Children should have Pen in their hands not Tools: Teacher can be there for their Rescue

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Abstract
Children are the gifts; they are the precious gifts presented by Almighty God to human life for filling the world with smile, happiness, and hope. Children are the future citizens; it is childhood which determines a child’s future, his/her life and their worthy contributions to the world. Thus it becomes an important aspect for us, for everyone in the society, to protect, nourish and work for the overall welfare of children of a particular Nation and the children of the World as a whole. Experience shows that a combination of economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection, together with a better understanding of the needs and rights of children, can bring about a significant reduction in child labour. Child labour is stubborn problem that, even if overcome in certain places or sectors, will seek out opportunities to reappear in new and often unanticipated ways. The response to the problem must be as versatile and adaptable as child labour itself. Child labour elimination and poverty reduction through economic and social development go hand in hand. In many societies teachers are looked upon as the individuals who can help to bring about positive changes in the lives of people. They are seen as natural leaders who can give advice on various affairs of the communities. Within the context of their direct interaction with children, parents and communities, teachers and educators could play several major roles in the prevention and elimination of child labour. Hence we can say that education transforms lives and breaks the cycle of poverty that traps so many are children. In this paper an attempt has been made to show the relationship between child labour and education. With the renewed interest in child labour as an economic and social problem, attempt has been made to assess its linkages to the human capital, hoping to solve continuing riddles in development policy and improve the quality of life for the world’s poorest and most disadvantaged inhabitants. This paper throws its light on causes of child labour, characteristics involved in child labour, education, teacher’s contribution.

Keywords: Child Labour, Education, Teacher’s Contribution, Development Policy, Human Capital, Labour Standards Respect, Negative Influence, Fatalist Attitude
1 Introduction

As any nation’s future lies in today’s children, they are to be equipped with health and education for them to be useful to the nation. In any case half of the children are wasting their time, while a significant fraction of them are breaking backs to earn a meager living. Making, the nation ultimately pay the price for its negligence of children. Though eradication of child labour has been recommended in various situations, it has been increasing at an alarming rate throughout the world. The problem of child labour is insignificant when compared with the problems in the developed countries. The near absence of child labour in the developed countries has resulted in excluding children below 14 years of age from the labour force. Though there are number of other reasons for child labour like social, traditional, psychological and political, the economical factors are the main cause for the prevalence of child labour in India. Utter poverty, unemployment or intermittent employment and under-employment of the parents in the family etc., and the various economic factors. The child work exerts a negative influence on the child’s personality and his well-being. The absence of harmonious family life, particularly if the child is employed on an external job, without the due attention and care of his parents and when the child is fully occupied in his work, he is without any opportunity for his physical or psychological development. In case of jobs accomplished in the streets, the child sometimes engaged in unsuitable, unhygienic surroundings is exposed to social evils, which may include even crime, drugs, and prostitution.

Even though the use of child labour is deplorable, in actual practice it has become neither feasible nor desirable to have stringent measures to enforce existing child labour law. It is felt that for the time being i.e., till the economic condition of the country improves, efforts will have to be made to organize better conditions of work to eliminate abuse, exploitation and health hazards due to this child labour.

2 Child Labour

In India, children used to help and accompany their parents in agriculture and other household activities in ancient time. Thus we see that child labour is not quite a new thing to the world since Poverty is the basic triggering factor, which forces parents to take their children, sometimes selling them into domestic help. Education hasn't been a priority for poor families, as they have to work every member of the family to make ends meet. Schooling has traditionally not been an option for many children in India’s rural families. With poverty widespread and high skilled jobs scarce, rural children typically have had to leave school early and join the workforce, earning what little they could to help feed their families. Children have long been used as domestic workers or indeed as bonded labourers. The economic condition of their family will be in such a condition that the dependents are increasing on the incomes that they bring in as workers. So as per generally agreed norms employing a person below age 18 years of age is termed as child labour. However depending upon the socio economic status the meaning of the same may differ to some extent. Hence in India employing any person between age 14 and less than 18 years in any hazardous activities or activities requiring extreme physical exertion may be termed as child labor. Also employing any person below age 14 years in any kind of activity aimed at earning a living is termed as child labour.

3 Sources and Circumstances that leads to Child Labour

- Uneducated families, daily bread-winners, hand-to-mouth laborers, large families with scanty income choose to send their wards for earning or at least to take care of their livelihood themselves. There are families that remain uneducated generation to generation due to their
suppression as bonded labors by several Land Owners. Full families, including children work for these Land Lords.

- Traditional beggars, who never want to shed their sweat and earn. As long as the time-honored free feeding is available in India, these beggars will only multiply and spread to all parts of the country. Occasionally their children, on not getting any sufficient money, tend to work.

- The deserted street children. They are abandoned by their parents due to illegitimacy in their birth or poverty. The children having no support from relatives in case of death of their parents, escapees from home due to several reasons, children of frequently quarreling parents under alcohol influence, etc.

- The unluckiest of the lot are the female children, who are employed to work, though under a homely atmosphere, suffer too much due to the cruelty of their masters at home. Their Masters treat these hapless girls like slaves or less than that and budge them to work sometimes inconsistent to their capacity. These voiceless children bear the brunt of all sorts of whips, beats, slaps on the cheeks and burns on their delicate bodies. The proven best babysitters, are scantily dressed, underpaid, ignored during their illness and expected to work anytime of the day and any hour at night.

4 Causes of Child Labour: Child labor is work that harms children or keeps them from attending school. The causes are quite similar to any part of the world, everyone agrees that child labour is a plague but most families know they don’t have much choice i.e., not putting a child to work means there won’t be enough food on the table for everyone. So few of the causes included are,

- **Poverty:** Poverty can be termed as the main reason for child labor in India. Though the country has achieved commendable progress in industrialization, the benefits of the same have not been effectively passed on to the lower strata of society. The disparities in income have progressively increased more so after the opening up of the Indian Economy from the late 80s. People who had the resources became richer by employing the poor who were readily available as cheap labor. The average earnings of a poor industrial worker are very low per day even in suburban areas and other metropolitan cities of India. In order to keep costs down even large companies employ unorganized workers through contractors who get uneducated and unskilled and semi-skilled people at very low wages. This helps the industries to keep their labor costs down at the cost of the poor laborers. In effect what happens is that the children of these poor unorganized laborers have to find some work to help run the family. They cannot afford to go to school when they do not have food to eat and when their other brethren go hungry. Hence children from such deprived families try to work as domestic servants, or in factories that employ them and remain uneducated and grow up that way becoming perennial victims of this vicious cycle or poverty and suppression.

- **Fatalist Attitude** Most of the people belonging to the lowest strata of society in India have a fatalist and submissive attitude towards life. They do not believe that their lot can be better.
High Population: The industrialists in India have been successful in taking advantage of this disadvantage faced by job seekers. Due to high population the job seekers not in a position to bargain a higher wage. As a result the poor remain poor working for low wages.

Illiteracy and Lack of Education: Illiteracy is a situation when a person is not able to read and/or write. This is when the person is not in a position to get even primary education. Lack of education is another aspect which is a result of illiteracy and lack of information. An uneducated person is one who is generally unaware of things which an average person is required to know. Such people are normally unaware of their human rights and the rights of their children too. The children of such people normally become child laborers around their homes.

Irresponsible Attitude of Employers: A general sense of irresponsibility towards society is seen the employers in India who are least bothered as to how their employees survive. In spite of being aware of the high cost of living and inflation they are least bothered and least ashamed to pay wages which are much below sustenance levels. Also if the employers were responsible they in the first place would not employ children at all.

Child labour involves at least one of the following characteristics:

- Violates a nation’s minimum age laws
- Threatens children’s physical, mental, or emotional well-being
- Involves intolerable abuse, such as child slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, forced labor, or illicit activities
- Prevents children from going to school
- Uses children to undermine labour standards

5 Education and Child Labour

Education is a crucial component of any effective effort to eliminate child labour. There are many interlinked explanations for child labour. No single factor can fully explain its persistence and, in some cases, growth. The way in which different causes, at different levels, interact with each other ultimately determines whether or not an individual child becomes a child labourer. We should not forget that teachers have rights at work and are key to quality improvements – their voices must be heard, and their organizations have a vital role to play in child labour elimination efforts. Here are the list of specific actions that teachers’ organizations might take in order to reinforce their own position and that of their members in the classroom and in education policy reform and programme development to improve the quality of education and to help in preventing and eliminate child labour. Some of the actions are normal activities for workers’ organizations, such as defending and improving their members’ working conditions, but these are important in strengthening the position of teachers in the classroom and the wider education sector. In many societies teachers are looked upon as the individuals who can help to bring about positive changes in the lives of people. They are seen as natural leaders who can give advice on various affairs of the communities. Within the context of their direct interaction with children, parents and communities, teachers and educators could play several major roles in the prevention and elimination of child labour.
6 Teachers’ organizations could:

- seek to improve the working conditions of their members by negotiating for better wages, reasonable working hours and appropriate teacher-pupil ratios, so that excessive demands are not imposed on overworked teachers which deter them from being effective instructors, facilitators and classroom managers.
- work along with governments in developing and promoting teacher ethics, codes of conduct, recruitment and work criteria.
- participate in the efforts to improve the education of teachers such as curriculum reform for teacher training (pre-service and in-service) and to promote more participatory approaches to adult education within teacher education and training programs.
- suggest and advocate more up-to-date and effective teaching methods and techniques, promoting successful and innovative practices implemented at field level by their members and that can be shared with other teachers.
- encourage the exchange of information and experience through effective use of the printed media or electronic means to broaden the knowledge base and enhance the skills of teachers as developing professionals.
- reach out to teachers working in rural areas and in non-formal education programs to involve them in teachers’ organizations and provide services for their benefit.
- extend organizational membership and protection to educators working in the non-formal education sector, and facilitate the training and qualification of educators;
- initiate and conduct campaigns against child labour by coordinating action with members at local, national and international levels.
- build up or strengthen teachers’ networks and forge alliances with other trade unions, child-focused or social development organizations and networks at local, national and international levels.
- engage in constructive, critical and open dialogue with governments to advocate for policy reform, program development and implementation to expand access to and improve the quality of educational programs to prevent and eliminate child labour.
- teachers are well positioned to identify the school-age children in the community, to encourage parents to enrol them in schools, to provide children with an interesting learning environment and to assist them with their educational problems and needs. Schools are also responsible for monitoring non-enrolment and absences, and teachers and other educational personnel need to be empowered to monitor the school attendance of children, assess whether they are involved in work and to what extent this interferes with their schooling and identify children who are at risk of dropping out. They can then contact the parents and provide help for these children.

- Teachers can be powerful advocates in the campaign against child labour. They can act as resource persons who can inform children, parents and communities of the importance of education and the harmful effects of child labour on children and society. To enable teachers to play an active role in the campaign against child labour at the community and national levels, they need to be informed and learn about the complexities of child labour.
– the causes and the solutions. In addition, they need assistance and resources to launch and implement school and community campaigns against child labour.

- Through their own organizations and in cooperation with other trade unions, children’s and women’s rights networks, community organizations and other NGOs, teachers and educators can collaborate with each other and with other organizations to work on curriculum development to strengthen the school management system and to advocate for policy reform that addresses the factors contributing to the exclusion of child labourers from school. Teachers could set up a network among them and identify other forums, networks or associations which could support them to influence changes in educational policy and practices.

It is vital that teachers and their organizations participate in decision-making and in educational planning and reform. The very nature of teachers’ organizations as advocates for teachers’ rights makes them effective partners in realizing and maximizing the potential of education in the fight against child labour. All the analyses on the relation between education and child labour point to the urgent need to improve the status of teachers and their working conditions and to address their continuing development as professionals. These are prerequisites for improving the quality of education in all countries, especially in developing countries where most of the world’s child labourers live.

7 Conclusion

By this we can conclude that the raise in awareness among teaching professionals about the child labour aspires to instill a sense of commitment and motivation to inform others regarding the problem along with students, colleagues, organization members and others in the community. To eradicate child labour, action should be taken to support global efforts by giving back child labourers their childhood and access to a decent education. This can be made through quality education by trained and supported teachers which should be free of charges to enable all children to attend. So education should be a public service and never be handed over to any private interests and enterprises. So teachers should undertake their journey towards greater awareness of the problem of child labour which in turn supports them in developing their plan of action in supporting the global campaign in eradicating the same. This can be made more successful by imbibing practical activities in the classroom and among their colleagues by setting up networks to share ideas, experiences and resources. Teachers should also be provided with basic information about child labour, child’s rights and the important role of education in the prevention and elimination of child labour. By all this the main aim is to stimulate discussion among teachers, children, parents and communities in providing better understanding of the child labour problem and also help those involved to organize strategies for action in order to prevent and eliminate it which encourage and inspire teachers to take action and provide them with ideas and strategies they can draw upon and adapt by setting up their own campaigns.

8 References


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