealed that community is reluctant to involve in activities of home based schools. It is suggested that Government of the Punjab should allocate funds for one hall for each NFEI, and name of each NFEI should be named on the name of some prominent person of that locality to ensure involvement of the community for quality of education. It is noticed that NFBES are established in backward areas where formal schools are not established.

It is noted that NFBES are established in backward areas where formal schools are not established. It is found that, due to poverty, parents are reluctant to enroll their children in NFBES and most learners who are enrolled have no facility for education after completing their basic education. It is suggested that the government of Punjab allocate stipends for enrolled learners to attract them, as well as dropouts /out-of-school learners, and L&NFBED should establish non-formal elementary schools for sustainable education.

It is also noted that L&NFBED is offering a six-month programme in ALCs to literate illiterate adults, and there is no technical or vocational component of education for the adults in the programme. There is no recognition of successful learners at any forum to
encourage them and attract other illiterate adults. It is suggested that L&NFBED should start long-term programmes for adults with the technical and vocational segment. It is also suggested that the databases of NADRA and L&NFBED should be linked to update the status of successful learners as literate in the database of NADRA. It is also suggested that link all governmental subsidies and BISP with the database of L&NBED, so that parents of all learners of NFBES and adults of ALCs should be automatically registered for these benefits, and the literacy rate of the country maybe increased.
References


