

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION FOR MARGINALIZED GIRLS (Case Study in Indonesia)

Siscka Elvyanti

University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

siscka_elvyanti@yahoo.com

Abstract

Life skills education for marginalize girls aims at exploring ways to empower poor and out-of-school girls in Indonesia by helping them to acquire appropriate technology-related knowledge skills, which would open the door to more job opportunities and ultimately increase their status in the society. Life skill education for girls become important because data from the Indonesia Ministry of Education shows significant gender gaps in school dropout rates, both at primary school and junior secondary levels. Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys. In primary school, out of every 10 children who drop out, 6 are girls and 4 are boys. It is the same in junior secondary school. The gender gap slightly widens at the senior secondary school to 7 girls dropping out for every 3 boys

This paper will suggest that promoting gender-equitable technical and vocational education can be a means of combating poverty. While recognizing that the girls and young women in poor societies are a particularly vulnerable group, this paper demonstrates ways in which they can be better equipped with training to seize income earning opportunities, thereby improving their living conditions.

Implementation strategies for this problem include: creating a national movement for completion of basic education, involving communities, especially parents and community leaders, the private and industrial sectors; enhancing and strengthening existing essential programs for increasing school enrolment; using alternative education approaches and programs to reach previously unreached poor and remote communities and improve equity in access to basic education.

Keywords

Life skill, marginalize girls, empower poor, out-of-school girls.

1. Introduction

"We are very poor and we cannot support our daughter's schooling. We cannot pay for her uniforms, study materials, daily allowance and for her tutorial/private lessons". "Parents always say that daughters do not need to study so much, just learn how to read and write, because they will be only working around the kitchen and may not do anything better than kitchen work". "Parents would ask their daughters to stop schooling at Grade 6 or 7 to marry them off or sometimes the girls themselves would like to get married".

In the Asia-Pacific region including Indonesia, poverty undoubtedly has girls face. Two-thirds of the worlds poor live in this region. The majority of them are woman and almost two-thirds are of school age [1]. While many occupational barriers have fallen, in social communities especially poor communities is still almost entirely sex-segregated. Girls are clustered primarily in low-status and low-priority education [2]. Poverty seem to be rationale for adhering to gender traditions and restricting access of girls to school by letting them stay at home, and also a compelling reason to defy these same traditions by allowing them to leave the home and travel faraway to earn income in the name of family survival.

In other side, research indicates that important personal, social, and economic benefits accrue from educating girls. In addition to increasing the duration of their own lives and improving the health of the children they bear, educating girls has been shown to further the education of succeeding

generations. Educated mothers are more likely to send both girls and boys to school and keep them there longer. Educating girls also contributes to a country's economic growth by improving women's participation in wage employment and in-home and nonmarket production. The more educated a girl is, the less likely she is to experience an unwanted early pregnancy. Worldwide, notable gains in girls' educational attainment were made during the past four decades. From 1960 to 1994, primary enrollments for girls increased in every geographic region in the developing world [3].

2. Marginalized Girls in Indonesia

Many of us, as educated society, treat boys and girls, men and women differently. Educated society may communicate limiting perceptions about appropriate and expected behavior, abilities, career direction and personal goals which are based on sex rather than in individual interest and ability [4]. In regulatory and policy framework Indonesia, achieving gender equality has full and equal access to and achievement in basic education. Even that, data from the Ministry of Education shows significant gender gap in drop out rates, both at primary and junior secondary levels. Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys. In primary school, out of every 10 children who drop out, 6 are girls and 4 are boys. It is the same in junior secondary school. The gender gap slightly widens at the senior secondary school to 7 girls dropping out for every 3 boys [5].

Marginalized girls in Indonesia are girls who live in poverty and cannot continue their education. Discriminatory girl education does not begin in regulatory or policy framework but rather with the advent of parent and socio-cultural. Most girl, almost poor girl, suffer from inadequate preparation in education so that they fear schooling and lack confidence in their ability to do so. These situation for girls a fear of or feeling helplessness with education or schooling thereby saying to them that it is natural for them not to school or drop out from school. Research from the past twenty years consistently reveals boys receive more opportunity for education than girls [6]. The pattern begins in socio-cultural with parents conferring more attention, more care, and more opportunity to boys [7]. When parents are too poor, daughters should stop to school because they can help in housework and in earning income. The boys can continue their schooling as they are not as capable in housework compared to girls. Beside that, sometimes the school environment is not girl-friendly; there are no adequate water and toilet facilities especially for girls; and lack of good teachers and school facilities. For example, classrooms are overcrowded and the girls do not like crowded group setting, or, teachers give more attention to boys than girls, they never give master class position to girls.

3. Out-of-School Life Skills Education System

The government regulation no.73/1991 on out-of-school regulation states that out-of-school education is aimed at: 1) meeting the educational needs of the community which cannot be met by the school education system; 2) helping learners to develop themselves at their earliest age to uplift their standard of living and their self-esteem; 3) providing learners with knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to develop themselves; 4) providing knowledge and skills to get jobs and income; and 5) preparing learners to continue education at higher levels.

There are four types of out-of-school in Indonesia [8]:

- 1) Literacy Programs. The number of literates among woman is still very high despite many literacy campaigns and literacy programs conducted by both the government and NGOs. This happens because many girls do not have access to primary education or drop out from primary school. The socio-cultural system still considers women inferior to men.
- 2) Basic Education Programs. The use of new approaches to achieve full participation in lower secondary education should be implemented in order to encourage primary school graduates to

continue their education for three more years, and to provide a new access for lower secondary students who drop out of school. Since 1994, the policy of out-of-school education has been emphasized in basic education through *Packet A* equivalent to primary school and *Packet B* equivalent to lower secondary school.

- 3) Continuing Education Programs. There are three types of continuing education programs: a) apprenticeships; b) income generating programs; and c) private courses. Apprenticeships and income generating programs are integrated into non-formal basic education and post-literacy programs. Private courses programs are implemented by private training institute/organizations.
- 4) Early childhood education in the form of play groups and child-care centers.

Actually, in practice, school education system in Indonesia, lack aims at exploring ways to empower poor and out-of-school girls. The out-of-school education system not increases life skills for marginalized girls. These happen because the Indonesia government has not had specific national policies for girls and women's education. The implementation mechanisms for girls' education are conducted through the formal school system for formal education and through various programs and projects in ministries dealing with non-formal or out-of-school education for girls and women. There is weak coordination among the ministries in regard to the operation of these programs and project. Within the school system, there is no differential approach to the education of girls and boys. The differences in education levels, school participation rates, drop outs, and educational attainment between females and males are primarily caused by poverty and by the socio-cultural values and norms of Indonesia society.

Indonesia girls who do not complete the primary education cycle or do not go on to at least lower secondary typically lack the skills they need – especially those enabling continues learning – to secure stable, reasonable paid employment. In addition many still complete In addition much still complete school without obtaining the necessary basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

Achieving the full participation on girls and women in educational activities requires a fundamental shift in how decisions are made and resources are allocated. It is not just a question of how parents view their children's education but also the way teachers and literacy facilitators relate to both girls and boys in an education setting. It also requires a shift in the way that policy makers, including government, the private sector religious leaders and other agencies, allocate resources and assume responsibility for educating all citizens. Effective educational activities girls require collaboration between the formal and non formal education sectors as well as between the private and the public sectors. Sustainable educational activities for girls are dependent on the development of local ownership of the activities. Implicit in local ownership are the active involvement, commitment, and coordination of a wide range of stakeholders, including decision-makers in government, local community and religious leaders, and community members themselves-both girls and men.

4. What We Can Do?

Preventing girls from dropping out it is not easy. The most frequently cited solution to drop out is raising awareness of parents and girls about the importance of education. To be successful, two criteria for such messages need to be met in order to change school practice: 1) they should be tailored to at-risk children and families, taking into account the girl's reasons for persisting in school or not; and 2) mobilizing messages and actions should have a long-term outlook, helping families deal with the various cultural, social and economic factors impeding their children's retention in school, given that dropping out is a long-term process of gradually disengaging with the school, rather than a single action.

Another factor keeping girls away from school, implied in the data but need further research. Beginning from primary school, marginalized girls receive basic life skill. Primary education was seen

as a reasonable investment, an opportunity to gain basic literacy, numeracy, and simple life skills. Providing vocational programs in secondary school will give them capability for life. Secondary school seemed, in contrast, to imply something, a way to get something else rather than an end in itself. The marginalized girls need another thing. Something real for life, because girls will become mother and housewives, and education can give them skills to earn and support their families.

Because that reason, life skill education must give earlier. Empower marginalized girls to improve their living standard through training and capacity in the field of vocational education. Adult literacy and life skills programs should be given a priority in areas of high drop out and poor attendance/transition as a way of sensitizing parents to the value of learning, especially for girls. Life skills for marginalized girls, could be vocational education program – for helping them get a job and/or for survival – like, family welfare, healthcare, fashion (to sew), catering, early childhood care, mechanic, electrician, or else. These opportunities are needed for girls to acquire knowledge and skills. More skills means better job opportunities with high salaries, will have higher self-esteem and respect in society. And when the young generations of women are educated, family and society will have better conditions.

5. Conclusion

While it is apparent that access to education becomes increasingly more limited as girls go to higher levels of education, Indonesia has achieved an overall good progress toward gender parity in net enrollment ratio at primary and secondary levels. Does this mean Indonesia does not have serious gender problems in education? Far from it, gender issues that are less obvious, more complex and intractable – perhaps harder to address with quick fixes – continue to plague Indonesia.

While poverty was the most frequently cited barrier facing students who could not afford learning materials, books, uniforms, transport or fees, it was fairly clear from the data that removing all costs and providing financial support would not have “solved” the problem. The increased knowledge, skills, attitudes, and self-confidence that come with acquisition of literacy skills have been demonstrated to help women in many ways: they more effectively pursue income-generating activities [9] and become more active in community groups and organizations [10]. Additionally, literate adults better understand the legal system so that they are able to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation [11]; they more effectively pursue their individual and family health needs and they provide better support for their children’s schooling [12] [13].

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