

Empirical Assessment of the Reasons of Out of School Children in Accelerated Learning Program Centers in District Quetta:

By

¹Mohammad Imran khan Batezai, ²Abdul Rauf Rafiqi, ³Abdul Qudoos kakar, ⁴Aziz Ahmed

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons of out of school children currently enrolled at Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) centers, in district Quetta. The accelerated learning program centers are providing education to those children who lost their first chance of education, the children who never been to school or dropped out at any primary stage, and reducing OoSC ratio. The District and provincial Department of Education should study other ALP programs designed for OoSC, dropped outs and at risks designs as identified and discussed in the literature and revise the design of UNICEF accelerated learning program setup to meet the needs of young people appropriately and sufficiently. The participants of this study were ALP students and their parents. 194 ALP students and 46 parents were interviewed through a structured questionnaire. The findings imply that ALP contributes the retention rate of dropouts and OoSC in the areas of the district where ALP set up exists. The major reasons for OoSC are socio-economic, far and long areas, overcrowded schools, and marginalized community.

Keywords: Reasons, Accelerated Learning, Out of School Children, etc.

¹M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Institute of Education and Research, University of Balochistan, Quetta Pakistan

²Dr. Abdul Rauf Rafique, Research Supervisor and Assistant Professor, Department of Pakistan Study Centre, University of Balochistan, Quetta Pakistan

³Lecturer Institute of Education & Research, University of Balochistan Quetta Pakistan

⁴Assistant professor, Department of Economics, Balochistan University of Information technology and Management Sciences, Quetta Pakistan

Introduction:

Pakistan has achieved notable progress in increasing access to education, however high numbers of children and adolescents are still deprived of their right to education. The latest Government of Pakistan (GOP) statistics cite that there are 51.2 million children between the ages of 5 and 16, of which 22.6 million (44 percent) are out of school. Of these, approximately 77 per cent have never been to school and 23 percent have dropped out. Currently, Pakistan has the world's second highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) at the primary level, with 5 million children aged 5 to 9 not attending school. At the lower secondary level, the number of children out-of-school doubles, with 11.2 million adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14 not receiving formal education.

Balochistan is the largest province in Pakistan (44 per cent land area), with an estimated population of 12.3 million. Most areas are sparsely populated, with an estimated average of 35 persons per square kilometer. Effective services delivery in the province remains a remote reality due to a myriad of operational bottlenecks, notable being access challenges which includes sparse population (35 Persons per Square Kilometer), perennial insecurity, rough and rugged terrain, poor and dilapidated infrastructure (e.g. roads, schools, health facilities, etcetera), long distances to key service centers including major markets, chronic human resource capacity gaps in terms of skills and numbers; and limited availability of development Actors and inadequate development budget to plug the gaps. Specifically, on education, Balochistan faces acute limitations in governance, access and quality of education, which is evidenced by indicators of alarming scales in the shapes of OoSC and drop outs. It is estimated that around 70% of primary to secondary school (grade 1 to 12) aged children are out of school (OOS) and with wide gender out of school disparities 63% boys and 78% girls. Net intake rate at primary level stands at 56%, the situation being worse amongst girls 72% boys and 38% Girls.

ALP centers in Balochistan are “catch up” initiatives to assist the out of school, dropped out/missed out children to complete their basic education and to obtain educational qualification in a relatively short time of period. UNICEF provides financial and technical support to the directorate of Education, Balochistan for opening ALP centers in different remote and urban slum areas in the province. The direct beneficiaries of the intervention are out of school, missed out/dropped out/left out, or children who missed the 1st chance of education due to any socio-economic reasons. The ALP centers in different government and private schools, madrassas

and community building are achieving to reduce the drop out and OoSC rates.

. Providing access to life learning opportunities for improving the quality of life of children including those with special needs and who have missed out formal education and equip them with adequate knowledge, productive skill and life skill through accelerated learning program, thus catering the need of OoSC children by providing them 2nd chance of education.

. Providing primary education to children age 9-13 years in 3 years and mainstreaming them into formal education system are mechanisms and strategies devised in ALP programs. UNICEF so far has established 254 ALP centers in 6 districts of Balochistan. A total of approximately 15000 students are enrolled and learning in these ALP centers in different rural and urban areas of the province. In Quetta district 30 ALP centers are established where 2000 OoSC are enrolled.

These ALPs states the requirements of children are that classically can be met in a traditional school setup. They offer a smaller school setting that is favorable for learning. The environment permits for a smaller teacher-student ratio for instructional distribution. It also generates more chance for children to knowledge achievement in their studies if they are deficient in basic educational skills.

Literature Review:

Alternative educational programs introduced early in 1960s to attempt to access students who had not been successful in traditional school settings in USA. The number of alternative schools was 500 in various states of the US by 1973. Gradually the number of alternative school increases till 1975 there were 5,000 alternative schools throughout the all states. Alternative schools have sustained to increase with popularity and the number, size and continue to assist a broader variety of students with different requirements.

The ALP program was for “those students who are naturally at risk of educational dissatisfaction which is showed by low scores, absence, troublemaking performance, and alike influences related with provisional and everlasting removal from the school “the basic framework was created by many ALP schools.

(Caver et al., 2011, p. 8). Shared a clue for those learners who didn't succeed in traditional school setting and resultantly they dropped out from high school arise in the last of 1950.

According to Lange and Sletten (2002), the "The objection made over on mainstream public educational system from 1950's to 1960's were being xenophobic and entirely designed for the achievement of a small group of students" (p. 3). During the period of 1960s, ALPs were sustained to arise as a response to the "bureaucracy and depersonalization of traditional schools" the reaction made on community schools (McKee & Conner, 2007, p. 44). The center of alternative learning programs shifted to number of students who were at risk from dropping out of school from high schools due to several reasons between the period of 1980's and 1990's. Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011) described that "the number of students were enrolled in alternative learning programs due to the fact that the parameters such that poor score, absentees of students, behavior problems and some special circumstances in traditional schools were unsuccessful and halted their smooth learning process" (p. 106).

Alternative education has provided opportunity and choice to students who had not been successful participations in conventional school setting. Smith and Thomason (2014), "states that the high dropouts and low graduation rates, growing discipline difficulties and marginalization of students expresses that the traditional school setting is not effective for teaching many of the students in today's society" (p. 111). School has to recognize and report the physical, psychological and social essentials of school students by presenting advanced methodologies to the distribution of teaching for their pupils. "Functioning with some autonomy outside of traditional education, alternative schools and programs have the self-determination to strengthen new educational approaches and simultaneously conduct credible research which then can be public within the learning community" (Cable, Plucker, & Terry, 2009, p. 1). A common impression regarding the alternative education is that it sounds similar an abundant approach to addresses with needs. Caroleo (2014) raise several questions for new advanced approaches by accumulation "some literature discusses that the learning opportunity being offered in alternative education programs is inferior associated to that of traditional education programs, thus generating a risk for those appearing" (Caroleo, 2014, p. 39). The contradictions of arrangement at ALP centers locations contributed to the substantial growth in size and quantity of pupils who were dropping from the school. That's why the sketch of national courtesy to this rising and alarming issue. Occasionally the community seems to blame at-risk

students for their disappointments in the public school setup. Though considering a mode to deliver a choice for the students in ALPs can frequently show and succeed instead of the public schools haven't did. The main compensations of Alternative Education Programs are their modified, varied programs and coaching that aim the advantages of the pupils. Silchenko (2005) states the "many of the nontraditional programs offer exclusive education experiences and opportunities that often challenge conventional structures found in many traditional settings. Some ALP's provide a safe waterfront for students who have been bullied or who have sensed ignored or rejected in comprehensive school settings" (p. 1). The condition of maximum number of students is that they have got an opportunity of education, and the students will continue their education and reinvest in education in high school and successfully transforming return to mainstream in their host public schools.

ALPs are introduced for those children's who are out of school, dropouts and at-risk. These programs are structured for (9-13) years of children's who never been to school or dropout form school at different primary stages. These programs were started in august 2014 in various parts of balochistan, and till three batches have successfully completed their primary education in ALP centers. Accelerated learning programs are contributing their services for out of school children's and dropout children's to provide primary education and mainstream them into traditional school setting. The ALP centers are providing education to those children's who never been to school or dropped out at any stage. The researcher conducts study on the effectiveness of ALP centers in district Quetta.

Methods and Materials:

The study is mixed and descriptive in nature, where the researcher has to find the root problems and have to find the major reasons of OoSC enrolled at ALP. This study utilizes a descriptive survey structured and semi structured questionnaire, to collect data of, dropouts, at risk children's in the ALP centers. The data required and collected in this research will be specific to out of school children's enrolled at accelerated learning program centers. This study utilized to accumulate the data specific to the above-mentioned appearances of the accelerated learning programs centers in Quetta district.

In this research study the data collection tools are questionnaires, whereas the researcher has used standardized questionnaires for each

variable of the study concerned i.e. ALP parents, ALP Students of the program.

The population of the study was ALP Students and ALP teachers; the total population of the study consists of ALP parents and 1765 ALP students. The sample size of the study for various variables is as were selected through convenient sampling technique was applied for data collection. 194 ALP students and 46 ALP parents in 14 ALP centers were interviewed through structured questionnaires.

The researchers explored the diversity of attitudes for qualitative data, and the data was presented through personal observations, interviews, open ended questions. The Quantitative data was collected and analyzed through statistical techniques. The statistical methods comprise on accumulating, collecting, evaluating, data coding and linking information based on primary data obtained through completed surveys from ALP students and parents at ALP centers of Quetta district. The data was collected and analyzed in numbers, percentages and percent distribution. Tables and figures, to convey more than one features of a data sets will also be used. The Quantitative data of this study was analyzed through Statistical package for social sciences “SPSS”.

Results and Discussions:

Data Analysis:

The complete data analysis is based upon two methods of explanations for thoroughly discussing the main objective of this study. In the first instance, all the meaningful tabulations are presented and explained as per the order of sampling units for ALP teachers, ALP students, ALP parents. In the second step, the data is portioned, analyzed and discussed in the context of the order of main objectives of this study.

Meaningful Tabulation: The data is analyzed for getting meaningful tabulations in terms of frequency distributions and descriptive statistics. This sub-section follows the presentation and explanation of data analysis to follow the orders of ALP centers, ALP students, ALP parents.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of socio-economic reasons of Out of School Children. .(data collected from students)

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. What were the key reasons that you dropped out or you did not enroll in traditional school?	194	1	3	2.22	.844

Table (1) presents the socio-economic reasons for out of school children of the accelerated learning programs centers of Quetta district. The socio-economic reasons of out of school children of ALP centers was indicated through three major indicators and statements in the questionnaire mentioned in the above table. The table represents the average mean which is 2.22, the highest mean 3.15 and the lowest mean 1.01.

Table 2 Frequencies and percentages of socio-economic reasons for Out of School Children. (data collected from students)

Statements	Economic reasons		Social reasons		General reasons	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Socio-Economic reasons for out of school children's.	52	26.	47	24.	95	49
		8		2		

Table (2) presents the socio-economic reasons for out of school children's in the accelerated learning programs centers. It was confirmed that 49% students are out of school or dropped out due to general reasons, 27% out of school students having economic reasons and 24% out of school children having social reasons.

Table 3 *Frequencies and percentages of Economic reasons for Out of School Children. (data collected from students)*

Statements	Fees not affordable		Poverty		Child is earning / child labor		School expenses / transports		Others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
2. Economic reasons for out of school children's	09	21	2	76.	1	1.	9	-	1	1.
		.6	1	3	1	0				0

Table (3) presents the socio-economic reasons for out of school children in the accelerated learning program centers. In this section the economic reasons are explained. 76% students are out of school children due to poverty, 22% students did not afford their fees.

Table 4 *Frequencies and percentages of Social reasons for Out of School Children. (Data collected from students)*

Statements	Personal status		Cultural norms		Alter nate / Madr assa		Enmi ty / tribal reasons		Other s	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
3. Social reasons for out of school children's	0	21	1	76	1	1.	9	-	1	1.
	4	.6	4	.3	9	0				0

Table (4) presents the socio-economic reasons for out of school children in the accelerated learning program centers. In this section the social reasons for out of school children are explained. 76% students are out of school due to cultural norms there is majority of girls out of school children in this section.

Table 5 Frequencies and percentages General reasons for Out of School Children. (data collected from students)

Statements	No school available		School available but No teacher		School is far away		Lack of interest		Corporal punishment		Domestic chores
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F %
4. General reasons for out of school children's	9	9.5	7	7.4	3	40.8	0	6.3	2	27.6	09.5

Table (5) presents the socio-economic reasons for out of school children in the accelerated learning program centers. In this section the general 1 reasons for out of school children are explained. 40% students are out of school due to school is far away from their homes because there are scattered population. 27% students are out of school because of corporal punishment in government primary school, either the children did not enroll or they dropped out from fear of corporal punishment. Other reasons include for out of school children the domestic chores, in several villages school is not available and in some places school is available but there is no teacher in the school. as well as several students are dropped out or out of school due to lack of their or their parents interest.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics of reasons for out of school children's (data collected from parents)

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. What are the key reasons that your children dropped out or you did not enroll hi/her in traditional school?	46	1.00	9.00	5.1087	2.82236
Valid N (list wise)	46				

Table (6) presents the parents views about the reasons for out of school children. In this section nine reasons were formulated in a single question asking that What are the key reasons that you dropped out or you did not enroll hi/her in traditional school? the mean for this statement is 5.1.

Table (7) frequencies and percentages of the key reasons that your children dropped out or you did not enroll hi/her in traditional school.(data collected from parents)

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Valid No School available	7	15.2
School Available but No teacher	2	4.3
School is far away	8	17.4
Lack of interest	6	13.0
Cultural Norms	6	13.0
Corporal Punishment	2	4.3
Poverty	9	19.6
Child labor	6	13.0
Total	46	100.0

Table (7) presents the parents views about the reasons for out of school children. In this section nine reasons were formulated in a single question asking that what are the key reasons that you dropped out or you did not enroll hi/her in traditional school? 20% parents respond that poverty is the main reasons that they cannot enroll their children in traditional schools.

17% parents respond that school is far away. 15% parent's responds that there is no school existing in their village. 13, 13, 13% parents' responds that the main reason of their children not enrolling in traditional schools is lack of interest and cultural norms and their children's are earning/ child labors accordingly. 4,4% parents responds they the reason behind not admitting their children in government schools is that the school is available but there is no teacher in the school and due to corporal punishment in government school they did not enroll their children.

Results:

According to this research study the major reasons for out of school children are:

The balochistan province has an area of 3, 47,190 sq.km and according to BEMIS data 13674 government schools exists in the province, whereas 1625 schools are not functional. With the supporting of this data averagely on each 29 KM one government school exists in the province. The population of balochistan according to the 6th national census 2017 is 1, 23, 44, and 428 so only an average of 35.5 people living per kilo meter in the province. This is the major issue for the increase of OoSC in the province. The population is scattered, far and long areas in the province and the balochistan is divided geographically in 5 regions, they are the highlands, deserts, coastal areas, plateaus and plains. In Quetta district the situation remains little different. The total area of the district is 2643 sq.km and the population according to 6th national census 2017 is 22, 75,699. An average of 861 people living per kilometer, while excluding the non-functional schools 8-9 Km one primary school exists in the district.

The second most major issue of the OoSC is more than 5500 primary schools are single teacher schools, in most areas the school is not available, there is no teacher in most of schools, and schools are far and long and away. Lack of basic facilities, shelter less schools and educational demands increase the ratio of OoSC in the province. in the study district the schools are overcrowded and 64 schools are single teacher which is 21% of the total.

The yearly growth rate of the province is 2.6% and the ratio of OoSC is more 60% in the province, it may lead to 75% in the same situation till upcoming 15 years.

Poverty is another major issue for drop outs and OoSC in the province. The socio-economic reasons are poverty, fees not affordable; child labors etc. are at an alarming rate in the district specifically and in province generally.

The social and culture norms and barriers towards female education is another major issue for OoSC after primary especially girls dropped out at this stage with a ratio of more than 60%. At high, intermediate levels it is an alarming rate. The main problems regarding this issue are Personal status, Cultural norms, social values, alternate (Madrassa), enmity/ tribal reasons, events of throwing acids on girls' students faces cause an extreme dropout rate in the province generally and in Quetta district especially.

Conclusions:

The expectations of the Accelerated Learning Program centers to provide the second chance of education and to meet the requirements of out of school children should be comprehensive of children's other than those who have dishonored school rules and recognized as "discipline difficulties" and sent to the ALP center.

The environment of the ALP is safe, orderly and conducive for learning. There is an identifiable program plan for each year / class in place in each school to ensure course schedule, daily break schedule, teaching of course planning and order of daily activities. There are locally accredited administrators in each ALP center to direct and direct the day-to-day operations and management of the schools.

Each ALP Center has established goals that support the mission and expectations of the program. The objectives of the program are developed, reviewed and revised regularly, providing an action plan that endorses the ALPs mission.

Educational design of all ALP centers to offer academic and educational services studies are conducted daily by qualified and certified personnel. Schools apply a daily schedule based on educational standards for teacher-to-student ratio, teaching time per day, access to counseling services, and referral opportunities to other agencies to help students respond to their needs. needs.

The district program for ALPs is reviewed and revised on an annual basis for school improvement. The effectiveness of alternative schools is evaluated by the local District Education Officials. Parents are required to register their child in ALP centers once the student has been assigned by the regular school. There is a minimum number of parent conferences scheduled by the ALPs that oblige parents to attend.

The visited ALP centers visited promote academic performance, behavioral change, functional skills, career education, character education, and high expectations and support. Taylor (2002) states that a good service-based or school-based learning project is education-related, responds to a real community need, and involves all stakeholders in the design, implementation and implementation and evaluation process.

These ALPs meet the needs of students who can usually be satisfied in a regular school setting. They provide a smaller school environment conducive for learning. The environment allows a smaller teacher-pupil ratio for teaching delivery. It also creates more opportunities for students to succeed in their studies if they lack basic teaching skills.

This educational effort is done through special programming designed for

Correct and / or reinforce basic skills in the areas of reading and mathematics.

Strengthening conflict management skills and competencies are key elements installed in the Educational design of schools to promote good decision-making skills.

Recommendations:

The Quetta district and Balochistan Department of Education should study other ALP programs structured for OoSC, dropped outs designs as identified and deliberated in the literature and review the project of UNICEF accelerated learning program setup to meet the needs of students properly and adequately.

The District and Provincial Department of Education should assign a special committee to revisit the other ALP Program's purpose and revise it to better meet the needs of OoSC. This is an immediate need.

Parents should be directly involved in their child's educational plan. They must attend the required exit meeting to return a student to the regular home school after completing assignment in the ALP centers.

Instead, the focus should remain on the painstaking work of reengaging disruptive and other at-risk students who are failing in traditional school setup to succeed both in school and in life.

The Expectations of the Accelerated Learning Program Centers to be provided educational accessibility, opportunity, and meeting the needs of

out-of-school children must include students other than those who have violated the school rules and identified as "discipline problems" and sent to the ALP center.

The District and the Provincial Ministry of Education should investigate other ALP programs designed for OOSCs, drop-outs and risk-based designs identified and discussed in the literature and revise the design of the Accelerated Learning Program. UNICEF to respond to the needs of young people in an appropriate way.

Alternative educational opportunities need to go beyond monitor the development of education and include the development of professional / personal skills. Opportunities and a more flexible registration policy, ie age.

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