

IMPACT OF FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS ON EFFORTS FOR ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The purpose of this study has been to evaluate the impact of financial constraints for achievement of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Pakistan and to suggest measures for improving the financial conditions to ensure achievement of universalization of primary education in the country. The main objectives of the study were: (i) To review the existing financial status; (ii) To critically analyze the efforts for improving the financial conditions and provisions for achievement of UPE. (iii) To suggest measures for effective and judicious utilization of financial resources in achieving UPE in Pakistan.

All education policies and development plans, developed since emergence of Pakistan, were analyzed to evaluate allocation and utilization of financial resources for achieving UPE. In addition, opinion of Planners, Administrators, heads of institutions and teachers were also gathered through submission of an exhaustive questionnaire administered in person. Part I of the questionnaire included major factors related to economic to seek the respondents' view about their effects on efforts to achieve UPE. In the part II of the questionnaire, the respondent were asked to give priority to the remedial measures to overcome the economic effects on efforts to achieve UPE. The total sample included 500 subjects which comprised 60 planners, administrators and heads of institutions, and 440 teachers from different strata of schools stratified as Federal Government Educational Institutions (C/G), educational institutions of Federal Government Educational Directorate, Islamabad, educational institutions of Directorate of Elementary Education, Rawalpindi, Army Public Schools, and educational institutions of NGOs.

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The political instability and the inconsistency in educational policies and constrained resources were major factors which adversely affected the UPE. The change in policies and drift of the objectives of achieving UPE due to lack of political will, resulted in inadequate financial allocations and in a number of planned period through which the allocated resources were not fully utilized. In -depth study of policy documents revealed unrealistic and idealistic targets with insufficient and non commensurating financial support. Major findings of the study were the poverty, lack of political will, resources constraints, political interventions, lack of commitment of teachers, lack of qualified trained teachers and their shortage, female teachers administrative problems, and access to school due to poor economic condition of the country which resulted into the major constraints in achievement of UPE.

A genuine effort is required for the implementation of policy strategies through improving the economic state of the country and adequate allocation of resources to basic education projects by eliminating the gap between the educational and the financial planner.

Key words: *Universal Primary Education, Enrolment Rate, participation rate, Literacy Rate, Poverty, Community Participation, financial constraints, Parental motivation, Teachers involvement, scholarships and stipends,*

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of different education policies and plan formulated by the Government to achieve the target of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Pakistan. Pakistan has gone through many educational policies and Five Year Plans which served as conceptual frameworks and plans of action for the development of education in the country. Each policy and development plan earmarked various provisions and financial allocations to meet the targets of UPE as envisaged in different education policies. However, the poor economic condition of the country and lack of resources resulted in non achievement of UPE targets.

Education is the basic right of every child and is essential for human capital formation. In spite of many commitments made by the Government of Pakistan, universal primary education is still very low. The decade of 90s is considered as a lost decade in terms of human development. Noticeable achievements are few in the education sector, especially in primary schooling. Government's financial commitment to education remained very low resulting in

insufficient number of schools available for the increased number of primary students. In 1990 the public expenditure on education as percentage of GDP was 2.2 percent and it dropped to 1.5 percent in 2001-02. The development budget of the education sector has dropped from 19 percent to 3.7 percent by the end of the decade. This lack of interest and low financial investment by the Government resulted in poor quality, inadequate supply of schools and professional staff, especially in rural areas.

Education plays a vital role in human capital formation. It raises the productivity and efficiency of individuals and thus produces skilled manpower that is capable of leading the economy towards the sustainable economic development. Like many other developing countries, the situation of the education sector in Pakistan has been not very encouraging due to poverty and economic dismal situation of the country which has resulted in:

- a. Low enrolment rates at the primary level.
- b. Wide disparities between regions and genders.
- c. Lack of trained teachers.
- d. Deficiency of proper teaching materials and poor infrastructure of schools.
- e. Extremely low level of public investment in educational sector.
- f. The allocation of Government funds is skewed towards education.

During the period, nine Five Year Plans were also prepared and put into practice which, *inter alia*, touched the system of education in the country at length. These policies and plans prioritized their targets as per needs of the people emphasizing Universalization of Primary Education (UPE), and increasing literacy rate for the country according to their ultimate combined objective. Despite the high hopes and aspirations, the outcomes have not really been realized and the country still lags behind in achieving the literacy and UPE targets as per requirement of Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

UPE in Pakistan

Pursuing the causes of non-achievement of UPE in Pakistan, different agencies undertook different studies. Bureau of Educational Planning, Ministry of Education in collaboration with USAID, undertook a study in 1976 and gave its findings. According to these findings, the salient in-school factors affecting UPE include poor physical facilities, high dropout, low retention, teachers' absenteeism, and lack of supervision, untrained teachers and parental apathy. Among these school factors, poverty was identified as the major one hindering UPE. (Khawaja, 1984; p-9) Other major barriers to achievement of UPE are identified as: poverty of the parents, women status in the society and disinterest

for female education, girls' domestic work, lack of community participation, shortage of female teachers, lack of physical facilities, irrelevant curricula. (Khalid and Mujahid 2002; pp 26-29)

Financial resources for education usually come largely from the public sector, which spends 2.5% of the GDP (2006-07) on education. A further 0.5% is estimated to be the contribution of the private sector, putting the combined resources at around 3% of GDP for 2006-2007. Although both public and private contributions have increased over the years (as a proportion of the GDP), there has been some increase in this proportion during the recent years, from the comparable figure of 2.2% in 2000-2001, revealing a slight upward trend. The data on public expenditure on education reveal the low priority Pakistan has given to education: it spends relatively less on education (2.3%) than countries like Iran (4.7%), Malaysia (6.2), Thailand (4.2%), South Korea (4.6%), India (3.8%), and Bangladesh (2.5%). The low priority for allocation of financial resources is another factor causing resistance to achievement of UPE targets. (Gop.2008; p.7)

Review of Targets and Achievements of Five Years Development Plans

The First Development Plan was formulated in 1955-60. Since then in all subsequent plans, universal primary education has been mentioned emphatically. All these plans proposed the target dates for achievement of UPE in Pakistan, but had to be extended on one pretext or the other which is indicative of non-seriousness and lack of commitment of Government agencies to this cause. Generally, the resources constraints were blamed for non-achievement of UPE in Pakistan. The following table depicts the plan wise financial allocations/ expenditure for primary education:

Plans	Educational budget	Allocation to Primary Education	Actual expenditure on primary education	Expenditure in Percentage	Percentage Share of Primary education	Inter Plan Increase
First Plan (1955-60)	304.93	51.4	21.2	41.0	16.85	---
Second Plan (1960-65)	490.00	78.00	19.00	24.00	15.92	60.7
Third Plan (1965-70)	1086.60	67.51	25.00	37.0	6.21	121.7
Non-Plan (1970-78)	2998.14	473.93	444.00	94.0	15.81	175.9
Fifth Plan (1978-83)	10698.00	3049.7	1413.3	46.3	28.51	256.8

