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Free Textbook Distribution Process in Sindh, Pakistan: A Study of Stakeholders Perceptions

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Abstract

Placed amongst the lower middle income countries (The World Bank 2010), a large segment of the population of Pakistan is unable to afford the expenses on basic amenities including education. In year 2003, the Government of Sindh, initiated a free textbooks scheme.

This study investigates the transparency and efficiency of distribution process; examines the challenges and opportunities of the procurement and delivery process; and assesses the perceptions and feedback of the stakeholders. The study was conducted in all the districts of Sindh Province. The data were collected through analysis of documents, field survey, focus group discussions and interviews.

The study concluded that the scheme was marred by logistic and resource constraints, lack of coordination, weak management, capacity issues of functionaries, ineffective monitoring mechanism, institutional corruption, and intervention's sustainability. The paper recommends that the public education delivery mechanism needs to be revisited and updated.

Key words: Free Textbooks Scheme, Resource Constraints, Public Education Delivery Mechanism, Stakeholders.

Introduction

The World Bank Report 2010 projects a sustained rise in the primary school enrolments recording an increase from 81% (2001) to a staggering 86% in developing countries in the year 2007 (World Bank, 2010, p. 53). The report adds that 38% of developing countries 'have already attained the primary schools completion goal and 7% are on the track to do so' (ibid., p.3). The economic prospects of Pakistan, however, have been thwarted by a number of developmental challenges. It is ranked 141 amongst the third world countries with a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.572 (World Human Development Indicators, 2009) (See figure 1, Appendix 1).

It is a state that invests, as opposed to the global weighed average of 4.9 per cent, only 1.8 per cent of GDP in education. This indicates only a marginal progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) associated with both health and education (World Human Development Indicators, 2009).

In order to accomplish its developmental goals of ensuring better quality of education; improving enrolments and reducing dropout rates, the government of Sindh (Pakistan), has introduced the "incentive system" as an educational intervention to ultimately curtail the depressing trends in education sector at provincial level. This "incentive system" includes (a) free supply of textbooks to students [FTD scheme] and (b) payment of stipend to female students to encourage female participation rates at school level.

This paper presents the summative evaluation of the FTD scheme, five years after its inception. Based upon findings from the impact study on FTD, the document aims to: 1) identify the gaps undermining the transparency and efficiency of the process adopted for textbook distribution; 2) examine the challenges and opportunities created in the entire procurement and delivery process; 3) analyse the perceptions and feedback of the stakeholders involved; and 4)

offer viable solutions to improve the educational intervention process in Sindh. Before discussing the results generated from the impact study, it is essential to present the region wise analyses of educational interventions in developing countries followed by objectives, methodology and organizational mechanism of the impact study in the succeeding sections.

Literature Review

The education interventions are planned with a broader perspective of achieving basic education for all, by focusing on poorest children and girls in tandem with innovative delivery, and systemic reform. There are various types of education interventions that have been in place in a number of countries, for instance, the textbook distribution schemes, vouchers, coupons, order forms and gender based stipends schemes. The academic interventions are implemented to: expand access to deprived groups, develop labor market significance, and concentrate on issues of faculty quality, governance, and financing (WB Education Sector Strategy Update, 2005).

The WB presents a utopian vision of education where all children complete school, learn well, and adopt healthy behaviors and positive values. More female, rural, poor, orphaned, and disabled children enjoy access to a good education, including early child development programs that promote lifelong success. More adults obtain skills—and gainful employment. More teachers are well trained and well paid, and more school curricula and learning materials are of good quality and relevant to labor market and societal needs. More universities produce skilled graduates who add to national and global knowledge. More countries use knowledge and technologies to leapfrog toward faster growth and improved welfare. More people and nations recognize the value of peace, cooperation, and democracy. And more education systems are well resourced and efficiently managed, enjoying active community and private sector involvement.

This, however, is an idealistic scenario and the only possibility of attaining proximity to this ideal status is by addressing these strands separately. In a global context, and specifically in economically challenged regions, the education interventions whether they are catering for demand-side or supply-side aspects, have been in place in a number of developing countries serving to maximize the impact of education through sustained quality and also by realizing the following conditions: improved enrolments and completion rate, harmonized provincial representation and reduction in gender gaps.

Educational Interventions: A Regional Analysis

Availability of free textbooks is considered an important factor in the provision of quality education. It is imperative that learners have an access to learning materials, primarily textbooks. Parents have to finance the textbooks themselves in most cases. If the textbooks are provided to all children free of cost then it helps transfer the burden of such costs from parents to the state. “This not only contributes to quality education in terms of the availability of textbooks for learners, but also facilitates equity in access to education for children from diverse backgrounds.” (United Nation University Report 2009, p.13)

A regional analysis of underdeveloped and developing nations suggests that a number of countries have instituted educational interventions by providing free textbooks. The government of Ghana in 1961 introduced the free textbook scheme, to supply every school pupil with basic textbook. The Rwandan government, in 2003/4, shifted significant household contributions for education to the state by introducing fee-free primary schooling, declaring uniforms optional, providing a grant of 300 Rwandan Francs per child directly to primary schools, as well as introducing free textbooks. Resultantly, there has been a 7.1% surge in enrolments since 2004, covering almost 93% of primary age children, achieving a gross enrolment ratio of 131%, a gross

admission rate of 191% and a net admission rate of 25%. This meant that seven % of primary age (7 – 12 years) children stayed out of school but the local community up encouraged the young tea plantation workers back in school. They also implemented fines between 500 to 5,000 Rwandan Francs on parents with children out of school (Obura 2005, p.7).

According to the Millennium Development Goals Report (2007), some of the countries that have recorded a surge in primary school enrolment include Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The gains demonstrate the fact that free schooling has a significant impact on school enrolment, and it is crucial for the attainment of the EFA goal of achieving universal primary education (United Nation University, 2009, p.12)

The policy of free textbook distribution achieved success in Africa and such educational interventions involving the revision and distribution of textbooks have been put into practice in Latin American nations too like Brazil, Chile and Mexico primary schools: (a) Mexican Compensatory Program to Combat Educational Failure; (b) National Program for Strengthening Reading and Writing; (c) Jamaica's Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) program. This increase in the spending of Latin American governments to cover both the demand and supply aspects over two decades has displayed encouraging statistics. Latin America has almost attained MDG of having universal primary enrollment by 2015, with 97% of students enrolled in primary school. Furthermore, the region is making steady progress towards ensuring, students complete their primary education after enrolment. The average youth literacy rate is now 96%, exceeding the world average rate of 87% (CRS Report for Congress 2007, p.2).

Despite the improvements, Latin America's education indicators still lag behind the developed world and many developing countries of comparable income levels in East Asia. The problem of grade repetition and dropout rates is particularly insidious in the poorer countries of

Central America, where dropout rates stood at roughly 52% in Guatemala, 53% in Honduras, and 41% in Nicaragua in 2005 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC] 2006). Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with a primary enrollment rate of some 67% and a primary completion rate of less than 30%, lags far behind other countries in the region on all education indicators.¹

In Asia, Sri Lanka's 'Universal Free Education Policy' was initiated in 1945 and supported by substantial expenditure of around 4% of GDP in 1950s and 1960s. The success of such policy manifested itself in form of high literacy and enrolment rates. In the early 1980, the government in order to enhance access to the poor brought in Free School Textbook, Programme Free School Uniform Programme, Navodya School Development Programme (Tilakaratna 2006, p.1). The 'political commitment', 'complementary government policies' and 'external agents in supporting policies' were the primary drivers in the success of this schemes.

In some regions of Asia, however, the educational interventions superseded expectations of the government. Ahmed and Chowdhury (2005) state that the government of Bangladesh espoused the Education for All (EFA) goals and established a compulsory primary education programme in 1991 in an effort to 'increase resource allocation' and 'mobilise public support'. In lieu of these reforms it instituted: (a) *Provision for free textbooks*, (b) *Food for education*, (c) *Monthly Stipends and Tuition Waiver*. The main beneficiaries of these interventions are the 45% of Bangladesh's 164 million population. It is amongst the least developed countries of the world near achieving MDGs by 2015, with an astounding 94% net enrolment as of 2010. Bangladesh also expects school dropout rates to drop to zero level by 2011 and eliminate illiteracy by 2021 (Haq, 2010).

¹ These figures are taken from the web-site of USAID in Haiti, Available at [<http://www.usaid.gov/ht/education.htm>]. No recent UNESCO or ECLAC education data are available for Haiti.

Educational Interventions: The Case of Pakistan

It is important to note that education in Pakistan operates at provincial level². Each province is divided into regions/divisions for educational administrative purposes. These are further divided into districts. Each Regional/Divisional Office is headed by a Director and the Districts headed by District Education Officer (DEO). Pakistan recognizes four levels of education: elementary (grade level 1-8), middle (grade level 6-8), secondary (grade level 9-10), and higher secondary schools (grade level 11-12). The structure is moving towards a three-tier education system, namely elementary, secondary and higher education.

Pakistan featured significantly in the early 1960s in universalizing education for all. Spearheaded by UNESCO, a '*Plan for the Provision of Universal, Compulsory and Free Primary Education*' was agreed upon in the Asian Member States Convention held in Karachi. The Plan spelled out long-term objectives of establishing a structure of universal, compulsory and free primary education for all by 1980, and estimated the financial and personnel requirements (Duke, 1966):

The magnitude of the Karachi Plan is staggering. Anticipating growth in populations, student enrollments at this primary level must increase from 66 million in 1960 to 277 million in 1980, representing 20% of the total population compared to 8.5% of the population attending primary school in 1960.1)... The estimated costs of the Karachi Plan were carefully calculated to include recurring and non-recurring expenses for the entire program, based on 1960 prices. Total expenditure for the 20 year period was set at 56 billion U.S. dollars. This figures out to an increase from 1.7 dollars *per capita* in 1960 to 4.3 dollars in 1980. (p. 73-74)

The Karachi Plan was a tremendous boost to education in Asia and became a model for other regions, except perhaps for Pakistan. The Asian Development Bank Study (2010) cites significant educational gaps among emerging Asian countries, as seen the educational attainment

² There are five provinces of Pakistan: Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baldistan and NorthWestFrontier Province.

in levels in Taipei, China (11.4) and the Republic of Korea (11.7) in 2010 are higher than the average in the advanced economies (11). By contrast, in India and Pakistan, although educational progress has been rapid in the past 40 years, the average remains below 6 years. The average attainment in both Vietnam (6.5) and Indonesia (6.3) also remained low in 2010 (Lee & Francisco, 2010).

It is evident from the data over the past four decades (1960-1999), the education sector in Pakistan, exhibited relatively slow progress in terms of enrolments, dropouts and completion rates. Hence, in the year 2003, Sindh Reform Support Unit (RSU), Department of Education (Sindh) launched the donor funded educational intervention known as the Free Textbook Distribution Scheme (FTD) to support pupils registered in Class 1 to 10 in all district of Sindh. The primary aim of the FTD scheme was to contribute to the human resource development in the region by addressing the issue of primary cost of learning for pupils and ensuring that students receive a full set of prior to the commencement of the new academic session.³ Since its inception, an amount of Rs 222.00 per student, of the total 3,641,221 enrolments, has been spent in 2008 alone (see table 01, appendix 1). The statistics for primary school enrolment actually indicate a decline in student numbers from 2,806,418 (2005) to 2,755,935 (2008) as per the latest data available on the level wise enrolment figures in Sindh for 2005-2008 (See figure 02, appendix 2).

This decline in primary school enrolments is after the institution of the FTD and stipend distribution scheme in the year 2003. In 2006 the RSU identified the following issues in its assessment report:

The public education in Sindh is faced with multiple challenges on various components of the delivery of education especially the elementary education. The situation is that of 6.7 million 4 to 9 age group children only 4.3 million were enrolled in schools, which

³ RSU Document Analysis 2010

included around a million children in private schools (mostly Karachi). Similarly as against 2.9 million eligible population for middle school 0.85 million are in schools leaving behind around 2 million out of school. The education system is thus bypassing nearly 3 to 4 million hundred thousand (sic) children every year. If the current trend persists, in the next decade nearly 3-4 million more children will grow up with no or little education (Sindh Devolved Social Services Programme Review Mission, 2006, p,3).

This was a bleak forecast. The government of Sindh expressed concerns as to the low enrolment of students in primary and secondary education sector of Pakistan. Post FTD, minor changes in the enrolments, dropout and participation rates in interior Sindh called for a proper evaluation of the “incentive schemes”. In 2008, an impact study was conducted by Iqra University (Karachi) to properly determine the progress and effectiveness of the FTD initiative. The study was carried out with the financial support of RSU and the UNICEF.

Objectives of the Impact Study

The overall objectives of the FTD impact study were to: measure the elements of transparency, reliability and efficiency of FTD; gather the feedback of the concerned stakeholders including parents, students and key management functionaries both at district and provincial levels; identify the challenges and shortcomings embedded in the proposed system of FTD; to recommend solutions for improvements in the operation of the FTD.

Methodology and Research Design

A mixed approach was employed for the study. Data were collected from the analysis of relevant documents, field survey, interviews and focus group discussions. The items of the questionnaire were translated in local languages including Urdu and Sindhi for understanding of native speakers. An extensive field survey was carried out across the 23 districts of Sindh. A total of 539 schools were surveyed by a team of 67 members. The number 539 constitutes 1.1%

of the total number of 49,615 schools in Sindh (Sindh Education Management Information System Census, 2007-08).

For the collection of quantitative data, different questionnaires were administered for **1493 parents, 474 head teachers and the all (125) Assistant District Officers of Education (ADOEs)**. A total of 10 focus group discussions were held in the selected districts of Sukkur , Mirpurkhas , Karachi , Hyderabad and Tharparkar divisions . Parents, Head teachers, Students and key government functionaries including Assistant District Officers Education (ADOEs) participated in FGD. Based upon the accessibility, willingness, experience and understanding of the scheme, participants were identified from FGD and some of them were interviewed individually. The data thus generated from the surveys and interviews were analyzed thematically and consequently interpreted.

Findings and Analyses

This section presents the statistical analysis of the quantitative data and thematic analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the stakeholders. It is in-depth analyses of the awareness, logistic, capacity building and orientation issues, coordination and liaison difficulties, warehousing, book sets and binding and shortage of books.

Awareness of the FTD Scheme

In order for a new education intervention to successful, components are mapped, goals are set and undertakings are defined. Mechanisms for coordination, reporting, and evaluation are established. Pro-actively creating the awareness of and training for a project of local, provincial and national interest among community is actually the first step in initiating a scheme. The main stakeholders involved in the FTD process were the parents, students, HMs and the ADOEs. Disseminating information about the new education intervention to schools located in remote

area of Sindh is difficult but the data suggest that the information was transferred through pamphlets, advertisements, and meetings. When parents were asked about the knowledge of the FTD scheme, 55% of them said they had obtained information from class teachers while 33% discovered about it through the advertisements on television. A small percentage (3%), however, had no knowledge about the scheme (See figure 03). Approximately 85%⁴ of HMs shared information with their colleagues regarding the FTD scheme (See table 02).

It is evidenced through the available data that in spite of the remoteness of the schools, the stakeholders were conscious of this system of textbook distribution introduced by the government (see table 02, appendix 1) but the textbook distribution plan and the level of stakeholder involvement was not spelled out. The report explicitly referred to the importance coordination proper awareness of the system, the process of distribution and the division of responsibilities amongst stakeholders. Therefore, it was suggested that parents needed to be informed about the scheme and regular briefings and meetings should be conducted between the RSU, ADOEs, Head Masters and School Management Committees.

Stages and Logistic Issues

After establishing the concerned stakeholders' knowledge of the scheme, major logistics inconsistencies in the textbook procurement and distribution process were reported. Tracking the release of books at delivery points, ensuring the supply to the recipients and documentation of delivery reports proved tiresome. The FTD comprised the following stages: 1) Preparation of Demand Lists 2) Warehousing and Transportation of Textbooks 3) Collection and Receipt of Textbooks.

Textbook Demand List Preparation: The HMs first organize the demand list to facilitate the Sindh Textbook Board Publishing House (STBB) in printing the required quantity of

⁴ Note that the percentage amounts are rounded off to the nearest decimal in the analyses.

textbooks. The STBB first supplies the textbooks either to warehouses or to the taluka's (town) centre school⁵. The ADOEs or Sub Divisional Officers (SDOs) then inform the HMs about the arrival of books⁶ for collection. The final demand lists for the taluka of a district are prepared by ADOEs by collecting data provided by the HMs. The ADOEs prepared 45% of final demand lists by collecting information from school heads, 27% from the supervisors (SPE) and 1.6% from personal visits to school (See table 03, appendix 1). The mechanism of demand lists preparation in the absence of actual enrolment remains ambiguous because as of 2010, the demand lists were still being prepared six months in advance based upon the current and projected enrolments. It is virtually impossible to prepare the demand list six to eight months prior to the start of academic year because there is no basis for the HMs to estimate the actual number of new admissions or enrolments in a particular class and/or school. The list making process is further delayed as records are seldom updated and files stowed away for years.

Textbook Transportation Arrangements: The textbooks distribution process incurs a transportation cost as the consignment of books is delivered to multiple delivery points. The data (See figure 04, appendix 2) indicate that 40% of time, STBB arranged the transportation of books from base to the taluka warehouses and in other instances, 34% of occasions the RSU and 10.4% times EDOs bore the transportation expenditure (IUGC Archives 2009). Most of the hauling expenses of textbook stockpile to central warehouse or supervisors' office (SPE) were paid for by the ADOE (18%), and Learning Coordinators (LCOs). Following the submission of demand lists, it was the responsibility of the RSU or the ADOEs to deliver books. In most cases, the teachers were sent with the peons to collect the consignment on their own. As evidenced by

⁵ Unpublished District Report Nowshero Feroze (2009, p.2)

⁶ Unpublished District Report Sanghar (2009, p.1)

the findings, the roles of the HMs and ADOEs were not clearly defined leading to disorganization at all levels of the process.

The textbooks were transported via multiple arrangements. There are two phases of textbook movement: (a) from STBB to warehouses (See figure 05, appendix 2) and (b) from warehouses to schools. It was identified that in the first phase, 40% of the cost of transporting books was borne by STBB, RSU (30%) and EDO office (19%). There were inconsistent accounts of the HMs and ADOEs regarding the management of finances. For example in the second phase, 31% of the ADOEs, as opposed to only 8% of HMs, stated that transportation cost was covered by District Education Office; whereas 33% of the HMs claimed school heads paid for the same (See figure 06, appendix 2). The HMs, however, confirmed bearing the transportation expenses of books and in some cases students were required to contribute Rs. 100 towards transportation costs. Neither the ADOEs nor HMs were remunerated for the expenditure incurred in the receipt of books. The FTD process presented a case of, misappropriation of funds and diminished responsibility because the data for 55% of expenses paid was transportation is altogether missing or not available (See figure 06, appendix 2).

Textbook Receipt Time:

The two main dimensions time and quantity have been identified as the key to efficacy of the FTD process. The quantity demanded and the amount received at the right time do not reconcile. For instance, around 78% (see table no. 09, Appendix 1) of the ADOEs stated having received the books before the start of the academic year. However only 39% (see table no. 10, Appendix 1) of all the ADOEs received them as per the quantity mentioned in the demand list. There are a number of factors identified by the stakeholders that contributed to the shortage of the quantity of books received like late orders placed, printing delays and distant locations of warehouses

amongst others. One respondent claimed that a number of brand new bundles of books were actually sold in the market⁷.

The data reveal the varying perceptions regarding the receipt of textbooks by different stakeholders (See figure 07, appendix 2). Around 61% of the HMs received the books one to three months post new school session and 54% of parents secured the textbooks right at the beginning of the academic year. In contrast, only 38% of the ADOEs said students received the books before or within one week of the start of the academic year. Hence, despite the timely dispatch of textbooks at the district headquarters, the disorganization in the transportation procedure delayed the passage of books to schools⁸.

A student from district Thatta informed that his village primary school did not receive textbooks⁹ and in comparison, the schools in cities obtained the books earlier. At times, the school administration is asked to collect books from distant locations. For instance, a school teacher from Nawabshah complained that STBB offered to provide the missing textbooks but the school had to collect the books themselves from their head office in Jamshoro at their own cost.¹⁰ Another school teacher from a school in GB Jamaluddin Halipota (SEMIS Code: 156204) informed that they received books in their schools in the first week of September.¹¹

An ideal process of FTD was observed in Sanghar. The parents lauded the scheme for providing them with a complete set of books absolutely free of cost¹². Other districts, however, were more skeptical about the system of FTD. For example, in Nowshero Feroze almost all

⁷ Unpublished Karachi Division Report (2009, p.2)

⁸ Unpublished Hyderabad Division Report (2009)

⁹ Unpublished Focus Group Discussion Thatta (2009, p.21)

¹⁰ Unpublished Focus Group Discussion Nawabshah (2009, p. 28)

¹¹ **Report from Kot Dijji, p.1**

¹² Unpublished District Report Sanghar (2009, p.3)

parents protested that the books were distributed after a month's delay¹³. In district Mirpurkhas, parents argued that due to delayed provision of books, their child could only use the books for three months as the session itself lasted six months (from September to February.)¹⁴

The preliminary findings indicate that early submission of demand lists does not guarantee timely receipt of textbooks. The delay time varied between weeks to several months after the initiation of the academic session. The HMs from Nowshero Feroze, Umerkot¹⁵ and GBPS Buxam Wasan (SEMIS Code: 156056) informed the surveyors that book sets were incomplete and late by a month¹⁶ even though they had submitted the demand list six to eight months before the start of the academic year. The Hyderabad Division Report provided a grim assessment noting that 10 % of the schools (mostly located in urban areas) received books in time. They arrived two to three months late¹⁷ in Hyderabad and far flung areas like U.C. Jarr, Taluqa Sajawal (Thatta) three months into the commencement of the new session.¹⁸ There were suggestions of books to be sent directly to schools prior to the start of new academic year¹⁹, before 20th August so that studies would not be disturbed²⁰ or ideally, during the summer vacations²¹.

Capacity Building and Orientation

Issues related to the capacity building and orientation of the stakeholders (especially the ADOEs) also arose during distribution process. The ADOEs were trained to prepare the demand lists, collect books from STBB, store textbooks and deliver them at delivery points. As per data,

¹³ Unpublished District Report Nowshero Feroze (2009, p.1)

¹⁴ Unpublished District Report Mirpurkhas (2009, p.5)

¹⁵ Unpublished District Reports Nowshero Feroze (2009, p.2) and Umerkot (2009, p.3)

¹⁶ **District Report of Nowshero Feroze, p. 4 Syeda Ume Kulsoom, District report of Hyderabad also pointed at the shortage of practical books**

¹⁷ Unpublished Hyderabad Division Reports (2009)

¹⁸ **Hyderabad division report, p.2**

¹⁹ **7 District Report of Khairpur, p. 4**

²⁰ **Focus Group Discussion , p.9**

²¹ **District Report of Shikarpur p.7**

only 33% of the ADOEs were briefed about the mechanism of preparing demand list in their training programme and knew the procedure of organizing demand lists for assembling, and warehousing of books (See table 04, appendix 1).

Procedure: While 24% of the ADOEs received orientation regarding the procedure for ordering books from STBB but a majority of 34% did not receive any orientation (See table 05, appendix 1). As for the method of storing books, 38% of the ADOEs were briefed but a greater 57% did not get any instructions about the said procedure (See IUGC Archives 2009).

Distribution: As far as the distribution process is concerned, 47% of the ADOEs were informed about the distribution procedure of books at school level while 52.3% of the respondents did not have any idea about the process. Interestingly 48% of the total surveyed did not answer this question (See IUGC Archives 2009).

Maintenance: Around 50% of the ADOEs received some orientation regarding the maintenance of record of books while 50% of the respondents did not have any idea about the process and the 48% of the total surveyed did not answer this question. Hence, from embryonic stages, the process experienced discrepancies where there was no system to identify and rectify such issues (See IUGC Archives 2009).

Book Storage: The personnel inside the warehouses did not receive proper training regarding the organization of books and dealings with the concerned officers or headmasters²² who found the warehouse staff impolite²³. They lacked the capacity to store books properly in the go downs.

Liaison Difficulties and Alleged Gender Issues

²² Focus Group discussion Nawabshah, p.28

²³ Unpublished District Report Hyderabad, p.5

Although, most ADOEs appreciated the textbook distribution scheme but lacked the proper understanding of the system. As focal persons and ‘duty bound officers’, they were not only responsible for distribution of textbooks to primary, middle and high school students²⁴ but also for monitoring the entire textbook distribution process. In addition, they were to supervise ‘the delivery of books from STBB and assign the task of distribution of books to the ADOEs.’²⁵ Since it was easier for male HM and ADOEs to collect books, most girls’ schools were dependent upon the assistance of a male HM or ADOE to collect books.

One female ADOE citing lack of teamwork from their male counterparts demanded that books for girl schools should be handed to female ADOEs. The latter resented marginalization in the whole process and believed their function was restricted to the preparation of lists²⁶. Almost all ADOEs agreed upon a separate system of distribution of text books for male and female ADOEs wherein the female ADOEs responsible for the distribution of textbooks in girls’ schools²⁷.

A report from Hyderabad division noted that the female ADOEs of K.N.Shah and Dadu were resolute²⁸ and stressed for a proper management mechanism between the concerned stakeholders²⁹. They also complained about the data provided by SEMIS as it did not match the records³⁰ available with the district management functionaries³¹. Hence, in case of any crisis, it was often difficult to approach the RSU or the STBB³² so it was important to arrange regular meetings with RSU should be in this regard.

²⁴ Unpublished District Report Sukkur (2009, p.7)

²⁵ Unpublished District Report Larkana(2009, p.10)

²⁶ Unpublished District Report Tharparkar (2009, p.3)

²⁷ District Report Mirpurkhas (2009, p.4)

²⁸ **Hyderabad Division Report, p.3**

²⁹ **District Report of Karachi,p.3**

³⁰ **Ibid.**

³¹ **Ibid.**

³² **Ibid.**

Overall, the ADOEs were officially accountable for delivery of books to schools overburdened with the responsibilities of distribution of books and supervision of the FTD process. Resultantly, their efficiency was compromised and their monitor and supervisory roles were often in conflict with each other.

Warehousing and Storage

The ADOEs in district Sanghar complained about the deplorable condition of books in warehouses as well as the behavior of personnel who expected monetary rewards. The books were not arranged in sets and those relevant to particular syllabi either went missing or left in a haphazardly in the warehouses.³³ There were multiple storage locations where the books were stored in school (56%) and offices (28%) or 0.8% in a rented place (See figure 08, appendix 2).

The HMs in district Sanghar, Shikarpur, Sukkur and Khairpur considered FTD a long winded procedure where books were sent first to the district then to tehsil and then finally to school.³⁴ Most of the stakeholders demanded the STBB deliver the books according to enrolment³⁵ straight to the schools³⁶ to ensure the provision of books only to functional schools (See table 06, appendix 2). The ADOEs reiterated the establishment of permanent warehouses at Taluka level for greater accessibility and reduced transportation costs³⁷.

Physical Production Specification Criteria

The physical production specification criteria are important to guarantee the quality of schools textbooks. Higher specifications lead to longer book life which reduces the amortized cost of provision. It has been observed cheap production costs inevitably result in low quality of books.

The World Bank report indicates that in developing countries:

³³ Unpublished District Report Sanghar(2009, p.3)

³⁴ Unpublished District Report Sanghar(2009, p.2)

³⁵ Ibid, p.6

³⁶ Unpublished District Report Sanghar(2009, p.3)

³⁷ Unpublished District Report Sanghar(2009,p.3)

‘a typical pattern emerge in which damaged and destroyed are not replaced and pupil: textbook ratios deteriorate steadily throughout the year. Good production specifications and long book life also create a possibility of secondhand markets, which can have dramatic impact on the cost of provision to students’ (WB, p.12)

There were complaints about the poor material and instances of missing pages resulting in the purchase of new books³⁸. A low quality was used and much of the text was misprinted. The respondents recommended production of hardbound books to increase the durability and avoid the issues arising out of poor binding can be avoided³⁹.

Financing Textbooks

There are various sources of finance for textbooks: government, donors, parents, sponsorship and fundraising. There is also a mixed financing system where the government funds textbook in rural areas and parents in urban areas- as is the case in Senegal or ‘harambees’ where the community purchases the textbook sets for the library to assist poorer parents. As the WB Case study for Africa suggests that mixed financing may also occur accidentally. In this scenario, the government promises to fund books but fail to make adequate provisions as in the case of Ghana, Zambia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Pakistan.

During the FTD process, the stakeholders were concerned about the arrangement of book in a class wise order⁴⁰. The HMs criticized the subject wise shortage of books.⁴¹ For example, in Kot Diji, HMs of GBPS Buxam Wasan (SEMIS Code: 156056) and a school teacher from another school GB Jamaluddin Halipota (SEMIS Code: 156204) reported that the Sindhi book for basic level, 3rd grade and 4th grade were not provided⁴². A similar claim was made by the

³⁸ Unpublished District Report Sukkur, p.3

³⁹ District Report Sanghar (2009, p.2)

⁴⁰ Unpublished District Report Shikarpur (2009, p.5)

⁴¹ Unpublished District Report Sanghar, p.1

⁴² Unpublished Report Kot Diji, p.1

students of a third school, GBPS Jamal Khan Rid, and district Umerkot.⁴³ It is a district with a Hindu community who opt study Ethics. In Hyderabad district some headmasters complained that the English medium book for Class I was never provided.⁴⁴ All in all, the headmasters were of the opinion that the shortage of books should be taken seriously and must be met on an urgent basis.⁴⁵

During the survey it was found that books in short supply at schools were also unavailable in the shops which meant that the student did not have the core textbooks for a considerable period of time or as an alternative, parents paid for the textbooks. They felt that there was no mechanism for the replacement of books if the student had accidentally misplaced or torn his/her book⁴⁶. The parents wanted dictionaries and practical books to be included in the textbook set.⁴⁷ A parent from GGPS Kdhan (a rural area of district Badin) commented that ‘copies, pencils, slates, dresses and other materials related to education should be provided by the government as poor parents in rural areas can’t afford such expenses.’⁴⁸

Monitoring FTD

The school management committees (SMCs), responsible for the overall management of schools, were not active in FTD. SMC members demanded an enhanced role in the whole process. They suggested that a monitoring group involving all stakeholders must be formed⁴⁹. SMC members added that they could play a vital role in maintaining the check and balance of the distribution system⁵⁰. They stated that warehouse personnel must be trained in book stocking

⁴³ Ashok Kumar, Unpublished District Report Umerkot, p.4

⁴⁴ Syeda Ume Kulsoom, Unpublished District report Hyderabad, p.2

⁴⁵ Unpublished District Report Nowshero Feroze, p.3

⁴⁶ Unpublished District Report Shikarpur, p.5

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.5

⁴⁸ Unpublished District Report Badin, p.1

⁴⁹ Unpublished District Report Shikarpur (2009, p.7)

⁵⁰ Syeda Ume Kulsoom, Unpublished District report of Hyderabad (2009, p.5)

procedure. They believed that the excess books should be transferred from warehouses to the schools to meet the shortage of books.

The ADOEs suggested that books in excess at warehouses should be brought and stored in schools so that any possible shortage could be easily met.⁵¹ They asked for a proper monitoring mechanism and allocation of resources to address the shortage of and delayed distribution of books⁵².

Local Impact of FTD

There were positive responses in the wake of the FTD scheme. For example, Ramazan Rid of Khairpur District reported that he was unemployed but due this scheme enabled his children to continue their education, something that was otherwise impossible.⁵³ Parents in Sanghar district while appreciating the scheme noted that their children were fortunate enough to receive their complete set of books which was given completely free textbooks in time (i.e. in the month of August)⁵⁴. Other districts, however, do not share the same perspective about the system of distribution as most of the complaints made by parents of these districts were directly related to the process of textbooks distribution

Free Textbook Distribution Scheme: The Bigger Picture

Although the Government of Sindh has spent considerable amounts on the distribution of free of cost textbooks: Rs.809, 011,017 and Rs. 800,000,000 in the years 2008 and 2009 respectively (See table 07, appendix 2), there are minor changes in the primary school enrolments, likewise, for middle and secondary school enrolments. It must be noted that this year, FTD has been extended to the students of class XI and XII (intermediate level). The

⁵¹ District Report of Mirpurkhas, p.4

⁵² District Report of Sukkur,p.7

⁵³ District Report of Khairpur, p.1

⁵⁴ District Report of Sanghar p.3

proposed budget (Rs.100 crore) for the year 2010-11 is the same as that of current year 2009-10 because a large number of undistributed books are already available and therefore, lesser number of books will get printed.

Now the textbook scheme was initiated because the government identified poverty as the main factor for less school participation. However, if the students were provided the resources required for continuing education then the number of enrolments should have displayed a marked increase over the span of five years, i.e., from the conception of the programme in 2004 till the year 2010. This did not happen. There can be a number of factors responsible for this statistics many of which have already been identified by the stakeholders engaged in the scheme.

There is however, another aspect that needs to be explored. The indicator (affordability) interpreted by the government may not be the only reason for reduced enrollments or increased drop outs. The WB (2010) suggests low quality of education as the main indicator responsible for this. This low quality of education is a result of resource constraints and weak management⁵⁵ which 'lead to poor infrastructure, high pupil-teacher ratios, and poorly trained, paid and motivated teachers, resulting in teacher absenteeism and low-quality teaching. This erodes the implicit MDG target of achieving universal competencies' (ibid. p.26).

The reliability of data is also an issue in third world countries; hence the number of pupils enrolled in primary, middle and secondary schools is only a tentative figure. For example, the total number enrolled in Sindh in the year 2009 is **4,131,658** in **48,090** schools which include 3,323,381 primary students in **44,518** schools (See table 08, appendix 1; and figure 02, appendix 2). But the total number of schools also comprises **closed schools** indicating instances of double

⁵⁵ Weak management and resource constraint was also observed in Reform Support Unit initiative of distributing free textbooks.

counting in the enrollment figures. This means the enrollments in closed schools should be subtracted from the total enrollments but the available data do not clarify this issue.

The research found that the demand lists for textbooks (that were to be distributed free of cost) were prepared through the figures reflecting total enrollments in each school⁵⁶. Because the enrollment figures were not tallied with the number of pupils actually attending the schools, this resulted in the excess or shortage of books sets assigned for distribution in each school. Hence, attendance (not school enrolments) should be the criteria for the preparation of demand lists.

Due care must be taken to load the required quantity of medium wise books needed in the schools of each taluka. A list prepared by RSU must accompany this shipment stating clearly the total demand of books requested by all the schools of the taluka (medium wise and class wise) along with a bifurcation of the number of books demanded by each school (medium wise as well as class wise.) While stating the demand of each individual school their SEMIS codes must also be mentioned so that the warehouse personnel can classify and 'tag' each school's supply of books separately. For delivering the books from the STBB to the warehouses, the RSU must adopt similar measures adopted in the corresponding scheme launched in Punjab where huge trucks of National Logistic Cell (NLC) were employed for a well coordinated and properly monitored delivery system. The NLC's services must be employed to load, transport and deliver the books and their personnel must be given the RSU list containing information regarding the quantity of books being loaded for each school along with school's tagging (SEMIS) code.

There are many types of software that can automatically upgrade the information present in all the systems once data is upgraded in any single unit. Apart from the modernization of information databases, the RSU must focus on the technical training of the Headmasters to

⁵⁶ Focus Group Discussions and Survey Data.

record data in a professional manner as they are the ones directly involved in the affairs of the school and have first hand information of new as well as outgoing students.

Reprinting of new books entails a cost to the government, therefore, the students should be encouraged to resubmit the set of books at the end of final examination so that the same can be distributed or reutilized. This will reduce the cost involved in printing new books and the largely donor funded money can be effectively used for other educational purposes and challenges. The SMCs should overlook the process of distribution and raise funds from local sources for textbook printing. Through this, the sustainability of the initiative; productivity and the transparency of the donors' finances will also be ensured.

Recommendations

The case of Pakistan is not isolated or the rest of the developing with such educational interventions in place. This list of grievances of stakeholders involved in this scheme rings true for the many countries that implemented free textbooks distribution schemes. For, instance, in Chile, the textbooks and teacher's guides were rated poor in quality (Anderson 2002, p 2). The Philippine Government, after evaluating its textbook distribution procedure identified the issues of inspection, delivery and monitoring pertinent to ensure the transparency of the FTD procedure followed by a number of strategies for improvement of textbook scheme. The different stakeholders in Sindh proposed number of changes to the whole process of textbook distribution:

Textbook Physical and Content Specification Criteria

The textbooks must give adequate coverage to the curriculum and introduce high print quality paper to ensure its durability. In cases of shortages the government ought to provide means of financial support directly to the school bank accounts or provide vouchers, coupons and order forms for individual schools to procure books. The funding mechanism should be base

on the principles of affordability, sustainability and predictability consistent with the policy procedure.

Textbook Cost Reduction Strategies

There are ways for the government to reduce the cost of textbooks through keeping fewer subjects, introducing book sharing, reducing the use of primary colours, decreasing page formats, as well as exerting greater control over input costs at the publishers' end.

Textbook Rental Schemes/ Revolving Funds

There are other options available as Textbook Rental Schemes and Textbook Revolving Funds. These have been employed by Cote d' Ivore, Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, and Ghana. Hence, there is no reason why the same cannot operate in Pakistan. (WB Paper 2008, p.21-22)

Monitoring and Coordination

There must be regular meeting and feedback recorded. ADOEs agreed upon regular meetings between RSUs, ADOEs and HM. The SEMIS data must be in accordance with the lists provided by the schools. The ADOEs requested a proper monitoring system to be established and emphasized devising a proper system of transportation or provision of sufficient funds for moving and distributing books. The School Management Committees asserted enhanced monitoring role as the system is plagued by weak management and institutional corruption. Reiterating the sentiments of sub-divisional officers and other stakeholders, the SMCs emphasized the training of warehouse personnel

Textbook Delivery and Recordkeeping

District office should be properly informed on the date and time of delivery so that all persons authorized to sign are all present. It was also raised that deliveries should be during

office hours and that any changes in the schedule of the delivery should be communicated with the division office. The book records must be updated and permanent warehouses established for their storage. The books must be provided according to the demands of the taluka. Books stored must be properly bound, kept in the warehouses in a class wise order and distributed as per the demands of the taluka.

Allowance for Textbook Transportation

The headmasters stressed the timely provision of books before the start of the academic year and that the shortage of books especially of English, Chemistry and Commercial Geography must be addressed instantly. They disagreed with the ADOEs stating that STBB should send the books directly send the books to the respective schools. The headmasters reported using personal resources for transportation and specifically asked for transportation or conveyance allowance for delivering text books. Seguin states:

Free distribution of textbooks is only possible when a stable state budget is sufficient to cover the costs, which is not the case for the majority of the least developed countries. Moreover, such distribution requires active follow-up and control which is not always easily guaranteed.” (1989, p.9).

It was suggested that the allowance can be easily cashed out if the officials processing the papers could be affiliated with the inspection and monitoring team.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Tables

Table 01: Enrolments and Cost per Student (2006-2008)

Year	Enrolments	Cost/Student
2006	3,660,421	138.3
2007	3,673,432	150.1
2008	3,641,221	222.2

Source: SEMIS⁵⁷ Census 2008-2009

Table 02: Headmasters' Knowledge of the FTD Scheme

Headmasters	Percent
yes	85.4
no	8.9
Missing	5.7

Source: IUGC Archives 2009

Table 03: Basis for Preparing the Demand Lists

Source of Information	Percent
Collecting Information from School Head	44.8
Collecting Information from SPE	27.2
Personal Visits to School	1.6
Record Maintained Office	0.8
Missing	25.6

Source: IUGC Archives 2009

Table 04: Demand List Orientation: ADOEs

Responses	Percent
No	24.0
Yes	32.8
NA	43.2

Source: IUGC Archives 2009

Table 05: Orientation Procedure to Collect Books from STBB: ADOEs

Responses	Percent
No	33.6
Yes	24.0
NA	42.4

Source: IUGC Archives 2009

Table 06: Means adopted for Transporting Books from Warehouse to School

⁵⁷ Sindh Education Management Information System

Means adopted for transporting books from Warehouse to school	%age
Through SPE/LCOs	31.2
Through HM	52.8
Personal arrangement	0.8
NA	15.2

Source: IUGC Archive 2009

Table 07: Means adopted for Transporting Books from Warehouse to School

Means adopted for transporting books from Warehouse to school	%age
Through SPE/LCOs	31.2
Through HM	52.8
Personal arrangement	0.8
NA	15.2

Source: IUGC Archive 2009

Table 08: Functional and Closed Schools- Statistics

School Level	No. of Schools	No. of Closed Schools
Primary	44,518	5260
Middle	2,787	378
Secondary	1604	1
Total	48,909	5,639

Source: SEMIS Census 2008-2009

When Did You Receive Books?	ADOE	HM	Students
Before Start Of Academic Year	77.8	34.6	32
After The Start Of Academic Year	18.5	65.4	66

Quantity of Books	ADOE	Head Masters
As per demand	39.2	55.7

Less than demand	44.8	41.4
More than demand	2.4	2.9

Table 09: Receipt Time of Textbooks

When Did You Receive Books?	ADOE	HM	Students
Before Start Of Academic Year	77.8	34.6	32
After The Start Of Academic Year	18.5	65.4	66

Table 10: Quantity of Books Received

Quantity of Books	ADOE	Head Masters
As per demand	39.2	55.7
Less than demand	44.8	41.4
More than demand	2.4	2.9

Appendix 2 Figures

Figure: 01 World Human Development Report 2009

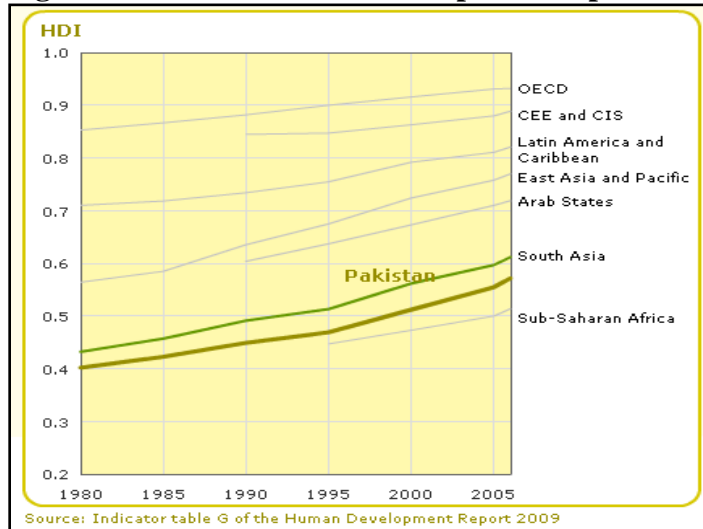


Figure 02 Level Wise Enrolments (2005 – 2008)

Source: SEMIS Census 2008-2009

Figure: 03 Parents' Knowledge of the FTD Scheme

Source: IUGC Archives 2009 Iqra University- Gulshan Campus

Figure: 04 Arrangement of Transportation

Source: Adapted from IUGC Archives 2009

Figure 05 Transportation Cost borne from STBB to Warehouses

Figure 06 Transportation Cost borne from Warehouses to Schools

Figure 07 Book Receipt Time – ADOEs, HMs and Parents

Source: Adapted from IUGC Archives 2009

Figure 06: Transportation Cost borne from Warehouses to Schools

Source: Adapted from IUGC Archives 2009

Figure 07: Book Receipt Time – ADOEs, HMs and Parents

Source: Adapted from IUGC Archives 2009

Figure 08: Location of Warehouses

Source: IUGC Archives 2009