



Effectiveness and Challenges of Non-Formal Education Programs in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Regarding the present research questions, this study sought to discover the difficulties encountered and the efficiency of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) programs. Proprietary data were then obtained from District Education Officers and Literacy Mobilizers from five districts using survey research. Internal reliability was acceptable, with Cronbach Alpha set at .700. Among those five districts data were collected from 5 different DEOs, 5 District Informatics Aides, and 64 Literacy Mobilizers through simple random sampling. Measures of ethical consideration were also observed during the research analysis to improve its reliability and credibility. The challenges of NFE including poor transport and insecurity and the issues of community participation were among the findings. Additional analysis was conducted and revealed a significant and positive relationship between NFE and the numbers of literates illustrating the key point that NFE has contributed to the betterment of the socio-economic status. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents opined that the Non-Formal Education Programs are appropriate for the community. They proposed policy and funding interventions to enhance the scaling up of NFE programs and yielding of target education structures and services to all ministries.



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1. Introduction

The Pakistani government has committed to providing inclusive, high-quality education for all citizens by 2030, ensuring equal access to education for both genders at all levels. This initiative aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve meaningful learning outcomes by 2030 (Abdullah et al., 2022). Despite the Vision 2025 educational requirements awaiting implementation, various obstacles such as illiteracy, poverty, discrimination, and inequality hinder the smooth operation of the formal education system. In this challenging environment, Non-Formal Education (NFE) has flourished as an alternative, offering flexible delivery methods, broad coverage, and supplementary educational opportunities (Newman, 2019). NFE emphasizes inclusive, learner-centered approaches that empower individuals with essential skills and knowledge, promoting social justice, equality, and active participation in various aspects of life (Murphy, 2018).

By targeting poverty reduction, skill development, and economic empowerment, NFE plays a vital role in enhancing personal, vocational, and national economic growth. The strategic focus of NFE lies in fostering connections to a knowledge-based economy and technology-driven global society, with the ultimate goal of creating a more inclusive and

prosperous society (Hussain, Salfi, & Mahmood, 2011). A significant portion of the population in Pakistan resides below the poverty line. While the affluent urban population leads lifestyles comparable to their counterparts in other countries or even in the Western world, the impoverished rural residents are often left behind. Due to limited resources and financial constraints, developing nations like Pakistan struggle to meet the crucial demand for education, making Non-Formal Education (NFE) a valuable tool in addressing this issue (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Non-Formal Education (NFE) stands apart from the traditional schooling system, aiming to serve specific goals and foster learning beyond formal structures (Hanemann & Scarpino, 2016). It represents a contemporary adaptation of age-old educational practices, catering to the educational needs of remote communities by nurturing their talents and knowledge (Latchem, 2013). Non-formal Education (NFE) serves the educational needs of diverse communities through tailored, informal, and succinct course offerings. To address challenges posed by population growth and social disparities, expanding the educational framework or exploring alternatives like NFE is a viable solution (Deb, Sunny, & Majumdar, 2020). This approach is characterized by purposeful, systematic education outside the traditional school setting (Adick, 2018).

The objective of the study was to investigate the effectiveness and challenges of Non-Formal Education Programs in establishment, enrollment and teaching in Non-Formal Education Schools. Several reasons make this study on Non-Formal Education (NFE) programs valuable including; In targeting deprived groups this study shows that NFE is a vital channel through which the education-less groups can be reached. This is especially important in a process that seeks to address the problem of social exclusion. The results therefore confirm that there is an increased literacy level where NFE initiatives are enhanced. This goes a long way in supporting the issues raised herein to increase efficiencies in NFE to include basic education as well as vocational training for individual as well as community transformation. It also establishes a list of challenges that are common in NFE programs with a focus on transport problems and the question of resource shortage.

Community participation is another factor that stands out clearly in the execution of the NFE initiatives. Knowledge of community characteristics empowers mobilization thus enhancing the environment in which educational programs will be implemented. The study has been done in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals where it corresponds to the fourth goal of quality education. Thus, promoting NFE provisions the present findings to the general tendency of accomplishing the educational goals till 2030. The descriptive survey research as used in the study should act as a guide to the future research in NFE. It stresses comprehensiveness of the multifaceted educational problem and opens the way for further investigations. The research urges the authorities to enhance their support and financing of NFE programs as sustainable advancement of education necessitates sufficient funding, material, and political provisions.

2. Literature Review

NFE structures its curriculum and instructional methods to accommodate learners' individual needs in their daily lives, without rigid rules like uniforms, exams, or mandatory subjects (López et al., 2020). Unlike formal education, NFE prioritizes personalized learning over a standardized curriculum, allowing students to engage based on their motivation and withdraw if necessary. It emphasizes flexibility in course selection and student-teacher dynamics, fostering a more informal educational environment compared to the hierarchical relationships found in traditional schooling (Huang, Spector, & Yang, 2019). The primary aim of Non-Formal Education (NFE) is to reach marginalized communities excluded from the formal education system, granting them the opportunity to access education and enhance their personal development.

NFE serves as a crucial resource for underserved, overlooked, and disadvantaged groups in need of educational support (Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan, 2018). This form of education operates within both the public and private sectors in Pakistan, offering basic literacy programs nationwide. The national education policy underscores the importance of utilizing NFE to achieve educational goals and enhance the overall quality of the population,

fostering a skilled and educated workforce essential for societal progress and prosperity (Fatima, Fatima, & Ali, 2018). By prioritizing education and promoting high literacy rates, NFE plays a vital role in empowering individuals and contributing to the advancement of a modern, moderate society. In numerous literacy programs, adult education emerges as a tailored educational approach that complements formal schooling provided by educational institutions like schools, colleges, and universities. Adult education presents adults with a valuable opportunity to actively engage in societal development and personal growth (Jumani & Bibi, 2011).

The objective of the Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education (L&NFBE) Department in Punjab was to offer high-quality learning opportunities to all illiterate and out-of-school individuals through non-formal methods by 2030, as outlined in 2018-19 (Rehman, Jingdong, & Hussain, 2015). Similarly, the following year in 2019-20, the vision of the Punjab literacy initiative aimed to provide quality learning opportunities to the same demographic using non-formal approaches, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all. This vision highlights the commitment to broader educational access and development (L&NFBE, 2019).

Non-formal educational institutions are closely supervised by the Project Literacy Coordinator (PLC) at the district level daily. The field staff, which includes Literacy Mobilizers (LM), are tasked with overseeing an average of 50 schools per LM and are required to visit all designated literacy centers once a month. Their primary role involves engaging with the community to encourage the enrollment of children who have missed out on formal schooling opportunities at the appropriate age due to various factors, with proximity to formal schools being a significant challenge (Mrashani, 2021). District literacy department staff regularly conduct baseline surveys to identify out-of-school children in underserved areas and subsequently establish new literacy centers, recruiting qualified teachers to facilitate the learning process (Eble et al., 2021).

The swift establishment of single-room schools equipped with essential learning materials enables the community to send their children to these government-run literacy centers for primary education, ultimately facilitating the transition of students into the formal education system. Periodic teacher training sessions are conducted to introduce innovative teaching methodologies, with the primary objective of integrating students into mainstream schooling (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2023). Through a parallel monitoring system implemented by the literacy department, monitoring and assessment personnel visit literacy centers daily, utilizing a mobile application for real-time facility checks and assessments tailored to individual student needs. The accelerated program, with an eight-month class duration, aims to advance students through primary education in three years, a process that typically takes five years in formal schooling (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017).

Abdullah et al. (2022) conducted a research study to explore the impact of non-formal basic education (NFE) on literacy promotion in District Rajanpur, Pakistan. The study aimed to investigate the strategies implemented by NFE schools to improve literacy rates within the population. Employing a descriptive design, the research targeted teachers from 241 literacy centers across the three tehsils of District Rajanpur. Data collection involved the distribution of a Likert scale questionnaire to the selected teachers, with the instrument's reliability confirmed by a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.76.

The responses received were analyzed by using the statistical package SPSS version 21 and also by using the Statistical Analysis Tool Kit available in MS Excel. The study results revealed the benefits of non-formal basic education aiming at literacy improvement. Some of the highlights were that concern with majority (over 70 percent of teachers) approve the influence of NFE centers in increasing literacy through available stock and suitable conditions. The mean score on the individual items being 3.79 out of 5 it clearly expressed the teacher fraternity's belief on how effectively the NFE fosters literacy. Moreover, the result of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient emphasized that non-formal education had moderate impact on literacy promotion; therefore, the null hypothesis was overall rejected. Finally, the study concludes that NFE has a unique contribution to the scaling up of literacy levels in poor communities especially the marginalized ones within developing countries with low literacy facility.

Hiq et al. (2021) conducted a study to evaluate the effects of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) system as to improve the life skills of illiterate adults in Division DG Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. The study aimed at assessing the awareness level, perceptions, and behavior among the adult learners regarding non-formal education the study used a cross-sectional survey research design together with a quantitative approach using questionnaires. A simple random sampling method was used to collect data from 400 registered, practicing adult literacy educators who have taught for at least six months; structured questionnaires were adapted from published literature. Data analysis was done by use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, consisting of descriptive statistics and t-test results' interpretation.

The results were quite dramatic, 75,5 % of respondents recognized the effectiveness of special teachers for adult literacy as opposed to ordinary teachers. Most learners expressed that they learned important life skills in ALCs which prepared them to decent jobs and be responsible members of society. An astonishing 90.3% of participants agreed that, adult learners got to achieve literacy skills meaning education for farmers was effective in raising the literacy levels among the targeted age groups. Further, a clean as to 95% pointed to the aspect of cleanliness and social responsibility after the training as a sign of NFE's societal relevance. Therefore, considering the findings of the study, the role of non-formal education to raise literacy levels and improve the quality of life of illiterate adults within the area under discussion and call for more governmental backing and finance for NFE.

3. Method

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Non-Formal Education (NFE) programs. The target population included District Education Officers (DEOs) and Literacy Mobilizers, involved in NFE initiatives. A sample of 5 DEOs, 64 Literacy Mobilizers was selected using a simple random sampling technique. Instrumentation involved the development of structured (close ended) questionnaires, created with input from stakeholders, including DEOs, literacy mobilizers and educationists. The demographic information was included the gender, trainings, undergoing projects, number of field staff, number of office staff, qualification, number of allocated schools.

While the questions about the challenges were included about vehicles, security distance, difficulties in mobility, fulfilling basic criteria, community and statistical data. The reliability of questionnaires was measured through Cronbach Alpha coefficient which was .700. This showed the high level of reliability of the questionnaires. Data was collected through field visits and directly contacting with concerned persons. All the ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research process. Data was analysed through SPSS. In data analysis descriptive statistics (percentage and mean) were applied to get the insights and description of the data. This study has the following delimitations:

3.1 Geographic Scope

The research is confined to five districts Multan, Muzaffargarh, D.G Khan, Rahim Yar Khan, and Rajanpur. Findings may not be generalizable to other regions of Pakistan or to areas with different socio-economic contexts.

3.2 Target Population

The study focuses exclusively on District Education Officers (DEOs) and Literacy Mobilizers involved in NFE programs. Other stakeholders, such as teachers, students, community members and organizations were not included in the data collection process, potentially limiting the perspective on the challenges and opportunities of NFE.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample consisted of 5 DEOs and 64 Literacy Mobilizers and While this sample size provides some insights, it may not fully represent the broader population involved in NFE across the region.

3.4 Temporal Context

The study reflects the situation as of 2023 and may not account for subsequent changes in policies, societal conditions, or educational practices that could influence NFE in the future.

3.5 Focus on Challenges

The primary emphasis of the study is on the challenges faced by NFE programs. While opportunities are acknowledged, they are not explored in depth, which may skew the understanding of the overall effectiveness and potential of NFE.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for various demographic variables related to District Education Officers (DEOs). The data is categorized into several key variables: Gender, Training, Undergoing Projects, Field Staff, and Office Staff. The majority of DEOs are male, comprising 80% (4 individuals), while females represent 20% (1 individual). Regarding training received, 40% (2 individuals) have not completed any training, 20% (1 individual) have completed up to 4 training, and another 40% (2 individuals) have undergone more than 4 training. A significant portion, 80% (4 individuals), is involved in more than 3 ongoing projects, while only 20% (1 individual) is managing up to 3 projects.

In terms of field staff, 60% (3 individuals) have between 13 and 15 staff members, while 20% (1 individual) have up to 12, and another 20% (1 individual) oversee more than 15 staff members. For office staff, 60% (3 individuals) have up to 10 office staff, while 20% (1 individual) manage between 11 and 15, and another 20% (1 individual) oversee more than 15 office staff. This table provides a clear overview of the demographic distribution and training status of DEOs, highlighting the predominance of males and the varying levels of training and staff management among them.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for demographic variables for DEO’s

Variables	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	4 (80.0)
	Female	1 (20.0)
	Nil	2(40.0)
Training	Up to 4	1 (20.0)
	Above 4	2 (40.0)
Undergoing Projects	Up to 3	1 (20.0)
	Above 3	4 (80.0)
Field Staff	Up to 12	1 (20.0)
	13-15	3 (60.0)
	Above 15	1 (20.0)
Office Staff	Up to 10	3 (60.0)
	11-15	1 (20.0)
	Above 15	1 (20.0)

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics for various demographic variables associated with Social Mobilizers. The data is categorized into key variables: Qualification, Training, Allocated Schools, and the number of male and female students in allocated schools. A significant majority of Social Mobilizers hold a Master's degree, accounting for 73.4% (47 individuals), while 26.6% (17 individuals) have an M.Phil. In terms of training, 39.1% (25 individuals) have not received any training. Conversely, 43.8% (28 individuals) have completed up to 10 trainings, and 17.1% (11 individuals) have undertaken more than 10 trainings. When examining the number of schools allocated, 59.4% (38 individuals) manage more than 100 schools, while 40.6% (26 individuals) have up to 100 schools.

Among the rural allocated schools, 62.5% (40 individuals) oversee more than 10 schools, compared to 37.5% (24 individuals) managing up to 10 schools. Similar to the overall allocation, 59.4% (38 individuals) manage more than 100 urban schools, while 40.6% (26

individuals) have up to 100. For male students, 57.8% (37 individuals) are in schools with more than 2000 male students, while 42.2% (27 individuals) are in schools with up to 2000. The distribution for female students mirrors that of male students, with 57.8% (37 individuals) in schools with more than 2000 female students and 42.2% (27 individuals) in schools with up to 2000. This table highlights the educational qualifications of Social Mobilizers, their training status, and the distribution of allocated schools and student demographics, indicating a strong presence of highly qualified individuals managing a substantial number of schools.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for demographic variables for Social Mobilizers

Variables	Category	Frequency (%)
Qualification	Master	47 (73.4)
	M.Phil	17 (26.6)
	Nil	25 (39.1)
Trainings	Up to 10	28 (43.8)
	Above 10	11 (17.1)
Allocated Schools	Up to 100	26 (40.6)
	Above 100	38 (59.4)
Allocated Schools Rural	Up to 10	24 (37.5)
	Above 10	40 (62.5)
Allocated Schools Urban	Up to 100	26 (40.6)
	Above 100	38 (59.4)
No. of Male Students in Allocated School	Up to 2000	27 (42.2)
	Above 2000	37 (57.8)
No. of Female Students in Allocated School	Up to 2000	27 (42.2)
	Above 2000	2 (57.8)

The data collected from DEOs regarding the challenges in establishing non-formal education schools reveals that the majority of DEOs (60%) agree, and 40% strongly agree that lack of vehicle and transportation is a problem, with a mean score of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.55 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 40% of DEOs disagree that lack of security is a problem, while 60% agree that lack of security is a problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 1.10 showing a higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 40% of DEOs disagree that long distance is a problem, 40% agree, and 20% strongly agree that long distance is a problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 1.34 showing higher level of agreement regarding the statement.

Table 3: Opinions of DEO's Regarding Challenges in Establishing NFBES

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
Lack of vehicle and transportation is a problem in establishing new NFBES.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (60.0)	2 (40.0)	4.40
Lack of security is a problem in establishing new NFBES.	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (60.0)	0 (0.0)	3.20
Long distance is a problem in establishing new NFBES.	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	1 (20.0)	3.40
Problems in mobility is a problem in establishing new NFBES.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (60.0)	2 (40.0)	4.40
Fulfilling the basic criteria creates problems in establishing new NFBES.	0 (0.0)	1 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (80.0)	0 (0.0)	3.60

Table 3 reveals that the majority of DEOs (60%) agree, and 40% strongly agree that difficulties in mobility are problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.55 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 20% of DEOs disagree that fulfilling the basic criteria is a problem, while 80% agree that fulfilling the

basic criteria is a problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 3.60 and a standard deviation of 0.89 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 60% of the departments do not give any rent or contingency for the payment of building rent, bills of electricity, and water, while 40% report a very low rate of such support, with a mean score of 1.80 and a standard deviation of 1.10 shows lower level of agreement regarding the statement. Overall, the DEOs perceive the lack of vehicle and transportation, problems in mobility, and fulfilling the basic criteria as the main difficulties in establishing new NFBES. The lack of security and long distance are also seen as challenges, but to a lesser extent.

Table 4

Statement	No (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very low (%)	Yes (%)	Mean
I/he/she spent time mentoring and coaching	3 (60.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	1.80

Where: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; N: Neutral; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree

In table 5, the results of the opinions of social mobilizers regarding the challenges in establishing non-formal education programs revealed that 4.7% strongly disagree, 3.1% disagree, 14.1% are neutral, 50% agree, and 28.1% strongly agree that community is a necessary element for establishing NFES, with a mean score of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 0.99 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 3.1% strongly disagree, 9.4% disagree, 4.7% are neutral, 40.6% agree, and 42.2% strongly agree that famous personality in the community play a significant role in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 1.06 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 6.3% strongly disagree, 1.6% disagree, 4.7% are neutral, 40.6% agree, and 46.9% strongly agree that the statistical data of the community has significance in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 1.06 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement.

Table 5: Opinions of Social Mobilizers Regarding Challenges in Establishing NFES

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
Community is a necessary element for establishing NFBES.	3 (4.7)	2 (3.1)	9 (14.1)	32 (50.0)	18 (28.1)	3.94
Famous personality of the community plays an important role in establishing NFBES	2 (3.1)	6 (9.4)	3 (4.7)	26 (40.6)	27 (42.2)	4.09
Statistical Data of the community play significant role in establishing NFBES	4 (6.3)	1 (1.6)	3 (4.7)	26 (40.6)	30 (46.9)	4.20
Distance is a very big difficulty in establishing new NFBES	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	3 (4.7)	31 (48.4)	28 (43.8)	4.31
Resistance from community is a major problem in establishing NFBES	1 (1.6)	2 (3.1)	2 (3.1)	40 (62.5)	19 (29.7)	4.16
Finding teachers is a significant problem in establishing NFBES	0 (0.0)	2 (3.1)	3 (4.7)	31 (48.4)	28 (43.8)	4.33
Uncovered areas in the community are very big problem in establishing NFBES	2 (3.1)	2 (3.1)	1 (1.6)	40 (62.5)	19 (29.7)	4.13
Fulfilling the basic criteria creates problems in establishing new NFBES	3 (4.7)	2 (3.1)	2 (3.1)	29 (45.3)	28 (43.8)	4.20

Table 5 reveals that 1.6% strongly disagree, 1.6% disagree, 4.7% are neutral, 48.4% agree, and 43.8% strongly agree that the distance is a big problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 0.77 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 1.6% strongly disagree, 3.1% disagree, 3.1% are neutral, 62.5% agree, and 29.7% strongly agree that the resistance from the community is a major problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 0.76 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement.

No one was in the category of strongly disagree, 3.1% disagree, 4.7% are neutral, 48.4% agree, and 43.8% strongly agree that finding teachers is a significant problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.33 and a standard deviation of 0.71 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. 3.1% strongly disagree, 3.1% disagree, 1.6% are neutral, 62.5% agree, and 29.7% strongly agree that uncovered areas are big problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.13 and a standard deviation of 0.85 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement.

Table 5 shows that 4.7% strongly disagree, 3.1% disagree, 3.1% are neutral, 45.3% agree, and 43.8% strongly agree that fulfilling basic criteria is a problem in establishing NFES, with a mean score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.99 shows higher level of agreement regarding the statement. In short, it can be stated that, the social mobilizers perceive various difficulties in establishing NFES, with the most significant being finding teachers, distance, and resistance from the community. They also believe that the community, statistical data, and fulfilling basic criteria play important roles in establishing NFES.

Table 6: Effectiveness of NFE programs

Statement	Very Bad (%)	Bad (%)	Neutral (%)	Good (%)	Very Good (%)
Overall effectiveness					
Non-Formal Education Program is...	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	0 (0.0)

From table 6, the majority of participants (60%) found the program to be Good, while 40% remained Neutral. No participants rated the program as Very Bad, Bad, or Very Good.

5. Challenges Faced by NFE Programs

Despite the potential benefits of NFE, the article details several challenges that hinder its effectiveness. These include administrative difficulties, inadequate resources, societal resistance, and the lack of trained educators.

5.1 Administrative Challenges

The article also notes that the process of formation and implementation of NFE programs is frequently frustrated by excessive bureaucracy. DEOs and Literacy Mobilizers have challenges in mobilizing resources and support from government that hinders overall functioning of NFE programs. A lack of clearly defined policies only adds to the equation since players involved are most often unclear as to who does what. Such issues were also highlighted by Shahid and Qureshi (2021) of their survey related to the influence of physical environment on learning.

5.2 Inadequate Resources

The article also reveals that most of the NFE programs experience financial and material resource constraints. This inadequacy is able to hold back the provision of quality education and other learning materials. The concentrations mainly depend on government funding, which can be a weakness, particularly in areas of competing LOAs. Consequently, a vast number of programs function in less than ideal circumstances leading to the compromise of educational quality (Bashir & Kaur, 2017).

5.3 Societal Resistance

A common belief system which has been pointed as that there is doubt within communities about the benefits of NFE. Traditional culture is still widely present in most families and is gripping in as far as those within it perceive formal education as more legitimate and valuable. This cultural bias may mean low enrolments in NFE programs especially among some group such as female or the marginalized. According to the article, awareness creation particularly with the community is key to changing the attitudes towards NFE and participation.

5.4 Lack of Trained Educators

Among all the factors of NFE, the quality of educators is one of the most powerful and critical predictors for its success. This article observes that most of the instructors offering NFE programs are not well equipped or trained hence failing to deliver quality education to learners. Cross sectional training and professional development of the NFE educators is also important in order to improve their pedagogy and respond to their student's needs.

The article presents a thorough examination of the challenges and opportunities associated with non-formal education. While NFE programs have the potential to significantly contribute to literacy and skill development in marginalized communities, addressing the challenges they face is crucial for their success. By strengthening policy frameworks, engaging communities, allocating resources, investing in educator training, and implementing effective monitoring systems, the impact of NFE can be enhanced, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and socio-economic development in the region. In summary, non-formal education is an essential component of Pakistan's educational landscape, particularly in areas where formal education falls short. The insights provided in the article serve as a valuable foundation for discussions on how to leverage NFE to empower communities and foster sustainable development.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study titled "Challenges and Opportunities: The paper "Non-Formal Education for Marginalized Communities" offers a brief on importance and issues linked with Non-formal education (NFE) for Pakistan, especially South Punjab. Indeed, non-formal education acts as another type of education beside the formative educational system especially to groups of individuals who cannot afford to be in formal school. In turn, this discussion will provide an attempt in summarizing the possible findings contained in the article of Conrad & Heward in terms of understanding the significance of NFE, the issues encountered, and the possible solutions for enhancement. The conclusions made in this study with the data collected from five districts, from DEOs and Literacy Mobilizers, show that, NFE has done positive role in literacy mobilization and socio-economic development. This supports the previous research of Abdullah et al. (2022) who affirmed that NFE enhancing literacy in District Rajanpur was positive.

CAFNEC also wishes to identify and develop socio-cultural characteristics on non-formal education hence defining it as a form of education whose delivery is flexible and fits the learners' needs most of the time (Sandhu, 2019). In this context, the article insists on the fact that NFE is extraordinarily important in territories where FSI are either unreachable or insufficient. The higher education holds one because it targets unorganized groups using informal and course-based, short term courses that are associated with poverty, social inequality and education like those the Sadruddin (2013) has focused on.

The study, therefore, acknowledges that NFE is more than complement for the conventional schooling since it serves as a compelling need in country's deprived areas including South Punjab. In the article, NFE programs are acknowledge-edged to be very useful for many people, especially those from low-income families since the information and skills learnt boost their income-earning skills and assist in community improvement. That is why this focus on practical application is a necessary factor for strengthening economic production and combating poverty, which is a major issue everywhere in the area, as it is mentioned by Gull and Sarwar (2020).

6.1 Recommendations

There are the following recommendations aiming to increase the efficiency of National Free Education programs, according to the article. These are improvement of policies, encouraging the community, enhancing financial resources through government grants, and non-governmental organizations and communities and enhancing the status of professional development among NFE teachers. Such strategies include; identification of stakeholder roles; resource mobilization; and monitoring and evaluation systems.

Stakeholder involvement is also very important to support NFE programs, with community information sharing concerning skill acquisition and economic gains. This way you'll attract people's attention and gain their trust, which will increase the rates of participation among the population.

Another factor is resource management and as such more cash is provided through government grants, collaboration with humanitarian associations, and donations from people. The training program for NFE teachers can improve quality by concentrating on teachers' professional development, incorporating new approaches to teaching, classroom behavior, and the utilization of Information Technology. Schedules or quarterly assessments can be facilitative to stakeholders since it helps them to make precise decisions based on what he or she may be going through and the possible way to tackle it.

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