

Impact of Adult Literacy on Women Lives in District Kech

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Abstract: This empirical study investigates and develops an in-depth understanding of adult literacy program in district Kech, Baluchistan. The empirical observation was conducted to gain a qualitative insight into the adult literacy impact on women social, emotional and psychological lives. This presentation argues that adult literacy program is an effective dimension which bridges the gap between literates and illiterates. The presentation focuses on National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) Pakistan district Kech learners' (enrolled adults) knowledge, skills and attitudes that changed within the specific time (three months). The adult literacy program provides Basic Literacy skills to the individuals in the Age Group of 11-45, who either never enrolled or dropped out of schools before acquiring literacy skills. The adult literacy program is designated to achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, with equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. The study was contextual which required the qualitative case study paradigm. Interviews, observations and researcher's own experiences were the main methods of data collection. The study was conducted in district Kech, Balochistan. The primary research participants were 50 learners of an adult literacy center, while secondary research participants were District Literacy Officer, 6 Literacy Coordinators, 15 Local Area Supervisors and NCHD District General Manager, Kech. The major findings of the study are: adult literacy program leads to emotional and psychological control, develop caring attitudes, enhance day-to-day learning and tends to lead to community participation. The study offers insights for adult literacy program personnel including Program Manager / coordinator and Literacy District Officer. It points out the importance of literacy, develops collective approach among literate and illiterates to reform a low literacy society.

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Adult literacy program has always been critique for its failure with set of reasons such as lack of political will, inadequate funds allocation (hardly 1% of education budget), absence of coordination and organizational structure, centralized monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and above all lack of commitment. However, in June 2001, President of Pakistan created a special Task Force on Human Development to develop

innovative strategies for social transformation and poverty alleviation with a focus on outcomes. For this, President of Pakistan satisfied National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) (President's Task Force report on Development, 2002).

The Mission and goals of NCHD are "To promote human development by supporting Government Line Departments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and elected officials at the district level in primary education, literacy and provision of basic healthcare services". NCHD is a fast-track initiative to improve social sector outcomes at the grassroots level. The goal of the Commission is to fill the implementation gaps and improve public sector delivery mechanisms to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)".

NCHD established Adult Literacy Program at 104 districts of Pakistan (2006) with the aim to provide Basic Literacy Skills to individuals in the Age Group of 11-45 who either never enrolled or dropped out of schools before acquiring Literacy Skills.

Lesson learned was that the past Adult Literacy programs were taken into consideration and NCHD incorporated these into its new program. NCHD has been officially declared as lead agency for the spread of literacy programs in the country by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In addition, the 2006 UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Prize was awarded to NCHD for its National Literacy Program. According to Program Manager of NCHD, it was declared at Brazily summit that Adult Literacy Program was the biggest program of its kind in the world run by NCHD Pakistan.

This study empirical in nature is meant to observe Adult Literacy Program in terms of impact on women lives. The study focuses on two of our Union Councils (Singaniser and Gokdan) of district (Phase Jan-June 2007). The literature on Adult Literacy Program often leads us to conclude the literacy to "do," not just to "learn," (Lin Kuzmich, 2007) is more focused and permanent activity which appears through attitudes and emotional change. Thus, this study explores Adult Literacy Program impact's on women lives in district Kech.

Statement of the Problem

Adult literacy program is a challenging task focused on those illiterates who are psychologically deprived, emotionally disturbed, and economically underprivileged.

The study underway builds on Freire's challenged learners to "read the world through the word." (1996). Though, it is tough to reach the point of reading word and world which shows ethical and moral activities rather than a process of coding and decoding symbols. This study would explore Adult Literacy Program's impact on women lives in district Kech.

Significance of the Study

The research will explore the;

- i) impact of adult literacy program on the life of women in district Kech
- ii) utilization of resources and opportunities and their coincidence with the efforts of stake holders
- iii) effectiveness of literacy planners.
- iv) success of the efforts made by planners
- v) space for petty edition into the knowledge regarding impact of literacy on the human life.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Main Question

What are the impacts of Adult Literacy Program on women lives in district Kech?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explored impact of adult literacy program in district Kech; Conducive learning environment, learners' engagement or participation, learners' livelihood change, emotional control and learning achievement of the program were investigated. The qualitative research paradigm primarily involved collecting detailed descriptive data about the beliefs and behaviors of actors or research participants in the

actual setting.

Research Methodology

Setting for the research: the Adult Literacy Program

The study took place within literacy sector of NCHD Pakistan that developed and implemented an adult literacy program in district Kech. A sample of 50 learners (adult literacy students) with three-months phase duration was drawn at random from waiting lists of 149 Adult Literacy Centers (ALCs) in socially and economically disadvantage areas. The ALCs were roughly equal in size (20-25), and the same numbers of learners (20-25) were chosen from 10 Adult Literacy Centers. Random selection was intended to ensure that learners could be as representative as possible of their communities.

All ALCs were established in 17 Union Councils out of 38 Union Councils of district All 10 ALCs were bilingual (Balochi and Urdu), Balochi was the language of communication and Urdu was used as instructional language. Learners agreed to participate in research study on the understanding that they are selected entirely at random. The program was aimed to provide Basic Literacy skills to the individuals in the Age Group of 11-45, either never enrolled or dropped out of Schools before acquiring literacy skills. Ten teachers, two Local Area Supervisors (LAS), six Literacy Coordinators (LC), and a District Literacy Officer (DLO) worked with the learners for 3-months. The program was based on the NCHD Adult Literacy program which was established through Social Mobilization Process (a process where communities own the program and ensure collaborative partnership with the donors).

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Observations

Records of ALCs visits and group meetings were made by District Literacy Officer throughout the duration of the program. These records were analyzed qualitatively to identify key themes and aspects of learner's practices and responses to the program. Through teachers' participative observation, it became possible to analyze

families' involvement in the program. Different data collection methods such as formal and informal interviews, document analysis, journal writing and observations were used.

Interviews

All learners, teachers, LASs, LCs and DLO who agreed to participate in the study were interviewed about their adult literacy practices to evaluate the program from the learners' perspectives in terms of the NCHD adult literacy program framework. Interview responses were analyzed quantitatively. A similar interview focusing on adult literacy characteristics and literacy practices were also conducted with teachers, LASs, LCs and DLO in the control group.

Balach1 (DLO) and its two LCs (Chakar and Sheymureed2) were also interviewed in order to know their perceptions and beliefs about adult Literacy program supported by semi structured interview guides.

Data Analysis Procedures

The steps which were followed in data analysis were: the interviews transcribed word by word and repeatedly analyzed according to the constant comparative method. 1 Pseudonym 2 Pseudonym, the steps followed were; (i) open coding (ii) identification of the research participants', feelings, descriptions of thought pattern, and actions related to the research questions, (iii) the categorization of about 285 codes into different categories. This was done by constant comparisons between categories; and between categories, codes, written observation and interview protocols, and (iv) fitting together the categories using the constant comparative method. For ethical consideration consent forms were used for seeking informed consent from interviewees.

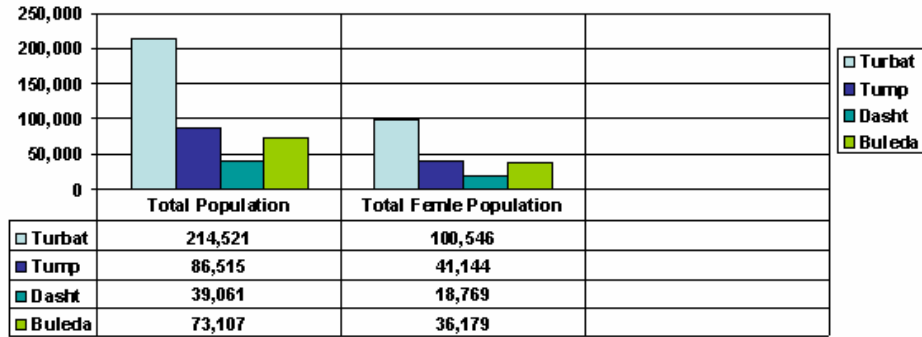
Discussion and Conclusions

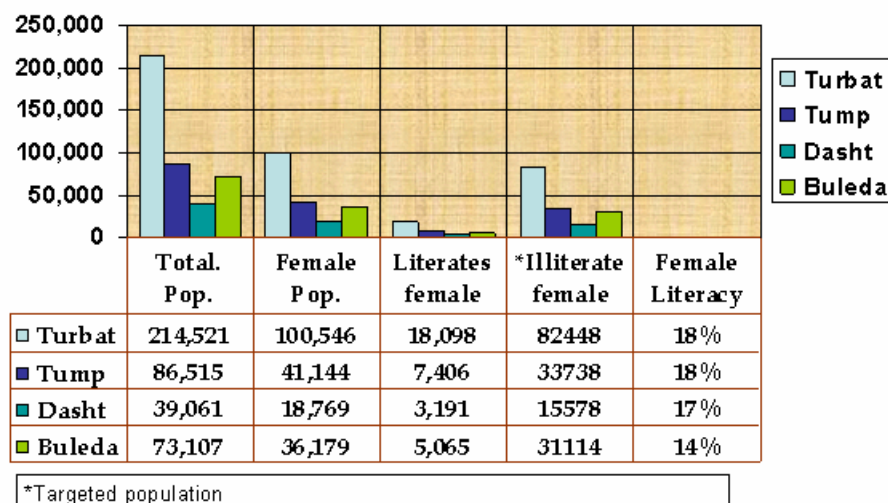
This study has explored the ways in which adult literacy learners viewed their experiences of literacy program. In the present study, take-up and participation rates were high and are perhaps more positive than might be expected for any adult literacy program in Pakistan.

Adult Literacy Program in District Kech

According to 1998 National Census, District has a population of 413204 with 47.58% females. The rural population makes up 83.4% of the total population. There are 38 union councils in Kech district. Compared to the national average population growth rate quoted at 1.99% in 2004, the annual growth rate of 0.97 for Kech and -0.73 and -0.09 for Tump is very low. Projected population growth rate for Kech District is 0.50 % (Census 1998). The tables below show the Tehsil wise population of district Kech and female literacy rate. In fact, female population is the target group in adult literacy program at district Kech.

Tehsil wise female population and literacy rate





Source: NCHD Human Development Support Unit Kech

NCHD Kech established its presence in April 2006 and the Literacy Sector started in June 2006. The Literacy Sector completed two phases of the program from July to December 2006 and then from January to June 2007. The study focused on phase two (January to June 2007) where 149 Adult Literacy Centers (ALCs) programs were completed and a total of 3283 learners graduated. Among the 149 ALCs, the study target was 10 ALCs. In fact, the course duration was compressed to six months where three months were meant for teaching and the other three months for Social Mobilization Process (SMP) and record keeping.

Mechanism of Adult Literacy Program

The adult literacy program mechanism is very dynamic where the Literacy Coordinator (LC) uses the SMP strategy to establish ALCs. Social Mobilization was used to enable the participants of the adult literacy program to discuss, analyze, and solve their problems by utilizing their existing resources. In the class, 20 to 25 learners were enrolled in the ALC who could achieve the following objectives within three months (two hours per day).

- After 180 hours of course duration, the learners will be able to achieve the level of that could read a simple paragraph with comprehension.
- Able to write 7-10 sentences.

- Numerical: Able to add, subtract, multiply, & divide up to 3 digits.

Adult literacy program followed strong monitoring mechanism which is fully decentralized in district where District General Manager, Regional Literacy Trainer, District Literacy Officer, Literacy Coordinator, Social Organizer, Local Area Supervisor, Teacher, Volunteer or community head all facilitate the ALC. Monitoring is salistituted with facilitation

Literacy Management Information Software (LIMIS) has been used to update on daily and weekly bases; daily dairy, center file, weekly work plan, teacher guide, weekly review meeting, record registers and stock registers.

Study analysed Adult Literacy Program documents and found effectively data flow through E-mail and LIMIS.

Impacts of Adult Literacy Program

Adult literacy program impacts may not be quantified by the study but the following themes would help to understand the program's effectiveness.

Process of Change

Adult literacy program is a bond between community and learners. Adult literacy program tries to ensure social change. In fact, this bond commenced with trust, commitment, sincerity and cultural value. Social Mobilization Process (SMP) promotes trust to identify, discuss, analyze, plan and solve the issue of illiteracy in the commitment, sincerity and strong cultural value, thereafter, learners may feel interested in eradicating the illiteracy from the society. Fatima (learner) regretted her life that "many times in life illiteracy created hurdles, for instance my cousin refused to get married, because I was illiterate, at home I had no say while educational discussion commenced in family members where all brothers and sisters are literate". Shakeela (learner) supported Fatima in group discussion that she belongs to a poor family where parents cannot afford girls education. She was interested in schooling but due to economical constraint she could not get admission in school. Afterwards she assumed education is not for girls but today she was realizing how much important education is?

Adult Literacy Program has impact on social change as Hani (teacher) claims

this sensitization and realization emerges from that gathering where adults ensure get to gather just for literacy. Furthermore, Imel, et al. (1985) also rationalized that literacy programs are developed in response to differing perspectives, they have differing purposes. Two common models are (1) personal development (2) empowerment and social change. The study revealed that among 50 learners (research participants) majority showed their interest and will towards getting education. Other findings of the study were financial constraint, cultural barriers and lack of parental support as the major obstacles to illiteracy. Zarina (learner) shared when she showed the desire to get admission in school but her mother desired that she showed continue embroidery rather than education. Mulum (learner) said “we are seven sisters and three brothers that is the reason our father says that he cannot afford education”. District Literacy Officer shared Adult Literacy Program emerged as a change agent for those individual who showed their will and interest fluently read sample text and writing. Kolawole and Adepoju (2007) argued that:

Adult literacy can be seen as the key to the development of the capabilities and growth of mankind, which aims at improving the growth, development and awareness of participants social, cultural, economic and community relations.

Learning is an active process by which individuals try to make sense out of information and experiences. A person’s prior knowledge, including beliefs and feelings, influence this process.

Adult Literacy Center is Bridged Generation Gaps

Study explored that in Adult Literacy Center (ALC) learners are of mix age group (11-45 years) while teachers are 17-24 years old. An adult literacy center is located in an area where 20 to 25 illiterates are willing to learn. The venue of ALC belongs to community which strengthens the ownership between community and NCHD. The literature has tended to portray illiterate adults from a deficit perspective, embedded in a culture of poverty (Imel, et al. 1985). Usually illiterates represent poor community where people are living hand to mouth and busy all the time for earning. Therefore, a generation gap emerged between young generation and elders. The study found that the learners were hardly discussing different aspects of life. Mahatoon (34 years old learner) shared:

Coming to this center she feels very close to her child because both are in the

same class. After class we usually set together and study together at home discuss different aspects of life which were missing in our daily lives.

Teaching and Learning in Social Contacts

Teaching approach at Adult Literacy Center is phonic in nature where at the end of book (1), teacher uses variety of syllables. On the completion of the book (2) learners can read and write simple words and sentences with functional mathematics (3) formal text books focus on social action? In fact, teaching adult is difficult but with highly committed teachers it may be possible to achieve the goals of the program. Hani (teacher) is of the view “It is very difficult to teach old age groups but it is an interesting field I really enjoy for the (learners) to write their name and feel proud”. In deed, such commitment helps to deliver teaching practice. Murwarid (Teacher) stated “this is not a job I feel it is my duty and responsibility to teach all illiterates who are my nearby. So in my class my mother, two sisters and my brother in law are also my learners”. Responding to my question that how your mother feel when you teach her? Murwarid replied my mother feels very happy and helps me in classroom management”. A 42 years old lady (Shahsta) reading the book (3) fluently and showing her happiness with saying that “I feel I got new eyes which lead me towards reading the translation of Holy Quran that was my dream”. Chakar (LC) shared we introduced Supplementary Reading Material (SRM) which is a technique where learners not only read books but also out of the syllabus they may read different topics according to their level. SRM technique developed by Local Area Supervisors (LAS) and teachers with the help of LC and District Literacy Officer. Shahan (LAS) shared in SRM our focus is learners issue such as different learners do not know Namaz (prayer) and its procedure or want to learn fundamentals of Islam then we developed SRM with the help of Islamic scholar and literacy team. Another learner (Sadganj) said “I was not able to perform my daily Namaz accordingly but Allamdullah, now I am quite confident to pray five times Namaz”.

Independence, creativity and learning are all facilitated when self-criticism and self-evaluation are valued. In other words self-esteem and motivation are heightened when individuals are in situations where they are accepted and valued. Thus, a culture of

learning in which learners' potential is fully recognized and actively supported by team leads learning process.

Conclusion

Adult literacy program impacts seem positive in district Kech. The study explored the effective mechanism of program where decentralized monitoring (facilitation) has been observed which may be one of the strong factors of the program. The impacts of adult literacy program may not be quantified but research findings are optimistic for rest of the country where Adult literacy program come across failure. The study also showed committed community in district Kech where importance of literacy takes place among illiterates. In addition, study found a slow and sure social change in learners' lives. However, discontinuity of adult literacy program may be one of alarming factors for learners which show new hope of life.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Is a 100 per cent take-up rate the level to be expected in literacy programs? Possibly, but to achieve such a level it may be worth noting features of this particular program that may have enhanced take-up. For example, there should not be interruption after Basic Adult Literacy Program there should be continuity with such as Post literacy program, Family Literacy program and Computer Literacy program. Finally Adult Literacy program needs alignment with formal education. In fact alignment with formal education is not easy but it is a step to bridge the gaps between non-formal education (Adult literacy program) with formal education (school system). In this alignment age factors may effect learning and participation therefore, adult class may be treated separately and also course may be developed accordingly.

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