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***Educational Rights of women in Perspective of Islam
Review of Educational Policies of Pakistan
Planning and Implication flows***

Dr. Samina Sadia *

Assistant Professor Sheikh Zayed Islamic center, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Dr. Umme Salma **

Lecturer, Institute of Education & Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

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ABSTRACT

This is a sad reflection upon Muslims and the societies that we have built since knowledge is one of the important pillars upon which the edifice of Islam has been raised. The very fact that the first revelation upon the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) contained the commandment to 'read' speaks volumes of the emphasis Islam lays on education. Instead many verses of the Holy Qur'an invite man to ponder and meditate over the creation of the universe. Thus it would be wrong to allow women to just partake in learning of the religious sciences and prohibit her from gaining a wider scope in her learning.

Key words: *knowledge information, development expansion, pivotal essential. obligations responsibilities.*

Women play very vital role in development of any societies. The pace of development is highly dependent on joint efforts by men and women in different fields of development. One of the important developmental fields is education, where women folk can participate and utilize their energies to bring prosperity within societies.

Education plays a pivotal role in developing human capital among diverse societies. It can be the beginning, not only of individual knowledge, information and awareness, but also a holistic strategy for development and change. It is very much



connected to form social relationships on the basis of equality with others and to achieve the important social good of self-respect. It is important to mobilize (through access towards jobs and the political process), to health and life (through the connection to bodily integrity) and to maintain other significant communications to sustain a developmental world and promoting the concept of global village.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Women play very vital role in development of any societies. The pace of development is highly dependent on joint efforts by men and women in different fields of development. One of the important developmental fields is education, where women folk can participate and utilize their energies to bring prosperity within societies. The importance of education, mainly women education nowadays can be well understood by the remarks given by woman who fled from Darfur to Chad (2004) saying that they had left behind all of their possessions. The shared that the only thing that they have brought in is what has been in their heads, what they have been taught, that is their education. They told that all the luxuries have been gone but education is the only thing that cannot be taken from them. Education plays a pivotal role in developing human capital among diverse societies. It can be the beginning, not only of individual knowledge, information and awareness, but also a holistic strategy for development and change. It is very much connected to form social

relationships on the basis of equality with others and to achieve the important social good of self-respect. It is important to mobilize (through access towards jobs and the political process), to health and life (through the connection to bodily integrity) and to maintain other significant communications to sustain a developmental world and promoting the concept of global village. Though the Education has become a universal human right all around the globe but this right has not been not been practiced in its real meanings in many parts of the world. Similar situation has been prevailing in the given research context, the northern part of Pakistan. This territory, being the remotest parts of Pakistan (one of the developing countries) heavily governs on patriarchal values in structuring a society. It represents different cultural practices for men and women. A man is always considered as the¹

Islam and women Education

Education is a fundamental human right, which is the key to success and economic growth, not only in developing countries but also throughout the world. The need to acquire knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim whether male or female. It has unanimously agreed by Islamic scholars that the first word revealed of The Quran was "Iqra" meaning "proclaim" or "read". Islamic teachings emphasize on

the acquisition of knowledge and education for all men and women alike. It is the duty of every Muslim, whether male or female to acquire knowledge. The prophet Muhammad was instructed that his message was addressed to both men and women alike, so he sought to achieve equality. For example, Allah states in the Quran: “Those who truly fear Allah, among His servants, who have knowledge.”²

The Prophet Muhammad’s Hadith high light the acquirement of knowledge for every Muslim. For example, one Hadith states: “seeking knowledge is a duty of every Muslim man.”³

This Hadith infers that education is not a right but a responsibility on every Muslim, male or female.

In another Hadith He said “one who treads a path in search of knowledge has his path to paradise made easy by God.....”⁴

This Hadith explains the superiority of the person who seeks knowledge over the one who does not. The reference here to superiority is to the person who seeks knowledge, man or woman.

Quran states the importance of knowledge. “Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?”⁵

The verses of Quran and Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad do not mention or imply any prejudice towards women with regards to education and the acquisition of knowledge for men and women. Women are not mentioned as inferior or unequal to men on this subject. There is nothing in the Quran declaring that women should not be educated or be denied the opportunity to acquire knowledge.

The prophet set aside a special time for the Muslim women so they could attend circles of religious instruction.

Abu Saeed Al- khudri reported: A woman came to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and said, “O Messenger of Allah, the men only benefit by yours speech, so make a day for us when we can come to you and you teaches what Allah taught you.” The prophet said: Gather on a certain day at a certain place.⁶

The prophet promised a double reward for a man who has a servant girl and he educates her and then marries her.

Abu Musa reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: If a man teaches his servant girl good manners, educates her in the best manner, then he emancipates her and marries her, he will have a double reward.⁷

In this Hadith emphasis is laid on the equality of education imparted to the girl slave and the latter part deals with the encouragement to free slaves. At last the time came when Islam abolished slavery.

A great role model for the education of women is Ayesha, the mother of the believers. She was one of the greatest scholars of Islam among the early Muslims.

The learned companions of the prophet would go to her for answers and advice. Abu Musa reported:

We never had a new problem occur to us as the companions of the Messenger of Allah except that we would ask Ayesha and find with her some knowledge concerning it.⁸

Masruq reported: He was asked, "Was Aisha knowledgeable of the obligations?" Masruq said: By the one in whose hand is my soul, I saw the learned elders among the companions of Muhammad ask her about the religious obligations.⁹

She is credited with narrating more than two thousands Hadith. She was known for her intelligence and sharp sense of judgment. Her life also substantiates that a woman can be a scholar, exert influence over men and women and provide them with inspiration and leadership.

There are many other women who were scholars in the early age of Islam and through the succeeding eras until today.

- Mu'adhah al-Adawiyah was a narrator of prophetic traditions from the second generation of Islam who related sayings from Ali ibn Abu Talib, Aisha, and Hisham ibn Amir.¹⁰
- Amrah bint Abdur Rahman was a student of Aisha from the second generation of Islam who related sayings from Umm Salamah and Rafi ibn Khadeej and was considered a legal scholar in the city of Medina¹¹.
- Hafsa bint Sireen was a student of Umm Atiyyah, Anas ibn Malik, and other companions of the Prophet. She was a legal scholar from the second generation of Islam and one of her students, Qatadah, is an important authority in the exegesis of the Quran.¹²

There are so many women in the scholarly history of Islam, particularly those specializing in the prophetic traditions. Therefore, Muslims should take these great women scholars as role models. Islam commands us to seek knowledge and to value education regardless of gender. We should offer girls and women the opportunity to learn the religion as well as what will benefit them among the worldly sciences. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not categorize women as inferior, He viewed them as equals. Unfortunately the attitude of discrimination towards women in unfavorable positions in Muslim communities around the world. According to the teaching of Islam, men and women textually have equal rights in all aspects of life, but this most basic teaching is not exercised in everyday practice.

The current status of women's education in Pakistan

Education is the backbone for national cohesion, inclusive socio-economic development, better standards of living, enhanced productive capacities of individuals, and to make ever increasing population a useful citizenry.

According to the CIA World Fact book on literacy, majority Muslim's countries have a gender disparity in terms of literacy rates between men and women. Literacy rates are directly linked to education rates. In Pakistan literacy rate is, male 69.5, and female 45.8, ¹³so there is a gender gap in literacy rate.

According to the World Bank, around half of the world's out of school females live in 10 countries, Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Ethiopia, cote d Ivories, Philippines, Bangladesh.....¹⁴

The World Bank also reported on the 10 countries with the largest gender disparities in primary enrollment rates. Pakistan is also included in this category.¹⁵

According to the World Economic Forum: The 20 countries at the bottom of the 2015 over all gender gap list, in order from the lowest ranked, are Yemen, Pakistan, Syria, Chad, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon,.....Angola.¹⁶

The education rate for Pakistani woman is among the lowest in the world, over half of Pakistani girls are not educated, and according to the World Economic Forum Gender Parity Reports Pakistan has the world's second lowest rate of female employment.¹⁷

The EFA (Education for All) Global Monitoring Report was started by UNESCO in response to the Dakar Frame work for action, Education for All: meeting our collective commitments, which was ratified by 164 governments in 2000.¹⁸

The monitoring report assesses the progress made towards the education for all goals, and analyses whether or not commitments are being upheld and suggests possible ways to continue measuring progress.¹⁹

Human Development Report (HDR) listed Pakistan in the category of "low Human development " countries with a female literacy rate of thirty percent, and Pakistan has ranked 145 in the world in terms of human development.

This situation is exacerbated by striking inequalities based on sex and socioeconomic status. Gender disparities are rampant with boys outnumbering girls at every stage of education. According to

Human Rights watch, 32 percent of girls of elementary school age are out of school, compared with 21 percent of boys. By grade six, only 41 percent of girls participate in education, compared with 51 percent of boys. And by grade nine, merely 13 percent of young women are still enrolled in school.²⁰

A chronic absenteeism from school among girls is worse in rural areas of Pakistan than in urban areas. Because of the gender inequality in education, the UN Development programme (UNDP) 2010 report ranked Pakistan 120 out of 146 countries based on its gender.²¹

Pakistan's plans and policies for gender equality

Education has a key role in the development of a nation. The progress of a country or a nation depends on quality education. Education has always been the major concern of successive governments in Pakistan since its inception.

Pakistan has expressed its commitments to promote education and literacy in the country by education policies at national level and getting involved into international commitments on education.

Pakistan's international commitments

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a historic document that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its third session on 10 December 1948 as the "common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations." The article 26 of UDHR provides as under:

"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."²²

Education for All (EFA)

At the World conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand 1990) delegates from 155 governments including Pakistan met to discuss major aspects of Education for All (EFA). Ten years after Jomtien, the world Education Forum was again convened where 182 countries including Pakistan participated. It concluded with the adoption of the Dakar Framework for Action (April 2000). The following goals are about gender equality in education.

Ensuring that by 2015 all children with special emphasis on girls and children in difficult circumstances have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls, full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.²³

The EFA goals focus on early childhood care and education including pre-schooling, universal primary education and secondary education to youth, adult literacy with gender parity and quality of education.

EFA Review Report October 2014 outlines that despite repeated policy commitments, primary education in Pakistan is lagging behind in achieving its target of universal primary education. Currently the primary gross enrolment rate stands at 85.9% while Pakistan requires increasing it up to 100% by 2015-16 to fulfil EFA goals. Of the estimated total primary school going 21.4 million children

of ages 5-9 years, 68.5% are enrolled in schools, of which 8.2 million or 56% are boys and 6.5 million or 44% are girls. Economic Survey of Pakistan confirms that during the year 2013-14 literacy remained much higher in urban areas than in rural areas and higher among males.²⁴

by the year 2015 it is expected that 69% female literacy will be achieved²⁵

(Millennium Development Goals 2015)

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the eight international development goals for the year 2015 that were established in the Millennium summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, Goals 2@3 specifically address education:

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary education

Target 3: Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Goal 3: Promote Gender equality and Empower Women

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels of education, no later than 2015.²⁶

²⁷ The goal 3 of MDGs is Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. It is aimed at eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015. There is a stark disparity between male and female literacy rates. The national literacy rate of male was 71% while that of female was 48% in 2012-13. Provinces reported the same gender disparity. Punjab literacy rate in male was 71% and for females it was 54%. In Sindh literacy rate in male was 72% and female 47%, in KPK male 70% and females 35%, while in Baluchistan male 62% and female 23%.²⁸

Gender equality in National Education Policy (2017)

Since independence in 1947, a variety of documents were developed on National Education Policies as guidelines on access, quality and governance in education sector of Pakistan. The Draft National Education Policy (2017) has been made to achieve many goals to improve the quality of education.

The important feature of this policy is to achieve gender parity, gender equality and empower women and girls with in shortest possible time.²⁹

According to UNDP 2010 report, Pakistan ranked 120 in 146 countries in terms of Gender-related Development Index (GDI), and in terms of Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM) ranking, it ranked 92 in 94 countries.^[14] Gender inequality in education can be measured in different ways. Gross and net enrollment rates and completion and drop-out rates are the ways to identify the gender inequality in education. Pakistan aims to achieve Millennium Development Goals and also aims to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of

education by the year 2015.^[15] Elimination of gender disparity at all levels of education requires higher allocation of resources on women's education. Strong gender disparities exist in literacy and educational attainment between rural and urban areas of Pakistan.

Issues and Problems for women's education

further observation drawn from the data is that all three women have an encouraging attitude from their parents and family members and hence they are motivated to continue their education despite several societal challenges in their ways. My experiences also endorse that many women have gone through such bitter experiences in our localities. Similar situation was also the case for all three of the research participants I There seemed to have been certain key persons in their lives who made the suggestion at the right time in their career that gently nudged them in the direction of educational institutions

- Poverty
- Lack of investment
- High cost of education
- Poor quality of education
- Social norm
- In security
- Lack of buildings
- Lack of awareness about girls education
- Lack of transport

Recommendations

- Increase expenditure on education in line with UNESCO recommended levels needed to fulfill obligations related to the right to education
- Direct the provincial education authority to make girls' education a priority within the education budget, in regard to construction and rehabilitation of schools,
- training and recruitment of female teachers, and provision of supplies, to address the imbalance between the participation of girls and boys in education
- Strengthen enforcement of anti-child labour laws
- Instruct police officials to work with schools to ensure the safety of students, including monitoring potential threats to students, teachers and schools, and working to prevent
- Rehabilitate, build, and establish new schools, especially girls' schools
- provide scholarships to good-quality

- Provide free or affordable transport for students who travel long distances
- Abolish all tuition, registration, and exam fees at government school
- Instruct all principals to identify out-of-school children especially girls
- Ensure that all schools have adequate boundary walls, safe and private toilets for girls schools

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