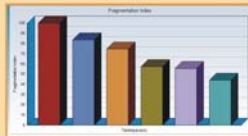


A Study to Review Policies and Classroom Practices Pertaining to Katchi Class System in Punjab



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Rationale of the Study

In Pakistan, the early childhood education in general and *Katchi* class in particular has been formally recognized after the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtein Thailand 1990) particularly in the National Education Policy (1998-2010). The policy announced to introduce Katchi/ Pre-primary class as a formal class in primary schools, extending the primary education for six years – katchi to grade V. Since then efforts have been made at various levels to enhance enrolment rate at ECE level, particularly in katchi class. However, the situation of education at katchi class level has been far from satisfactory. Available data suggest that most of the children who are enrolled in katchi class dropout – leave school before enrolling in class one. Data provided by EMIS/ PMIU shows high rate of enrollment of children in katchi class and class one and the ratio of dropout children in six districts of the Punjab. Continued high dropout rates from katchi class to class one indicates serious problems in the way the young learners are being received in the school and the way they are being treated. This situation demands the attention of policy planners and social leadership because if this situation prevails it will defy the aims and efforts of the Government of the Punjab to achieve universal primary education and the targets and goals of EFA.

The Government of the Punjab has initiated Punjab Education Sector Reforms, the purpose of which is to improve the quality of education by providing missing facilities and other interventions. One of the purposes of Education Sector Reforms is to increase the enrollment rate at primary level. For this purpose the Government of the Punjab has already allocated a budget of Rs. 300 million to undertake various measures for the improvement of education at katchi class level. Under this initiative the curricula for the katchi class is also being revised. However, all these efforts will be come fruitless if the continuous high dropout of children from katchi class to class one prevails.

This study has been conducted to review the provisions and policies pertaining to katchi class, weaknesses in its implementation and find out the reasons of dropout of children from katchi to class one.

The main aim of the study is to review policies and practices pertaining to the Katchi class system in Punjab, Pakistan in order to prepare a set of recommendations in consultation with the Department of Education and other stakeholders for improved policy development and implementation which can result in a strengthened Katchi class system.

This study was conducted in two phases: (1) A policy review and documentation of good practices, (2) Survey of Practices pertaining to ECE in general, and Katchi class. In Phase Two, a descriptive research design was used to collect data to describe the existing situation with respect to policy and practices of early childhood education in general and that of Katchi class in particular in schools of six districts of the Punjab.

2. Summary of Findings

2.1. Survey of School Officials

- Results of survey reveal that there is no consistent policy pertaining to admission age of children to katchi class. This age range varies between 3 to 5 years. Most of the teachers and head teachers of government schools said that the most appropriate age for admission in katchi class should be four to five years.
- The most frequently observed a criterion for admission into un-admitted and admitted katchi class is the same that is ability of the child to tell family members name. However, in case of un-admitted children, the second and third most important criteria is ‘paying attention by the child’ and being physically active. While in case of admitted children, the second important criterion is ‘oral counting’. On the other hand first three criterion for admission into class one are ability of the child to read words in primer, oral recitation of Urdu alphabets and writing up to ten.
- For majority of school officials, non-registration of children is the defining characteristic of un-admitted children, along with lack of regular attendance and non observance of school hours. Reverse is true for, admitted children, along with regular examination/ assessment.

- Although majority of school officials said they receive instructions regarding admission policy on Katchi class, but a good number of Head Teachers (25%) differed from this opinion. However, most of them said that they have never received any instruction or policy guidelines pertaining to the provision of physical facilities, development of child or about provision of health care and hygiene facilities.
- Survey revealed that about 40 percent schools admit only boys and 17 percent only girls in katchi class. About 43 percent schools have boys and girls together.
- Majority of the teachers (about 81%) responded that both admitted and un-admitted children in Katchi class have to observe five hours schooling while 21% and 25% revealed that un-admitted children spend four and three hours respectively.
- Slightly less than 50 percent of the teachers keep children waiting as un-admitted for three months, while remaining 50 percent of the teachers and head teachers, stated that it takes six or nine months and even some times one year to admit children in katchi class
- Only 38 percent teachers are satisfied with conditions of for katchi classroom. Where as, majority of the schools teachers were not satisfied with classroom conditions as well as with availability of other physical and health care facilities, such as drinking water, boundary walls, playgrounds and washrooms.
- About 42% both government and private schools use mixed medium of instruction in katchi class. On the other hand, about 36 percent government schools use Urdu as a medium of instruction compared to 52 percent of private schools. However, about 22 percent government schools use mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Only about 5 percent private schools reported the use of English as medium of instruction. Regarding the effect of use of mother tongue, 50.29 percent government head teachers and teachers and 28.13 percent private head teachers, are of the view that if students are taught in mother language it would help them learn better and develop understanding of the subject matter, which would help them to progress smoothly to upper classes.

- Majority of government and private schools officials are aware of the importance of play, group work, educational toys, and use of blackboard as instructional aid. However, they did not see the use of computer as much beneficial at this level
- Results show that most of the government school teachers (mean 3.48) and private teachers (mean 3.65) teach the katchi/nursery/prep class by themselves. However, there are a substantial number of government school teachers who ask the monitor to teach the katchi class or ask the children to play or study on their own
- According to government school officials, most important reasons of dropout of children from katchi to class one are, in the order of ranking; lack of parental interest, poverty and shift of residence, other siblings leaving the school and distance of the school from residence of the child.
- Majority of teachers both from schools with increased and decreased enrollment possess lower academic and academic qualification, that is, matric and PTC. The significant point to note is that out of 52 teachers of schools with decreased enrollment about 21 percent are totally untrained.
- Most of head teachers and DEO's are of the view that teachers of their schools in katchi class are in a dire need of special training to teach katchi class. However, contrary to the views of private teachers, majority of government school teachers do not believe that they need training to teach children of katchi class. The aspects in which teachers need training are; methods of teaching, method of assessment and writing methods, interests of child and keeping discipline in the class. Private school teachers also need training on cognitive development of the children.
- About 43% government school officials said that parents sometimes contact them to discuss issues pertaining to the problems of their children. Results of teachers' questionnaire also reveal that parents of children in private schools not only contact schools but provide academic support to their children in the form of helping them to complete homework.

2.2. Classroom Observation Checklist

- During observation it was noticed that in terms of provision of physical facilities, ECE centres and private schools are better than government schools, (both with dropped and increased enrollment in katchi class), NCHD schools and Madrassahs.
- In majority of government schools (66 %) and NCHD (80%), children of Katchi class sit on mats whereas, majority of private schools (66.6%) and ECE (60%) have bench and desks for students in the class.
- With respect to the availability of clean drinking water, Madrassahs, ECE centres, Private schools and NCHD schools are in better condition in comparison with government schools. Research team observed that in terms of observed facilities and cleanliness, government schools depict a very dismal picture.
- Results of observation check list reveals that in comparison to government schools, private schools and Madrassahs, ECE centers and NCHD schools keep children relatively less active.
- The most commonly used teaching methods by teacher of Katchi class in different schools was the same, and it was book reading/ recitation method.
- Majority of government school teachers used black board. With respect to handmade charts and use of flash cards and educational toys, ECE centres were better than all other government and private schools. In case of printed charts, private schools were better than all other educational institutions of the sample.
- Results indicate that majority of private schools (81.3%) used mix (written + oral) method of classroom assessment, followed by ECE (60%) and government schools 56.3%. Written tests are only used by teachers in government schools.
- It was observed that in all schools teachers were well dressed, possessed pleasant personality and wore clean dress. Although all schools have properly scheduled break/ recess in time table, but ECE centres, NCHD schools, private schools and Madrassahs are relatively better on this aspect, compared to government schools.

2.3. Household Survey

- During household survey it was found that out of 396 drop out students from Katchi class, 121 students (45.5 percent were girls and 54.5 percent were boys) did not attend school any more. Whereas, 275 students were again enrolled in any other institution/schools and 44.4 percent of these students were girls and 55.6 percent were boys.
- During the household survey of families for drop out students, it was found that majority of families (71.2 percent) depend on single earning person.
- Household survey revealed that most of drop out students' families (66.9 percent) consist of 6 to 10 dependents and 26.3 percent families had 1 to 5 dependents. Majority of the families have one child only which reveals that most are nucleus families.
- In case of use of mother tongue, it was found that out of 121 families of dropout children (who are still of school), majority (61.8%) of the families speak Saraiki language. While in case of 275 children who are re-enrolled in some other school, 52.5% speak Punjabi language at their home and 44.3% speak Saraiki.
- Results show that 88.6 percent families of drop out children lived in their own houses. However, it is not clear whether they live on self-owned land, shamlot or landlords land.
- Data reveals that majority of parents of the dropout students (121 who are still out of school and 275 who are going to other school) never went to school.
- Majority of the drop out children duration of school was 5 hours a day.
- Most of the children (both male and female) among 121 drop out children lived at home.
- Results show that out of 275 dropped children, who later joined some other school, majority of these students (63.7 percent) joined some other government schools, while only 33.9 percent joined private schools. Only 2.4% joined Madrassahs.
- Proper class/building in the school was one of the major reason for choosing other school to join again (both for male and female children) followed by social status/better quality of the school and distance of school.

- Majority of the parents (93.5) of dropped children who had joined any other institution/school again were satisfied with the new institution.
- Majority of the 396 children (121 who did not join the school and 275 children joined another institution) used bicycle as a transport for going to school.
- Families of the children who dropped from the school and later on did not attend any institution/school had Rs. 5533 income per family and Rs. 700 income per person. Whereas families of the children who rejoined the school have Rs. 7225 and Rs. 970 per family and per capita income respectively. This comparison shows that the families whose children are enrolled in some other schools have relatively better economic status compared to the families whose children are not attending any school at all.

3. Recommendations

1. A clear policy need to be formulated pertaining to the age of Katchi class children. Keeping in view the recommendation of education policy (1998-2010) and new education policy 2007 the entry age should be fixed to 4⁺ years.
2. There should be an informal assessment for promotion of students from Katchi to class one.
3. Every student enrolled in Katchi class be promoted to class one with out retention.
4. Separate data for enrolment of children in a particular class (promoted, newly enrolled and repeaters) should be gathered to depict a clear picture of enrolment.
5. There will be no academic criteria for admission in this class. Every student approaching school at mentioned age will be given admission.
6. In order to avoid wastage of resources, preference should be given to admit both genders in Katchi class particularly where the society and the teachers do not object.
7. While number of school hours for other children of ECE may vary from 3 – 5, but school hours for Katchi class children must be restricted to maximum four hours for academic work.

8. In order to provide a conducive environment to the children in reception class (Katchi) a preferably separate classroom for Katchi class, along with sitting arrangements, toys, games, blocks, flash cards and charts be provided.
9. Teachers of Katchi class should be given clear cut direction to preferably use Urdu as medium of instruction for children in Katchi class.
10. In order to facilitate smooth transition from Katchi class to class one and onward to other grades at primary level, the curriculum for Katchi class and the primary grades must be considered as a continuum., Hence, the same team of experts must be involved to develop curriculum from Katchi to grade five. Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education should ensure vertical integration of curriculum from Katchi class onward.
11. Smooth transition from ECE/ Katchi class to primary education cannot be achieved without the involvement of parents and the society. Hence teachers should be given orientation to involve parents of Katchi class children in teaching learning process as much as possible. This can be achieved by rethinking the scope of already existing SMC's.
12. Keeping in view, the learning outcomes at ECE/ Katchi class level as suggested by the National ECE Curriculum 2002 and 2007, teacher training programme for ECE must develop skills and strategies in prospective teachers in the relevant areas; for example, teaching methodologies, cognitive characteristics of children of four to six years of age, continuous assessment, use of A.V. aids and other instructional material and adopting collaborative and cooperative learning activities in katchi class.
13. The IER, University of the Punjab is offering Master degree in ECE. Its services should be utilized for in-service Education of ECE/ Katchi class teachers.
14. Although the new primer for Katchi class is much improved, but it still has strong academic orientation. It needs to provide suggestions and activities for implementing child friendly learning environment and hands-on activities for children at this level. Moreover, in addition to primer separate guide/ teachers' manual need to be developed to facilitate teachers in implementing effective teaching at this level.

15. The prevailing practice of keeping children un-admitted for long time and then keeping them admitted for a year or so should be abandoned no students will be admitted in Katchi class who have less than one school term time left for attending this class i.e. admission will not be granted to students seeking admission after the month of January.
16. NEEC can be assigned the task of developing a kit for Katchi class, which can comprise of items recommended in National Curriculum for ECE 2007 and like the kit developed by Department of L&NFBE.