

Contribution of Aga Khan Education Service for Secondary education: Case study of Gilgit

Introduction

Education promotes employment, earnings, health, and poverty reduction for individuals. Globally, there is a 9% increase in hourly earnings for every extra year of schooling (WB)¹. It drives long-term economic growth, spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social interconnection for any society. In this context, efforts of Aga Khan Education Service are well recognized in Gilgit Baltistan which is located at north of Pakistan. This place has been benefited by the contributions of Aga Khan Education Service. After independence from Dogra Raj, Gilgit Baltistan becomes part of Pakistan. In past the majority of current Gilgit Baltistan was illiterate. In 1982, the first modern formal school was formed in Gilgit by British. This was a primary school and offered education to only the sons of feudal ruling elites and after completed their primary education some of them left the areas and secured admission at Kashmir for higher studies. In early 1990s, Gilgit Baltistan was part of Kashmir region and in 1901 literacy rate of the whole Kashmir region was only 3%. In the first decade of 20th century, primary and middle schools were started to establish in Gilgit Baltistan but the schools were limited to only male members of the society (Dad, 2009). In 1940s Sir Sultan Muhammad Aga Khan visited Gilgit and established many formal education institutions which lead to expand formal education access in Gilgit region. When this initiative was succeeded many other NGOs also start to establish Schools in Gilgit Baltistan (Benz, 2013). Due to efforts of both government and non-government organizations, access to formal education become easier to both male and female which we can observed in improvement of literacy rate of Gilgit Baltistan, in 1981 literacy rate was less than 3%, in 1998 census literacy rate was 37.85% and according to PSLM 2006-7 literacy rate became 53%².

Historical Perceptive and Formation of Agha Khan Development Network:

Sir Sultan Muhammad Aga Khan was among those Indian Muslim leaders who considered without educational advancement Indian Muslim could not progress. He always preached importance of education. He always supported both boys and girls education. He said *“if I had two children and I could afford education only for one, then I would have no hesitation to give*

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/overview>

² *Education in Gilgit and Baltistan* (2009) DAWN.COM. Available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/497130/education-in-gilgit-and-baltistan>.

education to the girl” and in 1905 he opened two Aga Khan School at Zanzibar and Gwadar³. In 1957 Prince Karim Aga Khan became “Imam” (spiritual leader) of Shia-Ismaili community. After became Imam he visited all over the world and observed political instability and poor socio-economic condition of Ismaili communities and their neighbor. During his visit he also observed some countries in Asia and Africa was fighting for their independence while some were trying to adjust after independence from British colonization⁴. Due to these issues and problems in 1967 he founded Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) with the aim to build institutions and programs which could help people to face the social, economic and cultural challenges⁵. There are six different programs in Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Aga Khan Education Service (AKES) is the educational program of the Aga Khan Development Network (Malik, 2011). The main goal of the AKES is to promote education in the remote areas of the South East Asia and also emphasis education for all communities regardless of their socio-economic status and gender. The AKES is non-profitable private educational network which is operating in thirteen countries.

Under the AKES more than two hundred schools all over the world are operating in which student strength is remarkable.

Table no 01: Students enroll in Aga Khan Education Service

School	Students
Pre-Primary	15,350+
Primary	28,780+
Secondary	25,250+
Higher-Secondary	5,150+
Education Programs	20,600+

(Source Aga Khan Education Service)

³ *Remembering a hero of the nation: Sir Aga Khan's Drive for Education 2021-11-02* (no date) *Remembering a hero of the nation: Sir Aga Khan's drive for education 2021-11-02*. Available at: <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/37204>.

⁴ *AKDN IN RETROSPECT: 65 years of Service* (2022) *Aga Khan Development Network*. Available at: <https://the.akdn/en/resources-media/whats-new/spotlights/akdn-retrospect-65-years-service>.

⁵ *About the Aga Khan education services - Aga Khan Schools .Aga Khan Education Services*. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/About/Index#AboutAKDN>

AKES-Pakistan:

Due to the educational vision of Sultan Muhammad Aga Khan even before the formation of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), the Aga Schools system was working in Pakistan. Before the partition of Sub-continent, in 1905 Aga Khan School was established at current Gwadar of Pakistan. Now under the Aga Khan Education Service, there are 153 schools and five hostels are operating in Pakistan in which 53,000 students are enrolled⁶.

AKES-Gilgit Baltistan:

Due to poor socio-economic conditions, poor condition of government schools, teaching methods and harsh and inaccessible education to the girls of Gilgit region in the 1940s Sultan Muhammad Aga Khan established Diamond Schools (DJ) schools in Gilgit Division⁷.

He established “Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust” in which all the gifts he received on his Diamond Jubilee (60 years as Imam) were gifted to people of Gilgit Baltistan to improve their education and health status (Bolander, 2016). In 1960 after the visit of Prince Karim Aga Khan to Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral, more schools are established in Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral. In Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral, the AKES is the largest private education network in which 148 schools are operating and almost 40,000 students are enrolled and 50% are girls⁸. In Gilgit Baltistan, all the schools are located in Gilgit region. There are 107 schools in Gilgit region with a strength of more than 23000 students and 1000 teachers. These schools have helped in increasing literacy rates and socio-economic conditions in the mountainous areas of Gilgit Baltistan⁹.

Table no 02: Number of Middle, High and Higher Secondary Schools in Gilgit Division

Middle Schools	29
High Schools	27
Higher Secondary Schools	04

(Source Aga Khan Education Service Pakistan)

⁶ The Aga Khan schools in Pakistan (no date) Aga Khan Education Services. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/Pakistan/Index>

⁷ The Express Tribune (2012) “Sir Aga Khan III and the road to educational development,” 2 November.

⁸ The Aga Khan schools in Pakistan (no date) Aga Khan Education Services. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/pakistan>

⁹ The Aga Khan schools in Gilgit-Baltistan (no date) Aga Khan Education Services. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/GilgitBaltistan>

In Gilgit Baltistan, the Government is the main organization which is providing secondary education but the different NGOs help increase the quality and standard of secondary education. Among the NGOs, the AKES is the second largest organization providing secondary education in Gilgit Baltistan after the Government (Ali 2007). The following tables show the statistics

Table no 03: Statistics of Government and Private Secondary Schools GB

	Secondary Schools			Higher Secondary School		
	Boys	Girls	Co	Boys	Girls	Co
Government	125	50	3	1	7	0
AKES	0	14	15	1	2	1
Other Privates schools	2	3	50	0	0	13
Total	127	67	68	2	9	14

(Source EMIS 2012-13)

Table no 04: Number of AKES and other Private Primary, Middle and Higher Schools GB

	Primary School			Middle School			High School			Higher Secondary School		
	Boys	Girls	Co	Boys	Girls	Co	Boys	Girls	Co	Boys	Girls	Co
AKES	0	13	56	1	18	28	0	14	15	1	2	1
Other Private	12	1	122	10	3	89	2	3	50	0	0	13

(Source EMIS 2012-13)

Girl's Education

AKES always work to enhance girl education in Gilgit Baltistan. In Gilgit, AKES was the first non-governmental organization which established secondary school for girls. In 1988 AKES established first girl secondary school in Gilgit by merging D.J Primary School Yarkote and D.J Girls School Danyore. Since then AKES is considered the largest NGO in Gilgit which is promoting girl education (Shafa, 2011). When girls completed their secondary and higher secondary education from different AKES institutions they went to other regions of Pakistan for further higher education which cause a decrease in the girl's involvement as a teacher in their old institutions due to a lack of proper packages. The AKES is providing high-quality education,

particularly to girls, schools are mainly working in districts where the Ismaili community is present abundantly but in other areas of Gilgit Baltistan under AKES scholarships program is running for deserving girls to study science during their secondary education (Jaffer & Gul, 2013).

Infrastructure Development

In the entire Aga Khan Higher Secondary Schools well-resourced computer lab is present where students are encouraged to use internet and computer facilities to their projects and assignments. Along with well-resourced computer lab, well equipped science labs are available for the students. Libraries are also well-resourced which have subscription of more than 15 national and international periodic. At AKHSS Gilgit, along with well-resourced computer lab and library and well-equipped science lab, language resource center is present to improve the language proficiency. For worships, seminars and conference multi-purpose conference hall is also available¹⁰ At AKHSS Sherqilla School Auditorium is available for seminars, documentaries, and guest speaker sessions and for morning assembly¹¹. At AKHSS Gahkuch two large play grounds and multi-purpose hall is present. Due to harsh weather of region, the whole building of school is insulated¹²

On 25th October 2022 due to a lack of secondary school facilities in Gupis and Yasin two areas of District Ghizer, the AKES have been laid two state of art Secondary Schools in these areas which have a capacity of 1200 students in a single shift¹³.

¹⁰ *Aga Khan higher Secondary School, gilgit* (no date) *Aga Khan Education Services*. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/Pakistan/AKHSSG/Facilities/Index>

¹¹ *Aga Khan higher Secondary School, sherqilla* (no date) *Aga Khan Education Services*. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/Pakistan/AKHSSS/Facilities/Index>.

¹² *Aga Khan higher Secondary School, Gahkuch* (no date) *Aga Khan Education Services*. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/Pakistan/AKHSSGK/Facilities/Index>.

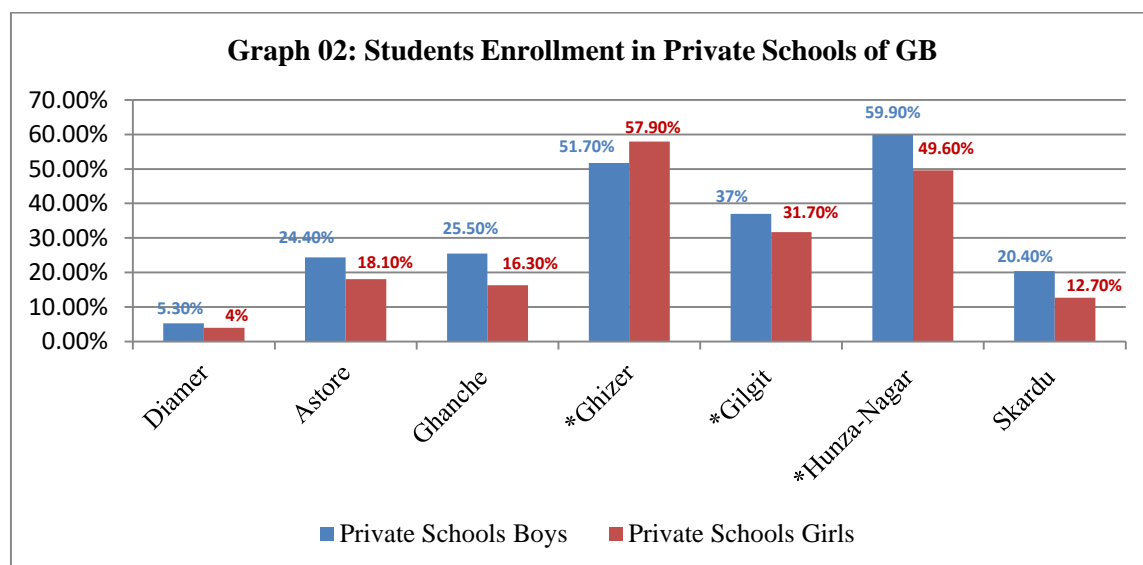
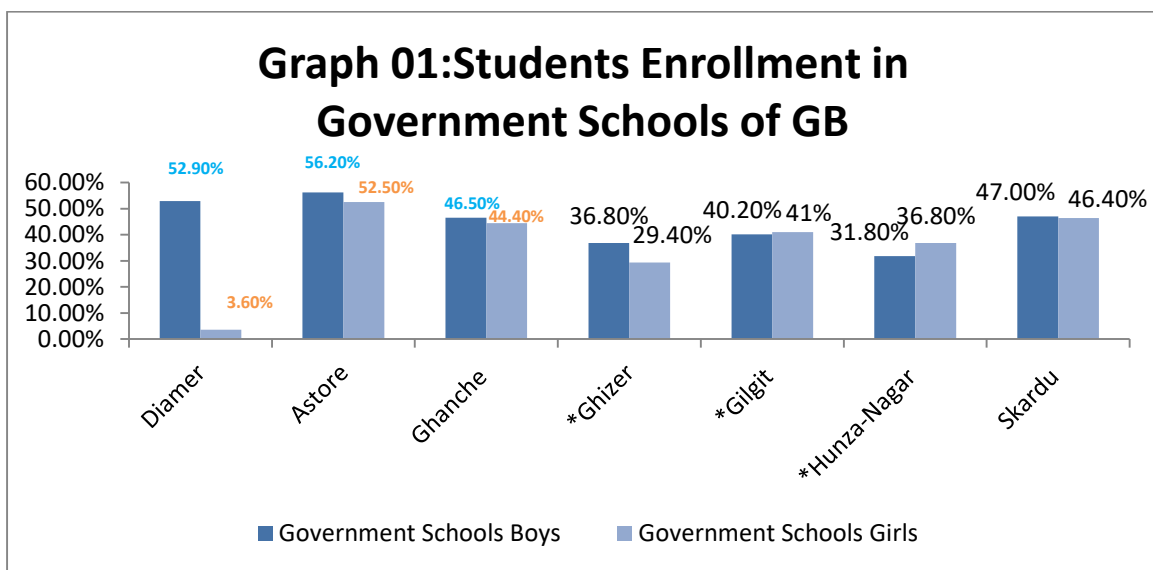
¹³ *Aga Khan Schools annual publication 2021: Aga Khan Academies* (2022) *The Aga Khan Academies*. Available at: <https://www.agakhanacademies.org/general/publication/aga-khan-schools-annual-publication-2021>.

Professional Development Centre North:

With the help of the Educational Department of Gilgit Baltistan, the AKES established the Professional Development Centre North to provide training to teachers and educational managers of all primary and secondary schools both government and private schools (Kanji & Ali, 2006). The Professional Development Centre also arranged short term training for teachers of Diamond Jubilee School (Abbas, 2003).

Enrollment in Schools:

AKES provides education facilities in three districts of Gilgit division. In these districts students enrollment rate is highest in private schools as compared to other districts of Gilgit Baltistan.



(Source Aser Pakistan Report 2015)
(*AKES is operating)

In the above graphs, it can be observed in all districts of Gilgit Baltistan student enrollment both male and female are high in Private schools of those districts where AKES is working.

Dropout and never enrolled rate

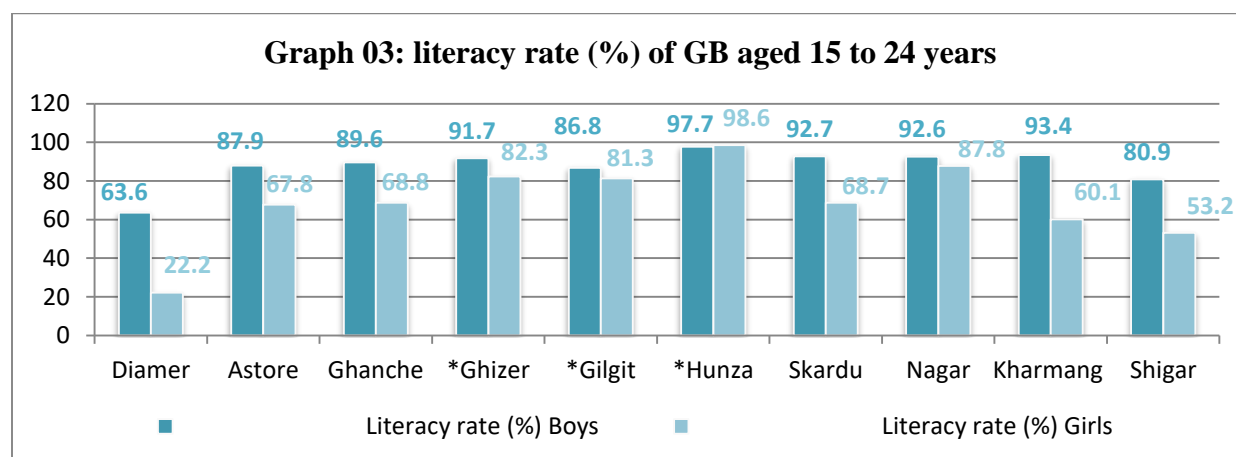
Districts Ghizer and Hunza have the lowest rate of dropout rate of students from schools and the never enrolled rate at schools is the lowest rate in GB. In these two districts, the AKES is the main organization which provides educational facilities.

Table no 05: Statistics of School Dropout and never enrolled Gender wise in Gilgit Baltistan

District	Dropout rate (%)		Never enrolled (%)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Diamer	5.4	0.5	35.8	91.9
Astore	1	1.8	14.9	18.5
Ghanche	3.4	3.2	17.2	21.5
*Ghizer	0.5	1.8	10.4	10.3
*Gilgit	1.8	3.3	16.9	19.5
*Hunza-Nagar	0.8	0.6	5.1	7.9
Skardu	4.8	3.3	26.1	35.1

(Source ASER Pakistan Report 2015)
(*AKES is operating)

Literacy rate aged 15-24 years



(Source UNICEF 2017)
(*AKES is operating)

In Pakistan, the average age for secondary and higher secondary schools is completed between 15 to 24 years. The literacy rate aged 15 to 24 years can reflect quality of secondary and higher secondary schools. In case of male and female literacy rate, district Hunza has highest literacy rate and district Ghizer and Gilgit have also better literacy rate as compared other some districts.

Northern Pakistan Education Project:

The AKES has promoted quality education with the help of different initiatives and one of them was Northern Pakistan Education Project. In the first phase of this program 1185, Government and private secondary teachers were trained to promote student-centred learning and content Knowledge (European Commission, 2002). During the second phase of the Northern Pakistan Education Project (2003-2008), the AKES started working to increase the access of girls to secondary education in the remote areas of Gilgit Baltistan (AKES-P, 2005).

Curriculum

All Secondary and higher Secondary Schools of Aga Khan Education Service in Gilgit have affiliated with Aga Khan University Examination Board. Under Aga Khan University Board all examinations are conceptual based and application of knowledge in real world¹⁴. For Secondary Schools science subjects are offered which include Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and compulsory subjects are Urdu and Pakistan Studies. For Higher Secondary Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering classes are offered¹⁵.

Initiative during Covid-19

During the pandemic of Covid-19, due to the lack of internet facilities students of Gilgit Baltistan were suffering and AGES launched the “Drop Everything and Read” program so that student of the AKES could continue their studies. In this program, lessons were broadcast with help of local cable services and students with access to computers provided USB memory where recorded lessons were stored¹⁶.

Student Achievements

In 2019, three students from Aga Khan Higher Secondary School (AKHSS) of Gilgit division got United States College Scholarships. In 2020 and 2021 ten and nine students respectively secured admission at Agha Khan Medical University¹⁷. In Pakistan the Aga Khan University Examination Board is classified into two region, region one and region two. In region two Punjab, KPK and Gilgit Baltistan is included. In the Board examination students of Aga Khan

¹⁴ About the Aga Khan education services - Aga Khan Schools (Aga Khan Education Services). Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/About/Index#Curriculum>.

¹⁵ Aga Khan higher Secondary School, shergilla (Aga Khan Education Services). Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/Pakistan/AKHSS/>

¹⁶ Aga Khan Schools 2020 (no date). Available at: https://www.agakhanschools.org/Content/downloads/aga_khan_schools_2020.pdf

¹⁷ Publications (2022) Aga Khan Development Network. Available at: <https://the.akdn/en/resources-media/resources/publication>

Schools in Gilgit region always secure remarkable result. In 2019 examination in class 9th two students in English Compulsory, one student in Physic and one student in Biology were high achievers. In class 10th one student was high achiever in Biology and one student was high achiever in English Compulsory. In HSSC part one student in English Compulsory, one Mathematics and two students were high achiever while in HSSC part two Physics in each student while in HSSC part two, one student in English Compulsory, one student in Chemistry and two students were high achiever in Biology¹⁸.

Co-Circular Activities

Secondary education not only helps students to understand academic subjects but also helps students to understand their potential and identity (Kapur, 2021). The AKES not only provides quality academic knowledge but also provides opportunities to their secondary school students to show their abilities in co-circular activities. In the Tech-Fair Gilgit-Baltistan, students from Aga Khan Secondary School Gilgit stood 1st and 2nd competition and AKHSS Hunza stood 4th in the competition. Gilgit Baltistan is badly affecting due to Climate and environmental changes, in 2021 to increase awareness about this issue, AKES initiated a tree planting driven programs in their twenty school of Gilgit Baltistan¹⁹.

Conclusion

Due to efforts of both government and non-government organization accessibility of school education has been increased in Gilgit Baltistan. In all districts of Gilgit Baltistan public and private schools have been opened, now parents can choice either public or private school for the schooling of their children. AKES have opened their schools in three districts of Gilgit division, district Gilgit, Ghizer and Hunza. Due to quality education in AKES schools, in these three districts of Gilgit division, private school enrollment is high as compared to government school enrollment. One of the prime aims of the formation of AKES was to promote girl's education. Due to mountainous area and harsh weather of Gilgit Baltistan, educational accessibility is not easy for both boys and girls, but due to AKES, girl enrollment in schools is high in district Hunza and Ghizer. Literacy rate is an indicator for the educational attainment in Pakistan student

¹⁸ *High achievers awards 2019 - Aga Khan University* (no date). Available at: <https://examinationboard.aku.edu/press-center/Publication/High-Achievers-2019.pdf>

¹⁹ *Publications - aga khan schools* (no date) *Aga Khan Education Services*. Available at: <https://www.agakhanschools.org/Home/Publications>.

completes their secondary education at the age of 15 to 24 years, in case of Gilgit Baltistan literacy rate of the aged 15 to 24 years are highest in district Hunza, and also in districts Ghizer and Gilgit literacy rate is better than other districts. AKES is not only providing quality education in few districts, but also in collaboration with Government of Gilgit Baltistan and international organization for arranging training programs and seminars to teachers of government schools and other private schools, formation of the Professional Development Centre and Northern Pakistan Education Project are particular example. In all schools of AKES career counseling seminars and conference are also held due to which their students get foreign scholarships for higher studies and secure admission in top universities of Pakistan such as Aga Khan medical university Karachi, LUMS, NUST and IBA Karachi. Due tremendous efforts of Sultan Aga Muhammad Khan and Prince Karim Aga Khan educational resolution has come to Gilgit division and now they are considered as progressive and most educated region of Pakistan.

Recommendations

Based upon the available scholarships and literatures following are some recommendation points

- AKES need to expand their schooling activities outside the Gilgit division, especially to Diamer division where girl school enrollment is very low.
- Attractive salaries should be offered, so that their students can join them after completion of higher studies
- After completion of secondary school education, higher education institutions are not available at Gilgit Baltistan, therefore focus should be to establish higher education institutions in Gilgit Baltistan
- Career counseling activities should also expand to other government and private Schools.

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