



# Educational Strategies to Empower the Poor

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# Outline

- ▶ Freire's ideas on how education can empower the poor to lift them out of poverty
- ▶ Brief context: International efforts to achieve Education for All
  - ▶ Lessons from international efforts
- ▶ Emphasis has been increase in numbers: Quantity not Quality
- ▶ What aspects of poverty affect education most?
- ▶ Relation between education and poverty
- ▶ Barriers to achieving universal education goals
- ▶ Inequality and discrimination
- ▶ Best Practices
- ▶ Priorities and effective policies
  - ▶ Role of Academies

# Education to Empower the Poor

- ▶ To talk of poverty, education and empowerment in Brazil is daunting
- ▶ Impact of the English edition of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970 has been tremendous in North America and is said to have achieved "near-iconic status" in teacher training programs
- ▶ It is important to recall two important points about Freire's ideas
  - ▶ (A) what poverty does to people (results in culture of silence, strips them of confidence, make them passive, vulnerable and fearful)
  - ▶ (B) the goal (social equity) and process of education (knowledge creation and not knowledge transfer), method: Conscientization (raising awareness of causes of inequality)
- ▶ The implications:
  - ▶ Inequality implies that many people are powerless (status quo will prevail)
    - ▶ Education means empowering people by actively involving them in the process
  - ▶ Quantity is not enough, quality is important

# Global Goals for Education for All

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- ▶ 1990: Education for All (EFA): international effort to educate every citizen everywhere
  - ▶ Aim to ensure all children have access to primary education by 2015
  - ▶ Increase level of adult education
  - ▶ Focus on gender disparities (girls and women)
- ▶ 2000: Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Post Rio Summit)(8 goals)
  - ▶ Universal primary education by 2015
  - ▶ Eradicate extreme poverty
- ▶ 2016: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): (17 goals expand on MDGs)
  - ▶ To be achieved by 2030: Inclusive, equitable quality education, lifelong learning
  - ▶ Gender equality by empowering girls and women

# What has been achieved? What has been learnt?

- ▶ Uneven achievement of goals
  - ▶ Education goals were not met in many of the countries of the South
  - ▶ Gender equality is still a distant goal in most countries, even in the North
- ▶ What was learnt
  - ▶ Failed to target the root causes of poverty:
    - ▶ Inequality in society, especially gender inequality (structural and societal)
  - ▶ The Multifaceted and interdependent (holistic) nature of development
    - ▶ Not enough focus on human rights, sustainable economic capabilities
  - ▶ The goals should be for all countries, not only the South
    - ▶ Countries of the North have many inequalities within their societies
      - ▶ Poverty, gender inequality, unequal access to many resources
  - ▶ Enough goals: need institutions to implement and monitor them

# Quantity not Quality

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- ▶ EFA, MDG > education for all: emphasis on increasing numbers
- ▶ Data indicates robust relationship between schooling and earnings
- ▶ Revolution of rising expectations (social unrest and extremism): quality matters
  - ▶ If there are jobs, the education received will not qualify them for many jobs
  - ▶ Unemployment will cause unrest because people think they deserve jobs
- ▶ Education to a large extent globally, especially in countries of the South, is what Freire called a “banking model”: rote learning, not critical, enquiry-based
  - ▶ Transmission of knowledge: teacher-centered – student listens passively
  - ▶ Students are not actively involved in what they learn
    - ▶ Because they avoid relating the learning to their own experiences
    - ▶ Because they are not constructing the knowledge (and will forget what they hear)

# What aspects of Poverty impact Education most?

- ▶ What is poverty?
- ▶ It is both
  - ▶ An absolute term – when people do not have basic necessities: food, water, shelter, clothing (results in absenteeism, poor performance, dropping out of school)
  - ▶ A comparative/relative term – when inequality in society gives unequal access to resources (less opportunities for quality education)
- ▶ A multi-dimensional concept and indicates
  - ▶ not only lack of economic capital (lack of access to good education, good teachers)
  - ▶ but also lack of cultural capital (e.g. parental background) & social capital (networks) (\*Education)
  - ▶ results in lack of confidence and positive self-concept (\*Education)
  - ▶ makes people vulnerable to discrimination (based on class)(\*Education)
  - ▶ ultimately, lack of freedom of choice to function effectively in society (affects life-chances)
- ▶ Cyclical relationship:
  - ▶ poverty prevents people from obtaining good education, and
  - ▶ lack of good education creates poverty
- ▶ Often intergenerational due to lack of education

# Relation between Education and Poverty

- Evidence that education and poverty levels are related
- Malnutrition and poverty cause permanent and irreversible damage to both body and mind
- But relationship is not linear: it is complex (stereotypes, limited opportunities, limited horizons)
- Education and Employment
  - Each year of schooling increases salaries and employability
  - Educated populations increase a country's GDP, so poverty decreases and improves economic development
  - No country has achieved consistent economic growth without 40 % adult literacy rate
- Women's education
  - Evidence that education benefits girls at higher rate than boys
  - Delays marriage and having children, have less children
  - Increases ability to earn wages/ Decreases family violence/Increases decision-making power
    - Women focus on children's education and health

# Barriers to Achieving Universal Education Goals

- ▶ For people living in poverty
- ▶ Universal Primary Education: problem getting children to school:
  - ▶ Child labor, bad schools, high dropout rates, teacher absenteeism, bad infrastructure
  - ▶ Enrolment in grade 1 does not ensure remaining in school- wastage with drop outs
  - ▶ Output levels often so low that students cannot enroll in secondary schools
- ▶ Gender equality: girls have less education because of
  - ▶ Gender discrimination, boy preference
  - ▶ Girls married off and disposed as burdens
  - ▶ Kept home (cannot go to school) to do house chores and look after siblings
  - ▶ Lack of physical facilities such as toilets and residences in rural areas

# Inequality and Discrimination

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- Inequality in Society and Education: data shows
  - **Inequality in education driven by quality rather than access**
  - **The least unequal societies have the lowest poverty levels**
  - What causes inequality? low levels of education and skills lead to
    - unemployment / poor health / large families / can be intergenerational
  - Unequal opportunities can lead to poverty and poverty can lead to social exclusion
- Education and Discrimination (unequal treatment)
  - Discrimination due to differences in
    - gender, ethnicity/race/culture, religion, sexual preference, dis/ability, **class** (poverty)
    - At societal, institutional, individual levels
    - **Attitudes of teachers / administrators often push students out of school**

# Best Practices

- ▶ The NGO, BRAC now working in 8 countries has had high impact on poverty reduction
  - ▶ Integrated development program (special focus on girls & special needs students)
  - ▶ Considered to be the world's biggest secular private education system
  - ▶ Early childhood to tertiary level : focus on INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
  - ▶ Partner with governments and target the poorest children to complete basic primary education
  - ▶ Provide teacher training, libraries, computer aided learning at the secondary level
  - ▶ Provide scholarships (Bangladesh & Uganda)
  - ▶ Use boat-schools in hard-to-reach areas in Bangladesh to reach the poorest of the poor

# Impact

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## Multi-pronged education programs

- ▶ From pre-schools to primary, secondary, university levels
- ▶ Mobile libraries, education for special needs children, multipurpose, non-formal and multi-purpose community centers, mobile education, computer-aided learning, adolescent clubs, sports training, English language and ICT classes, etc.
- ▶ 1985-2015: scope in Bangladesh (F=females)
  - ▶ 13,800 **pre-primary** schools/ 400,072 (61% F) students, 13,800 teachers
    - ▶ 5.61 million (67% girls) completed pre-primary, 5.57 million (61% F) went to grade 1
  - ▶ 22,791 **primary** schools/ 681.794 (62% F)/22,622 F teachers
    - ▶ 5.35 million (66% F) completed primary/5.06 million (66% F) transferred to formal schools
  - ▶ 47,953 teachers provided subject-based training/19,737 school administrators
- ▶ Primary School Certificate pass rate 99.99%, 7.26% A grade, 5.44% GPA 5
  - ▶ 2014 Secondary School Certificate: 93% pass rate(93.7%F/92.5%M)
  - ▶ 3,542 (45% F) meritorious students from poor families received scholarships

# Integrated Approach is Essential

- ▶ Education is essential to eliminating poverty
- ▶ Need special efforts to target the very poor, women and marginalized groups
- ▶ Education should be multidimensional –
  - ▶ skills training in basic literacy/numeracy/IT
  - ▶ develop self-concept, science & technology, social sciences
  - ▶ knowledge in human rights, arts, music, sports
- ▶ Greatest impediment to education is social prejudice
  - ▶ Improve teacher education and teacher attitudes
  - ▶ Social prejudices regarding gender, special needs children

## Priorities and Effective Policies

- ▶ **Increase public funding of education** as a percentage of GDP, rather than as a share of the budget
  - ▶ Public allocation of funds to education is an **investment**, not an expenditure
  - ▶ Lack of education leads to inequality which in turn leads to lack of development
  - ▶ Public-private partnership can build innovative institutions
- ▶ Focus on **women's education**:
  - ▶ Leads to equity in society
  - ▶ Mother's education highly correlated to higher levels of education (important for future generations)
- ▶ Most urgent is to have good **teacher education**: priority should be given to attracting good students to teaching and give them high pay (e.g. Finland)
- ▶ Educational Institutions (teaching methods) need to be **INCLUSIVE**: discrimination based on class, caste, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity are very damaging for education and society

# Role of Academies

- Contribute to raising the quality of Teacher Education Institutions
  - Focus on Evidence-based teaching; enquiry and dialogical methods
- Raise status of women in STEM fields

*Thank you!*