



Role of Aga Khan Education Services in Promoting Female Education in Gilgit-Baltistan

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Abstract : *The purpose of this study was to assess the role of Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) in promoting female education in Gilgit-Baltistan. AKES has a long history and tradition of strong leadership especially in the field of educational development. AKES is a network of educational institutions that has been providing educational facilities for the students for more than one century. It started its initiatives in 1905 by opening a new school in Mundra, Later it became the large network of schools. Currently it operates more than 300 schools and provides quality education and advanced educational facilities for 54,000 students in Asia and Africa. The organization is playing a significant role to educate female in the remote and far-flung areas. The proposed study was conducted in two districts namely Hunza and Gilgit. Out of 21 secondary schools, 7 schools were selected through simple random sampling whereas three different questionnaires (teachers, students and head teachers) were designed on three point Likert Scale i.e. agree, disagree and undecided. Stratified sampling technique was used to collect data from 250 students, 50 teachers and 7 head teachers, which was later analyzed using percentage and mean. The study revealed that AKES has played a vital role to educate and empower female. It provides necessary educational facilities for students like proper seating arrangement, spacious classrooms with full ventilation, drinking water, washroom, and playground, provision of curricular and co-curricular activities etc. Teachers and head teachers also play their role in an effective manner for instance, teachers consider individual difference, pay individual attention, deliver lessons with the help of audio-visual aids, and provide conducive environment for students. Problems at AKESP schools are lack of required books in the library, shortage of laboratory equipment and computer lab. However, the organization may take suitable measures to solve these problems.*

Key words: Community involvement, educational facilities, female education, women empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Acquiring basic education is fundamental human right because it is the only tool that helps to differentiate between animals and human being. This principle has been accepted and recognized after the 1984 adoption of the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, various other human right activists have reiterated and have emphasized the right to free and compulsory primary education for all the children. According to Education for all (1990)(12), all the children especially



females who are in difficult situations and especially those who are in small ethnic groups, should have right to free and compulsory education. Here it is very important to mention that public health is strongly related to education as educated people have more awareness about health related activities and food which they consume in daily lives. When girls have awareness about education, there will be no or less cases of HIV/AIDS, child survival figures will be high and maternal health will be improved.

According to the global campaign for education (2005)(9), if all the girls get complete free education up to primary level, 70,000 cases of HIV could be prevented every year. According to Dr. Kwegir Aggrey, "educating a man means educating an individual whereas educating a woman means educating a whole nation". It is very important for females to have equal access to education as their male counterparts.

Education is also considered as one of the most key factors in overcoming the barriers and strengthening females into the mainstream of development. Education not only provides basic information and skills but it also enables women to fight for their rights and to play their role in the progress and development of the society where they live. Education gives status and confidence especially for taking good decisions. Educating women helps to reduce poverty that is why every nation emphasizes female education.

Education and female status or position in any society is interconnected. Major steps have been taken to increase literacy all over the world as stated by Bhatt, D. B and Sharma, R.S (1992)(7)

'emphasize has been given to improve the women status throughout the world with the help of education as education is the only tool that not only change the mindset of the masses but also help them to uplift the living standards'. Thus female education plays a significant role in the development of nations as the literacy rate of a country helps to reduce poverty and improve the economic condition by providing various opportunities for the citizens.

According to Ake (1993)(1), there are numerous advantages of women education that includes the decrease of maternal mortality, improvement of child health and nutrition, lower fertility rates, increase of women domestic role and their political involvement, enhancement of the economic productivity and growth, and protection of girls from HIV/AIDS, abuse and mistreatment. Girls' education yields some of the highest returns of all development investment, yielding both private and social benefits that add to individuals, families and society at large.

According to Pakistan Economic Survey Pakistan (2013-14)(18), females are believed to be 51 percent of the total population in Pakistan. As they constitute more than half of the total population, so their participation in the development is very vital. Pakistan female literacy is 48 percent whereas male literacy is 73 percent. There has been a steady increase in the female education as compare to past year but female literacy rate is comparatively lower in all the periods than that of male. The situation is very drastic in rural areas as compare to urban areas. There are many factors that affect female education in rural areas among which low status of woman as compare to man, cultural, social, religious and social norms



concerning woman's role in society, lack of educational facilities, and other many taboos associated with the female.

UNESCO (2012)(19), if we compare the situation of Pakistan with other nations in educating low-income girls, it showed minimum progress. The number of poorest out of school girls in Pakistan is twice as compare to India, three times more if we compare it with Nepal and more than six times as compare to Bangladesh. There are many reasons for low enrolment of girls like militant groups in the rural areas do not allow female to go to school or they simply blew up schools in such areas. Female education in Pakistan is badly suffered by poverty, socio-cultural restrictions and other factors.

Women have to face so many problems in today's society which they can solve if they are properly educated. An educated woman not only looks after home but also socializes her children in a better way. She solves day to day problems intellectually and also helps to boost up the economy. Education of woman is not only for herself but for home and society at large. An educated woman helps to raise children in a better way who ultimately can take part to make a society prosper by taking part in the progress and development. So imagining a developed society without educating female is impossible. The present study was undertaken to see the role of AKES in promoting female education in Gilgit-Baltistan at secondary level.

Objectives of the study

To assess the overall role of Aga Khan Education Services in promoting female education in Gilgit-Baltistan.

1. To evaluate the educational system of AKES as well as educational facilities provided for the students.

Research questions

1. What is the overall role of AKESP in promoting and enhancing female education in Gilgit-Baltistan?
2. What kind of facilities does the organization provide for students and teachers and how it has helped to empower the female in the area?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive quantitative study which was conducted in secondary schools of Aga Khan Education Services located in Gilgit and Hunza, Pakistan. The study populations were head teachers, teachers and students. Simple random sampling and stratified sampling was used while interview based questionnaires were used to collect data. Questionnaires were designed in the light of objectives and literature review. Seven secondary schools were selected from two districts (Gilgit and Hunza) through simple random sampling while stratified sampling technique was used to collect data from 7 head teachers, 50 teachers and 250 students. Data was collected through questionnaire with Likert scale i.e. agree, undecided and disagree. The reliability and validity of the data collection tool was established through pilot study. Response rate was 100 percent. The data was tabulated and analyzed using percentage and mean score. The scoring was done by using Likert scale technique by assigning a scale value to each of the three responses which are as under:



Response Category	Scale Value
Agree	3
Disagree	2
Undecided	1

RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to age

Participants	Age groups	Number	Percentage	Mean	STDEV
Students	13-14	72	29 %	14.94	0.97
	15-16	171	69 %		
	17 & above	7	2 %		
Teachers	20-30	9	58 %	32.86	5.47
	31-40	18	36 %		
	Above 40	3	6 %		
Head teachers	30-40	1	14 %	47.57	8.46
	41-50	4	57 %		
	Above 50	2	29 %		

Age distribution

Regarding age distribution of students, teachers and head teachers, more than half of the respondents i.e. 69%, 58% and 57 % fall between the age groups of 15-

16, 20-30 and 40-50 years whereas less than half of the respondents fall between the age groups of 13-14, 31-40 and above 50 respectively.



Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to teaching experience

Participants	Experience	Number	Percentage	Mean	STDEV
Teachers	Below 10 years	32	64		
	10-15	16	32	8.08	4.63
	Above 15 years	2	4		
Head teachers	Less than 10 years	1	14		
	10-20	3	43	18.28	7.18
	Above 20	3	43		

Teaching Experience

Table 2 provides us information regarding number of teaching experience of the respondents where 64 % of the teachers have less than 10 years of

teaching experience. For head teachers, 43 % of the total respondents have 10-20 and above 20 years of teaching experience.

Table 3: Analysis of Responses about the Role of Education in Women Empowerment

Statement	Level	F	Percent
Role of Education in Women Empowerment	A	241	96
	UND	4	2
	DA	4	2

Education is considered to be an important component of a society and an absolute necessity for its economic and social development. It also plays a significant role in women empowerment. Regarding the role of education in women

empowerment, a vast majority of the respondents i.e. 96% agree that it helps to empower women in every society. Only 2 % respondents disagreed with the given statement.



Table 4: Analysis of Responses about Contribution of AKES in students' personal growth and development

Statement	Level	F	Percent
Contribution of AKES in students' personal growth and development	A	175	70
	UND	17	7
	DA	58	23

Table 4 provides us information about the contribution of AKES in students self-growth and facilities for the students where a significant number of respondents (70%) agrees that the institutions provides various team work opportunities, increases students problem

solving skills, develop students creative thinking abilities and leadership skills which are important components of students' personal growth whereas less than 25 % of the total respondents disagreed with the given statement.

Table 5: Analysis of Responses about Classroom and School Environment

Statement	Level	F	Percent
Classroom and School Environment	A	224	89.6
	UND	25	10
	DA	1	0.4

Classroom and overall school environment has a significant impact on students growth and development. It also plays a vital role in overall teaching and learning process. A vast majority of the respondents i.e. 89.6% agree that AKES based schools have conducive

environment for smooth teaching learning activities including spacious classrooms with ventilation, lighting system, proper seating arrangements, and sports facilities whereas less than 1% showed their disagreement against the given statement.

Table 6: Analysis of responses about role of the teachers for promoting female education

Statement	Level	F	Percent
Overall roles and responsibilities of teachers for promoting female education	A	41	82
	UND	3	6
	DA	6	12

Teachers' positive role is indispensable for providing quality education in every society and are the character builders. With regards to the teachers' role in promoting female education in Gilgit-Baltistan, 82% respondents agree that they play their due role, motivate parents

to send their daughters to school, arrange sessions at community level regarding the importance of female education and focus on the holistic development of their students rather than their academic area whereas 12% disagreed.



Table 7: Analysis of Responses about the Involvement of Community members for promoting female education

Statement	Level	F	Percent
Involvement of Community for promoting female education	A	5	72
	UND	1	14
	DA	1	14

The above table provides us information about the involvement of community in promoting female education where 72% respondents agree that they involve members of the community as they are

the stakeholders who play an important role in promoting female education in the society only 14 % participants disagree with the statement.

Table 8: Analysis of responses about the role of head teacher in overall school development

Statement	Level	F	Percent
Role of head teacher in overall school development	A	6	86
	UND	1	14
	DA	0	0

Head teachers are not only responsible to monitor the ongoing teaching learning process but as being head of the institution, they have to play an active role for overall school development. The

above table illustrates that majority of the respondents i.e. 86 % agree that they play their due role while none of the respondents disagree with the given statement.

Table 9: Analysis of responses about students' security and facilities for the students and teachers

Statement	Level	F	Percent
Students' security and facilities for the students and teachers	A	6	86
	UND	1	14
	DA	0	0



With regards to the students' security and facilities for the students, 86% respondents agree that proper facilities like clean drinking water, washroom, and playground with sports facilities are available for the students. Moreover, AKES based schools are secure for students having boundary walls and teachers are concerned about the security so they don't allow to go outside the school during break time.

DISCUSSION

Increased knowledge, self-confidence, and awareness about gender equity are important components of women empowerment (Murphy-Graham 2008)(17). Educated women are more confident and are financially stable as compare to those who are uneducated. They are less dependent on men and are in better positions in every society. Educated women become more confident (Maslak and Singhal, 2008)(15) they can argue and make their own decisions. They become aware of their rights and they raise their voice if someone tries to overrule their rights. Women education is key element to improve women health, nutrition and education in the family and also empower them to participate in decision making. Education not only enables women to acquire knowledge and information but also helps them to achieve economic security, self-confidence, necessary skills required to live a healthy life. Moreover, it gives inner strength to face challenges in everyday life and enables them to take part in the progress and development of society (Bera N. 2016)(4)

The major focus of AKES schools is students' personal growth and development. It provides opportunities for students to develop holistically rather

than providing bookish knowledge and appreciates them to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities. AKES schools offer conducive and effective environment for students in order to create the ability of inquiry. There is a two-way communication in the class that means teachers encourage students to ask questions. Teachers appreciate them to take part in co-curricular activities which help to develop students' self-esteem, confidence, team work skills and discipline. (Malik, 2011)(14).

Classroom and school environment plays an important role in students learning. Students easily grasp new concepts and ideas if the environment is conducive (Hanna, 2013)(11). AKES education system facilitates its students fully by providing favorable environment inside and outside the classroom like considering individual differences, paying individual attention, appreciate them to ask questions and participate in different learning activities. New research also reveals that classroom environment has significant impact on academic performance of students. The University of Salford conducted a study regard class environment which reveals that classroom environment is critical for learning and can affect student's learning and academic progress by as much as 25 % (Barrett, 2013)(3).

Community members and stakeholders play an important role for promoting female education (UNICEF, 2005)(22). They further motivate people to send female to acquire education. Community participation and involvement is very necessary for improving educational relevancy, quality and access. (Swift, 2006)(20).



Head teachers are not only responsible to monitor the ongoing teaching and learning process but their role is complex and multidimensional. (Lizotte, 2013; Moose, 2013)(13,16). They have to ensure better teaching and learning at school, satisfy students and parents along with upgrading school infrastructure (Bryk, 2010)(8).

Head teachers are not only responsible to create linkages among stakeholders, community members and institutions but also responsible to provide a safe and secure environment for girls where all the teaching and learning activities move on smoothly. Moreover, they provide necessary facilities for both students and teachers including well-equipped classrooms, clean drinking water, washrooms, playground, library, laboratory, teaching aids and guide books etc. (Malik, 2011)(14).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AKES is playing an effective role for promoting female education in one of the most challenging regions of Pakistan. It started its initiative in 1905 by opening a school in Mundra since then its providing quality education for the students in more than thirty countries. The institution doesn't compromise on quality. The major aim of AKES education is to empower female who not only aware of their rights along with being less dependent on others but also to take part in the progress and development of the society where they live. The researcher has found that overall school and classroom environment is conducive for teaching learning activities with necessary facilities for the students. Teachers and head teachers are dedicated who play their role to promote

education in the area including conducting seminars and awareness sessions at community level to promote female education. Major problems at AKES schools are lack of books in the library, equipment in the laboratory and access to internet. In order to overcome these issues, the institution can build linkages with other donor agencies, government and non-government organizations.

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