

Robina Shoeb*
Muhammad Abrar Ahmad**
Anam Iftikhar***

HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN PUNJAB, 1999-2008: AN ANALYSIS

Abstract

Education is the foundation of better economic growth and poverty reduction, and it is impossible for any nation to progress socially, politically, economically and technologically without education. Indeed, any effort targeting reduction in poverty cannot be successful without a solid education base. Punjab undertook a number of initiatives during 1999-2008 to improve the socioeconomic indicators including education indicators. However, resource constrained economy of the province was unable to match the ever-rising needs of the education sector. To make for the resource deficiency, the Punjab Government launched some initiatives with the help of international development partners. The assistance came both in terms of financial as well as technical support. Major reform initiatives in education sectors mainly include Punjab Education Sector Reforms Programme (PESRP), and Punjab Devolved Social Services Programme (PDSSP). These interventions were major stride towards addressing the challenges facing our social sectors especially education sector. This article more specifically throws light on the status of education and its related indicators in the province of Punjab. It explores various interventions that have been implemented in the education sector in the province with the financial and technical assistance of the donor agencies. A brief impact analysis of these reforms programmes is also discussed.

Key Words: Education, Punjab, Poverty, International Development Partners

Education – Philosophical Context:

Needless to emphasize, the efforts to reduce poverty would hardly bring about any change without some urgent and extensive improvement in access to and quality of education. Economic Survey of Pakistan (2003-04) ardently articulates that “Education offers an escape from poverty by empowering people and enhancing

* Dr. Robina Shoeb, Assistant Professor, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

** Dr. Muhamamd Abrar Ahmad, Lecturer, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

*** Anam Iftikahr, Lecturer Department of History and Pakistan Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

opportunities for greater participation in the labor markets”.¹ Available evidence suggests that greater opportunities for education lead to a skilled labour market that in turn produces skilled workers who are able to make better living hence contributing effectively to reversing the incidence of poverty in the country, improving the state-society relationship and thus strengthening the democratic institutions and norms in the country.

Education therefore, is the most effective tool to reduce poverty and improve the status of living of any household. Gender imbalances further necessitate for greater opportunities of education for all. Available literature and evidence confirm that for women to come out of the poverty, education is the easiest and the most efficient means. Norwine and Gonzalez emphasize that “if there is a single word that sums up the hope for improvement in the status of women in the third world, it is education”.² With relevant and better education, women can make an evident improvement in their social, economic and political status hence, a sound educational system is the key to women socioeconomic and political empowerment.

Experts are of the view that type and system of education carry great significance for the economic and social development of a nation. A lot depends on the relevance and up-to-date education. Rasool observes that “The future of any country depends upon the type of education and training that is provided to the young generation”.³ In fact, it is also true that our social and economic survival depends entirely on the kind of education imparted to our children.

Moreover, education sector occupies a prominent position in the development process of any nation. Societal and economic transformation largely depends on the efficacy and efficiency of the national education system. Education is a foundation stone of every civilized society; it is a tool, which brings about not only social-economic change, but also shapes the ideology and ethos of the society. A nation cannot make progress without Education.⁴

Before we come to the more complex aims and objectives of education, let us first determine what ‘education’ really is!. “The word education is taken from the Latin word ‘educare’ which means to bring out”.⁵ This means to bring out and enhance the inner qualities of an individual.

Today, we consider a person educated if she or he has ever attended a school or a college and can read and write however; education doesn’t end in college or university; rather *it continues from the cradle to the grave*. In the earlier stages of human development, there were no regular schools for imparting instructions; the elders’ customs, tradition and wisdom were the institutions and source of education for younger generation.⁶ After the introduction of the ‘letters’; schools and regular system of education came into existence. The aims and objectives of the education and its system were always in conformity with the objectives and the ideals of the society in which they functioned.

Concept of Education in Islam:

If we talk about the importance of education in Islam, the revelation from God started in the form and array of educational lesson. As regards to the importance of knowledge and education, the Muslim scholars have presented their views on the

education, its purpose, nature, teaching, methodology etc. The Holy Quran as revealed to our Prophet (PBUH) begins with the word “READ”. Understanding of Islam depends on knowledge, and without God’s commands, cannot be understood in their true sense.⁷

Before the advent of Islam, no organized system of education existed in Arabia. “They only learnt the customs and professions of their elders and of course, they were very good in poetry but orally”.⁸ Revelation of Holy Quran began in the form of ‘educational lessons’. *Ashab-e-Sufa* were the famous group of Muslims who got education from the Holy Prophet (PBUH). They occupy a very eminent position in Islam. The importance of education could be seen in Islam in the battle of ‘*Baddar*’. Prisoners were promised to be freed if they would educate some Muslims as a payoff for their freedom.

The Holy Mosque was used to educate the children and no specific place was allotted to teach the students. “The proper schools were established during the period of Hazrat Omar (RA) in all subjugated territories and reading of Holly Quran was made compulsory for the children of the tribes”.⁹

In the 8th century, a proper system of basic education was adopted and the period of Umayyads and Abbasids witnessed an outburst of intellectual activities. The Fatamides provided funds to organize higher education at the mosque of Al’ Azhar at Cairo which was the beginning of now famous Al Azhar University. In 891 A.D., there were more than 100 libraries in the city of Baghdad and there every city had big library with big hall rooms where people could sit and study books.¹⁰

As far as the subcontinent was concerned; the Muslim rulers of India generally took keen interest in education. Many schools, colleges and libraries were set up. The poets, scholars and the learned men were encouraged and patronized by the rulers. Many *madrassas* and *maktabs* (informal schools) were established during the period of the Muslim rulers. During the British period, many significant steps were taken to enhance the educational status of the people especially the modern education.¹¹

Evolution of Education Sector in Pakistan since 1947:

We got Pakistan in the name of Islam. Islam is a ‘Din’ which covers all aspects of life, religious and temporal, and discovers every secret of life in the universe. This approach towards life and universe can be justified and satisfied only through a certain level of knowledge which can only be acquired through education.

Since 1947, social, economic and demographic changes had taken place in the country. However, these treasures could not be valued properly. We failed to institutionalize and build upon the available educational infrastructure in the country. “They haven’t been institutionalized in any form. In fact, they haven’t been politicized, which, according to the social scientists, is a pre- condition for institutionalization”.¹² Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, after the creation of Pakistan presided the first educational conference held in Karachi in 1948 which deliberated upon the education system for Pakistan.¹³

The educational conference discussed the reorganization of education system in the country in accordance with the needs and aspiration of the country. Soon after

the independence, “the central and the provincial governments found themselves confronted with great problems arising from the gigantic dislocation and damage caused by the partition”.¹⁴ The first task was to make good, the damage caused by the general exodus of non-Muslims teachers, the closing down of schools and colleges run by non-Muslims and the absorption of the displaced teachers and students coming from India to Pakistan. This was done as quickly as possible, but the desire for education spread from the lower middle class to the peasant class. There was a general demand for establishing more schools and colleges; the new state was thus, faced with the challenging task of providing education to a nation with 87 percent illiteracy.¹⁵

In later years, many constructive decisions were taken to promote the education; its quality and access but unfortunately, the desired results still seem a distant dream to be realized. We still struggle to achieve a decent literacy rate among the developed and also the developing nations.

Before the partition of the subcontinent, “over 80 % of its population of nearly 400 million people was illiterate”.¹⁶ To begin with, a number of policies were adopted which focused on establishing new schools and enhancing awareness among the people for education. Educational administration needed to be organized and the central and the provincial governments wanted to base the education system on the ideology of Pakistan. The Pakistan movement had gained great strength from the needs and desires of the Muslims to shape their destiny according to the ideology, traditions and teachings of Islam.

During 1950s and 1960s, Pakistan Government focused on the economic growth to reduce poverty, but the poor were not able to get the fruits of the economic growth, because of the too slow trickle- down effect.¹⁷ Therefore, the government economic policies failed to generate the desired economic and social gains for the poor and disadvantaged in Pakistan. The policies could not bring about any significant improvement in the social and economic status of people of Pakistan.

A comparison of human development indicators of the 1950s and 1960s across countries shows that “Pakistan’s performance was below the average for the South Asian countries and below the average for the developing countries”.¹⁸ This confirms our earlier notion that economic and social policies of 1950s and 1960s couldn’t dove tail the fruits of economic development down to the poor stratum of society.

While independence from the British was a great blessing, it exposed Pakistan to the gravest challenges of social and economic instability. “Pakistan had to undergo a turbulent process of nation building”.¹⁹ The independence led to many phenomenal challenges and “several major problems not only on administrative level but on the economic side as well”.²⁰ Similarly, on the other hand, the ever-rising elites’ power in Pakistan has resulted in the manipulations of the majority by a handful of people.

Evolution of Education Sector:

Since independence; Pakistan has been struggling with finding an education system that suits our needs and priorities. A brief account of the education sector in Pakistan is given below to see its evolution through the years.

Primary Education

Among all the stages of education, primary education has a central place. Efforts to expand primary education began sluggishly in 1947. Considerable efforts and progress have since then been made as can be noted in “three five year plans from 1955-60, 1960-65 and 1965-70”.²¹ However; the efforts to improve the primary education throughout the country since 1947 did not fare very well.²²

Frequent changes in the governments and the education authorities made it impossible for sustained support to be given to the implementation of these plans. The Fourth Five Year Plan was formulated at a critical juncture in the history of Pakistan due to prevailing political uncertainty. However; the Planning Commission worked hard at producing a comprehensive document.²³ The Fourth Five Year Plan gave high priority to the primary education to achieve the goal of universal education up to class five by 1980, and provided for the opening of 23 thousand new primary schools in the country. The fourth five-year plan in fact, never got off the ground largely due to preoccupation and engagement of the authorities in the political agitation.²⁴ The most prominent feature of the education policy from 1972 to 1980 was the provision of free education up to class ten.²⁵ In 1971, the literacy rate was twenty one percent which increased in 1981 to twenty six percent.²⁶ This literacy rate further increased in the next ten years from twenty six percent to thirty seven percent in 1994.²⁷

In the Twenty Year Perspective Plan 1965-85 and the Education Policy 1993-2000, all of which had accorded prime importance to the expansion of primary education in rural areas. The achieved results were not disappointing. In spite of the Social Action Program (SAP), primary enrollment in Pakistan though, did not improve and instead, stagnated during the 1990s. In 1999, the primary school gross enrolment rate (GER) was seventy one percent, as against seventy three percent in 1991, while the net enrolment rate (NER) dipped down from forty six percent to forty two percent”.²⁸

There had been an increase of about ten percent in the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) from forty two percent in 2002 to fifty two percent in 2005”.²⁹ A Survey conducted by Human Rights Commission (2006) reports that educational targets set under Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had not been met. There were disparities in literacy rates between provinces and regions. “Sindh had the highest literacy rate, at fifty five percent and Baluchistan had the lowest at thirty seven percent”.³⁰

Higher Education:

In Pakistan, getting higher education is not a big issue but most university programmes stress upon only theoretical education, and do not promote market-oriented skills resulting in increase of unemployment.³¹ This means that the education system has historically failed to meet the demands of the job market. A household data in 2005 showed that “educated laborers are earning ten percent more than uneducated laborers, while individuals in the “professional” category with more than eight years’ education earn sixty six percent more than workers in the “labor” category with the same level of education”.³²

“In 2004, nearly fifty percent of employed people were literate in Punjab. Among these, about eighty five percent were matriculates or less educated, and only two percent were graduates or postgraduates”.³³

Pakistan Government is focusing to enhance the standard of the universities, the Higher Education Commission was established, and the major focus of this Commission has been to improve the quality of research. Similarly, in Punjab, the number of universities has mushroomed at an annual rate of fourteen percent since 1996 with rise in enrolment as well. Similarly, the number of female instructing staff has also risen during these years. Taking a look at the student percentage, total number in every university in Punjab was three thousand one hundred and fifty-five in 2004.

Technical and Vocational Education:

In Pakistan, the technical and vocational education is mostly provided in the private institutions. “Informal training through the traditional system of *ustad-shagird* (teacher-pupil) also provides training to a large portion of the population engaged in the informal sector as wage earners or self-employed workers”.³⁴ Historically, technical and vocational education has been ignored in Punjab with no standardized criterion to measure performance of these private institutions.

Most of the times, there is hardly any linkages between the vocational institutions and job market. This is how they produce excess manpower in some fields and ignore some sectors altogether. Given this disconnect between the educational institutions and the job market, the challenges of unequal demand and supply rise which have actually led to reduced demand for new technical college. Training of the teacher was an important part in providing the quality of education, which is greatly ignored. Owing to this, the teachers training programme have traditionally faced many problems, for example shortage of science equipment, libraries, laboratories, and unsatisfactory teaching staff.³⁵

As stated above, on-the-job training was carried out through the traditional *ustad-shagird* (Teacher-student) system in the informal sector because the formal training institutions were not enough in number and in skills to meet the existing demands of the market. The *ustad-shagird* (Teacher-student) model has been useful both in providing training as well as employment to the trainee. This model works on a mutual basis while serving the interests of both the parties. The Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) was established by the Punjab government for this purpose.³⁶

As far as Punjab was concerned, it has been a better place in getting the targets for the universal primary education mentioned in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals.³⁷

The education indicators in the province of Punjab were relatively poor mainly because of socio-economic and cultural hurdles, and number of other reasons including insufficient resources, poor infrastructure, inaccessibility, poorly paid and untrained teachers, lack of teaching aids in schools, and absence of citizens' engagement.³⁸ Therefore, the focus of the Punjab government has mainly been on several issues, especially on primary education, better literacy rate, teachers training, syllabus and materials development and to provide sufficient

opportunities to get the secondary and higher education while giving importance to technical and vocational education. “The Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme (PERSP) was a main intervention towards getting these goals”.³⁹

Situation Analysis:

Pakistan is placed among the developing countries and when compared with other countries, the situation is not quite up to the mark. From 1999 to 2006 Punjab education outcomes were better than in the rest of the country but fare poorly when compared to the rest of South Asia. Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) 2004 reported Punjab’s average literacy rate at “52%”.⁴⁰ The average percentage of literacy was lower in female as compared to that of male. According to P-PRSP, “Differential in literacy between the urban and rural areas was at least 20 percent points.”⁴¹ Among the females, this was more than 23 percent points in favour of those residing in urban areas.

The overall literacy rate for the country was 54% (male 66% and female 42%) net primary enrolment ratio was 46% in 1991 and was expected to reach 58% by 2005-06.⁴² This literacy rate and net primary enrolment were lower not only as absolute but also in comparison with other countries in the same development bracket. “Past data relating to the proportion of pupils starting grade I and reaching grade 5 was fraught with difficulties. Current statistics, nevertheless points to encouraging results: 72% of pupil starting grade 1 reach grade 5. Completion rates for girls were improving but continue to be lower than those of boys.”⁴³

The expenditure on education at the household level was extremely low in all the provinces. According to the data during 2002 “the share of household expenditure on education in Punjab was only 3.74%: 2.69% in rural areas and 5.55% in urban areas”⁴⁴ leading to poor service quality of education.⁴⁵

Similarly, there were around forty-four thousand primary schools, seven thousand middle schools, four to five thousand high schools, five hundred higher secondary schools, and four hundred colleges for professional and general education run by the government. 500,000 staff including 319,905 teachers were appointed to manage these institutions.⁴⁶

Educational Management Information System (EMIS) showed that there were around nineteen thousand schools running by the private sector in 2003 with thirty one percent students from primary to higher secondary level. The Education Foundation was strengthened to involve the private sector, because in cities and small towns the private schooling was important, and it was significant considering the private system to expand education and improve quality.⁴⁷

The district wise literacy ranking shows that Rajanpur, Muzaffargarh, and Lodhran (South Punjab) had not changed since 1998. While all these districts were interestingly in the south of Punjab, districts with higher literacy were either in central or northern Punjab.⁴⁸ In terms of literacy levels, these patterns were fairly consistent with the incidence of income poverty in these regions. Both the income level poverty and the literacy rates were negatively related. The districts with higher income poverty had lower literacy rates and vice versa.

Absence of basic services and teachers in the schools, and insufficient monitoring were other factors responsible for the huge dropout rate of the students from schools. Situation was not good even in the special schools. In Punjab, out of six hundred thousand special children, only about 4,000 were enrolled in schools.⁴⁹

Although there is an increase in enrolment at each level “nearly 9.57 million children of school-going age were out of school. About 36% children aged 5–9 were out of school; this proportion was 29.5% for the age group 10–12 years, 40% for the age group 13–14 years, and 58% for the age group 15–17 years. Primary level completion rates however, improved considerably from 1999 to 2005, increasing from 38% to 46%”.⁵⁰ UNESCO in its 2007 Education for All Report stated that “economic constraints on households were key factors in keeping children out of schools”.⁵¹ The Punjab government targeted the low enrolment, high dropout rates, to increase the overall literacy rate and specially amongst females and needy students, and also to increase the teaching staff at the elementary education level.⁵²

Role of International Development Partners: (1999-2006)

Punjab Government had undertaken a number of initiatives in the education sector between 1999 to 2006 to improve the education indicators. However, resource constrained economy of the province was unable to match the ever-rising needs of the education sector. To make for the resource deficiency, the Punjab Government had launched several initiatives with the help of international development partners. The assistance comes both in terms of financial as well as technical support. Major reform initiatives in education sectors mainly include Punjab Education Sector Reforms Programme (PESRP), and Punjab Devolved Social Services Programme (PDSSP). These interventions are major stride towards addressing gaps in the education sector.

Punjab Devolved Social Service Programme 2004-2008:(Asian Development Bank)

Asian Development Bank approved funding amounting to US \$150 million for the Punjab Devolved Social Services Programme (PDSSP) on December 20, 2004. In addition, the Department for International Development (DFID) of United Kingdom also provided thirty million US dollars with an associated technical assistance (TA) grant of twenty million GBP.⁵³

PDSSP mainly aimed at achieving progress on MDGs focusing on issues related to poverty, gender disparity, education, health, clean water and sanitation. More specifically, the Programme’s objective was to strengthen devolved social services for a more reasonable, effectual, operative, and sustainable delivery of social services in line with the Punjab Local Government Ordinance 2001 (PLGO).⁵⁴

The Programme was anchored in three key policy outcomes including: “(i) realigning intergovernmental relations to support devolved social services; (ii) rationalizing and setting minimum standards for social services; and (iii) strengthening the public accountability mechanisms and promoting public-private partnership”.⁵⁵ The Programme was initially launched for three years to support the delivery of devolved social services, and it covered all 35 district governments and 34 Tehsil / Town Municipal Administrations (TMAs).⁵⁶

In education sector, the main candidates for investment under PDSSP included secondary schools, upgradation and providing safe environment for the girls by giving them scholarships and free textbooks, and providing facilities to special or handicapped children.⁵⁷

Annual Sector Planning (ASP) under PDSSP:

Development of ASPs by local governments represents a quantum rise from the traditional incremental budgeting and planning processes. The objective was to gradually introduce evidence based planning using the tools and mechanism provided under the Punjab Local Government Ordinance, the Local Government Planning Manual and other relevant government documents.⁵⁸

This development planning process was based not only on stakeholders' consultations, but also founded on solid facts and figures. This was an effort to draw local planners away for incremental planning to needs based planning. Under this approach, the needs were identified after detailed situation analysis and subsequent gaps analysis, in view of the vision of the district government. The resources available were determined and development schemes were prepared to meet the development needs of the local population within resource envelope available. The ASP was an instrument to achieve all of these objectives.⁵⁹

For preparation of ASPs all the requirements of the PLGO 2001 and the Budget Rules were complied with participatory planning and the role of the Council Committees. ASPs were developed after taking in confidence of the communities and participation of the relevant Council Committees, and the respective Council approved it through a resolution. It was approved that the plans, schemes, projects identified in the ASPs must be incorporated in the overall Annual Development Plan of the district. The provincial line departments would offer technical support and guidance in improving their quality.⁶⁰

ASPs for the education sector focused on whole of the education sector however; ASPs for education would mainly focus on female middle and secondary education. Most of the funding would be utilized for upgrading the female middle schools to secondary education schools. Therefore, the exercise of developing ASPs for education was mainly confined to middle and secondary female education only.⁶¹

Education Sector Component of PDSSP:

About 17% (\$12.75 million) of the Programme funds have been earmarked for the education sector, which also includes the special education initiatives. 70% of these funds would go to the mainstream education sector (US \$9 million) and 30% to Special Education sector (US \$3.75 million). The following MDG directly relates to Education: Achieve universal primary education.

In order to facilitate the achievement of these goals, PDSSP plans include the following:

- i. Up-grade girls' middle schools to high schools in the most underprivileged districts;
- ii. Encourage public-private partnerships in the education sector;

- iii. Reorganize DPI (Directorate of Public Instruction) offices;
- iv. Manage structures and quality assurance systems;
- v. Support selective provision of new multi-disability primary schools for handicapped children and support for community led and public-private partnership initiatives.
- vi. Launch School Health Programme.⁶²

Special Education Sector Component of PDSSP

Under the head of PDSSP about US \$3.75 million were utilized in the Special Education Sector while 30% of the total funds were allocated to the mainstream education. These funds mainly targeted the following areas.

- i. Behavior modification and stress management of all the four disabilities with specific reference to the mentally-retarded children.
- ii. Speech and language development of children with communication disorders.
- iii. Mobility orientation of the blind.
- iv. Skill development for rehabilitation of disabled children.
 - v. Latest teaching methodologies of children with disabilities.
 - vi. Audiometer and audiology of the deaf.
 - vii. Needs assessment and use of teaching aids.
- viii. Review of existing service and technical standards.
 - ix. Review of curriculum in teachers training institutes and training of Master Trainers.
 - x. Impact analysis of various initiatives.⁶³

Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme:

The Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme (PESRP) was started with the financial and technical support of the World Bank and government of the Punjab in 2001 and it still continues. The Programme focuses particularly on quality and access issues in education. It was initially a three-year (2003–06) rolling programme worth PKR. 22 billion. It was built around three main pillars: “1). Public finance reforms to realign expenditures at the province and district level toward education, 2). Devolution and public-sector management reforms, and 3). Education sector reforms to improve quality of, access to, and governance of the education system”.⁶⁴

PESRP in its early phase did a great job to improve the education indicators in Punjab. Number of incentives were taken to improve the missing infrastructure, including provision of free textbooks, and fees to the girl students to increase the enrolments in schools. This Programme was further extended for three years after getting success in the first phase.⁶⁵

The interventions made under PESRP tried to reduce teacher absence in schools. It also focused on the strength of the school councils. Public-private partnerships was encouraged through reformation of the Punjab Education Foundation.

Up to the secondary level, education was free and free text books were provided to encourage, girls were given scholarships for grades six to eight, schools were provided with the missing infrastructure and facilities. Government of the Punjab allotted PKR. 33,046 million to the education sector for the year 2002/03. This allocation was increased to PKR. 42,023 million for 2003/04 with a substantial increase of 27% over the allocation made during 2002/03. PESRP aid of \$100 million each for 3 consecutive years represented a huge amount of funds, which boosted up the education sector while engaging the LGs in implementation.⁶⁶ A Directorate of Staff Development was established to train the in-service teachers.⁶⁷ The private sector was engaged to improve the quality of textbooks.⁶⁸

In order to “encourage active public and parental participation in school management and to promote local responsibility of teachers, students’ parents were given the major membership in the School Councils”.⁶⁹ Each School Councils was given funds amounting to PKR. 0.4 million. Similarly, a capacity building project was launched on pilot basis, mainly to improve 2,400 School Councils in six districts: “Attock, Chakwal, Gujrat, Faisalabad, Vehari, and Rahimyar Khan.”⁷⁰

A system of third-party collaboration was introduced to get fair assessments of the quality of different programmes and their results and because of these programmes, enrolment rate showed a significant progress especially in the girls’ enrollment which increased to 44% from 43%.⁷¹

Total expenditure on education as a percentage of Punjab’s GPP has increased steadily after 2004, after the initiation of the Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme (PESRP). The distribution of education-related expenditure across broad categories indicated a sharp and substantial rise in expenditure on primary education, especially after 2003. A rise in secondary and university education expenditure could also be seen however, expenditure on professional education showed a declining trend”⁷²

“Punjab Education Sector Reform Program (PESRP) was started to address all these problems. Much greater efforts are still required to address quality of education, teacher development and motivation, monitoring learning achievement, and identifying alternatives of hiring qualified teachers.”⁷³ The available data show a positive growth in the percentage of females who have attended school from 1996-2006. The percentage of people that has ever attended school also increased during the same period and the difference between the females and males is much lower than before.⁷⁴

Punjab was also slightly heading in literacy to the other provinces of Pakistan. “Overall literacy in Punjab is 55 % for males and 44% for females”.⁷⁵ An extraordinary development has occurred in Punjab’s female literacy rate from 29% in 1996 to 44% in 2005. Similarly, the data of MICS (2004) confirm that all districts in Punjab showed improvement since 1998. According to MICS (2004) “Rawalpindi was on top (78%) in terms of literacy, followed by Lahore (74%),

Sialkot (70%) and Chakwal (69%)”.⁷⁶ The comparison further shows that “In 1998, there were eight districts where the literacy rate was less than 35%; this number fell to one in 2004.”⁷⁷

The comparison further showed that during the period from 1998 to 2004, the overall change in literacy rate for Punjab was about 7% (47–54%); 6% for males and 9% for females. The percentage change for females (26%) was more than double that of males (11%).⁷⁸ The PSLM reports that “proportion of population aged 10 years and above that had completed primary schooling or higher. This proportion indicates an improvement in Punjab from 38% in 1999 to 46% in 2006.”⁷⁹

The PSLM reports that “proportion of population aged 10 years and above that had completed primary schooling or higher. This proportion indicates an improvement in Punjab from 38% in 1999 to 46% in 2006.”⁸⁰

Conclusion:

The study has tried to prove that from 1999 to 2008 Punjab moved ahead in providing the education services to its inhabitants. School enrollment, especially enrollment of girls at primary level, was increased significantly compared to enrollment during past years, and in comparison, to other provinces as well. The gross enrollment rate at the primary level grew at 57% compared to 47% in 1999. Overall literacy rate increased in the province as compare to 47% in 2002 to 62% during 2006. Available data reveal that the education indicators were much improved in Punjab and World Bank assisted PESRP had been the main vehicle behind this enhancement. Similarly, the ‘gender parity index’ for education also improved to 0.93 in 2008 from 0.78 in 2002. The available data further confirm that the situation of Education in Punjab was better than the other provinces, but still it was far behind in getting the targeted goals especially for women education.

The Government of Punjab tripled the amount for the education from PRs 9,200 million in 2006 to PKR. 12,480 million in 2007, and a projected allocation of PKR. 28,135 million in 2009, it showed the serious efforts of the Punjab Government to enhance the education sector performance in the province.⁸¹ The ADP for FY 2006-07 aimed to spend 49% on PERSP activities, 23% on school education, 18% on higher education, 4.5% on special education, and 6% on literacy, non-formal education, and sports.⁸²

PESRP and PDSSP have definitely been the most effective initiative undertaken with the support of international development partners, in education sector with long term impacts. Generally, the importance which is given to education sector in Punjab in years under discussion had positively impacted the overall literacy rate, employment and overall awareness of the masses. Therefore, it seems critical to continue with the reforms policies and initiatives that have delivered successfully and have brought about positive change in the socioeconomic indicators in the Punjab to ensure achievement of desired milestones of 100 % literacy and, enrollment for a peaceful and prosperous Punjab.

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