The Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Poverty Alleviation through Distance Education

1. Abstract:

The objective of this paper is to identify and to frame a strategy on how to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and to alleviate poverty using distance mode of education especially in the low incoming countries. Distance and technology based education have focused mainly on adult and higher education rather than child education as well as child labour related issues. The child labour issue is one of the great-concerns thought the world. Due to child labour the achievement of millennium development goals (MGDs) and education for all (EFA) is hampered greatly. Several governments and UN International Labour Organization (ILO) have invested their endeavour to eliminate child labour as well as elimination of poverty. Strategies like non-formal education (NFE), skill development training (SDT) youth employment service (YES), supervised apprentice and work place improvement programme have been adopted to address child labour (CL) generally, and the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) specifically. Using traditional way, these strategies are being implemented. The technology mediated open and distance learning is not yet adopted any where to address CL/ WFCL. There is ample scope to work on this issue. Probably no any contributions on child labour education in the field of distance education. By this paper attempts should be made to identify the existing situation of worst forms of child labour, their education attempts and preparation to employment that will ultimately lead to poverty alleviation. By this paper/presentation two types of outcomes would be derived. One is in the field of advocacy and consensus among the policy makers and implementers and another is in the field of strategy and modality formation. Policy makers and implementers will adopt proper measures to eliminate child labour and poverty alleviation using technology mediated distance education in their respective areas/ countries. They will work and think about appropriate technology, innovation in curriculum and assessment including credit transfer policies and frameworks, networks and resources for learner support, research, global best practice (if any) and capacity building.

2. Introduction:

Due to industrialisation and expansion of science and technology knowledge and information have got special momentum. The needs of a modern industrial society are very different from those of earlier society. Educational needs in the society have also changed in their range and variety because of the ever expanding division of labour of the industrial society. Its impact has vested upon on the curriculum and syllabus which should be changed time to time. They have to be changed from time to time to suit the newer educational needs. In the same way, we can no longer stick on to the old pattern of classroom teaching for the learners who have special needs and demands caring attention for education.

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The life pattern of the working children and youths do not allow them for full time learning or regular attending learning centres. Even for unemployed youths who want to go for further training and learning they cannot avail it as desired.

In 1992, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). IPEC has gradually grown into a worldwide movement addressing child labour in more than 80 countries, of which Bangladesh is one. ILO-IPEC's international legal and moral framework is found in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) and in the ILO Conventions No. 138, on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and No. 182, which calls on member states to "Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) as a matter of urgency through national Time Bound Programmes." Bangladesh is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it ratified the ILO Convention No. 182 in 2001.

According to "A consolidated good practices in education and child labour (ILO, 2007, page -4)

As an integral part of its work in the elimination of child labour since its creation in 1992, ILO-IPEC has used education and skills training interventions extensively in its programmes and projects worldwide. As these projects have progressed, matured and successfully concluded in many cases, ILO-IPEC has amassed a considerable portfolio of knowledge, experience and expertise.

3. Definition of Child labour and the Worst Forms of Child Labour

There are various categories of international standards for defining working children, depending essentially on the age of the child and the nature of the work that he or she is engaged in.

3.1. Economically active children are those between 5 and 17 involved in any form of productive work, whether paid or not. Thus children who work at home for a family business without pay are economically active, as are those undertaking domestic work in someone else's house. However, children doing chores in their own home are not classed as economically active, although the time spent on such chores can be substantial and may jeopardize enrolment and attendance at school.

All children under 12 who work are child labourers, as are those under 15 who engage in anything but light work of less than 14 hours per week. Children of 15 and above who work are not considered child labourers, unless their work falls under two further categories, known jointly as the **Worst Forms of Child Labour** or **WFCL**.

3.2. Hazardous work includes all work by children which is hazardous either by the nature of the work itself (such as work with aggressive chemicals or sharp tools) or the circumstances in which it is carried out. Hazardous circumstances would include long working hours (in excess of 43 hours per week), work in cramped conditions or under poor lighting, or work at night.

3.3. The **Unconditional WFCL** includes those forms of child labour which are the most abusive and damaging, such as trafficking, forced or bonded labour, child soldiers, use of children in prostitution or pornography etc.

4. Child labour worldwide

Worldwide, an estimated 352 million children aged 5-17 are economically active, representing more than one-fifth of all children in this age group. An estimated 179 million of these children work in hazardous conditions, either through the nature (e.g. the agents or equipment) of their work or the circumstances (e.g. long hours, work at night) in which that work is carried out. The vast majority of children engaged in the WFCL.

5. Child labour in Bangladesh

The number of children engaged in labour is estimated 31 million and in the worst **forms of child labour** in **Bangladesh** is estimated at **1.3 million**.

6. Child labour and poverty

Poverty is multidimensional and can be considered from different perspective, as follows:
   a. Absolute and relative poverty
   b. Below US$ 1 per person per day poverty
   c. Human poverty
   d. Human dignity/ Human rights- based approach to poverty(freedom of choice, capability is appropriately developed through quality education and health services)
   e. Poverty and squared poverty gaps
   f. People's own perception-based poverty
   g. Endemic/ widespread and sudden poverty

There is a perpetuating cycle that represent and demonstrate relationship between poverty and child labour. Poverty is, no doubt, closely associated with child labour all over the globe. Due to poverty children and their guardians are compelled to enter into labour market. Child labour and poverty are both cause and consequence of each other.

7. Education and child labour

As we know, uneducated labourers   are liable to be exploited by others because they may not be aware of their rights and also of how they solve their problems when they are subjected to oppression. Because of their low level of capability, the uneducated are often unable to find good jobs; and even they find employment, their wages/ salaries as well as their productivity are low. They need education and training for skill development to raise their productivity and income. Education is also necessary if the people are to absorb and employ improved technologies and methods of organization and management to contribute towards accelerating economic growth, while enhancing their own

incomes. Simply removing child labourers from work is not enough, as experience at ILO-IPEC and elsewhere has shown. Children and their guardians must also be provided with viable alternatives, if the cycle of child labour is to be broken.

<u>According to "Global Task force on Child Labour and Education for All"</u>

Education is the key vehicle through economically and socially marginalized children, youth and adults can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. There is a close link between education access and child labour.

Compulsory education

Free and compulsory education of good quality up to the minimum age for entering into employment is a key tool in preventing child labour.

School attendance

Attendance at school removes children, in part at least, from the labour market.

Employable skills

Education also lays the basis for the acquisition of employable skills needed for gainful employment. The skills acquired at school may lead directly to the sort of gainful employment that will help children rise above the poverty into which they were born.

Girl's education

By the benefit of education, girls are more likely to make the choice of education, thus helping to reduce the future ranks of child labour.

Transitional education

Good quality transitional education programmes can also be important in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of child labourers enabling them to "catch up" their peers and can help reintegrate child labourers into formal education. Such programmes can also provide former child labourers with literacy and numeric skills, building their confidence and self esteem.

Skill training and life skills

Many programmes targeting child labourers include life skills component and often provide older children with skills training. For many of these children, the education and training they receive can be a lifeline enabling them to become fulfilled and productive adults and can help break the cycle of poverty.

8. Distance education: nature and definition

Distance Education is a process of teaching and learning, where the learner is ' *quasi- permanently'* separated from the teacher and peer group, and teaching is done usually through self- instructional materials (both print and non- print) and

communication technology with an emphasis on supported self- study *(Glossary of Terms Commonly Used in Distance Education, STRIDE, IGNOU, India)*

The following are some main features of DE:
- relaxed entry qualification
- allowing learners to learn at their own place and pace
- two-way communication
- use of self instructional materials
- use of electronic media
- student support services
- advanced methods of evaluation
- degrees by cumulative credits

There are some features which may not compatible with child labour education context. Here distance education will be presented in a manner that any sorts of technology which will be used for delivery of education and associated issues.

9. Areas of WFCL where ODL can contribute and how

9.1. Non-formal education (NFE):

Child labour is a critical issue which to be eliminated through several strategies like non-formal education, skill development training, supervised apprentice and youth employment service. The ODL has specific role to address this issues with emphasis to equity in education, teachers training, vocational education, upgrading curricula and in all phases of formal and non-formal sectors.

NFE is the most viable strategy to eliminate child labour especially for WFCL.

NFE will be delivered by an NGO Implementing Partner. Children were taught basic literacy, arithmetic and life skills, as well as receiving orientations on health, hygiene and human and child rights.

For younger children, NFE can provide an effective transition into formal education.

Under NFE there are basic literacy, supplementary reading as well as life skills component. Using technology mediated learning approach we can deliver it properly. For literacy purpose interactive CD can be used.

ODL has strong multiplier effect. Programme's Facilitators or Social Monitors can use audio/video cassettes for aiding the teaching –learning process or imparting their message and knowledge about various issues and problems and distribute them among the target audience. Facilitators can easily use 'Audio-Vision' to deliver their particular lesson. CL and WFCL related issues, events and impacts to be demonstrated using different media like TV, Radio, Computer, Internet etc. Guardians, interested young people and opinion leaders, and can use any skill and awareness related CD, Video, documentary, docu-drama in their learning

centres (at MPC) at their own time frame. The reason behind this is that, they have no time to go to the MPC at scheduled time.

9.2. Skill training

Skill training can provide a route into decent work. Children who lack even the most basic literacy skills face a dilemma: they are too old to return to school but are unable to learn skills effectively. Such children may require both NFE and skill development training (SDT). SDT courses normally lasted six months, depending on the level of skills required by the job market in a given trade. Training took place in specially equipped Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), and was supervised by a trained instructor. Skill training centres may comprise of with a job placement officer, who took responsibility for placing SDT graduates in viable, non-hazardous work, including apprenticeships, wage employment and self-employment.
Introducing technology mediation, in the area of SDT the hands-on, visual and highly practical tips of skills is possible to demonstrate. Through this feature learning is possible anytime anywhere. To some extent this technology based education would be used for other life skill based education and also supplement issue based teaching and learning. By this intervention, WFCL, its impact and future directions can easily be demonstrated through video/CD etc. Technology based distance education, which is cost effective, appropriate and skill oriented, would be very effective for child labour education in particular skill development training (SDT).

9.3. Youth employment and support (YES)

YES is very important strategy to for eliminating child labour, upgrading their skills as well. It will work both as a resource centre and as an employer's pool for SDT graduates, apprentices and other community young people. This centre will provide information and services on Job and Job placement maintenance services, tracking of supervised apprentices, career counselling, occupational health and safety self-help manuals. All technology mediated instructional materials, self-instructional materials, video/ audio CDs, Audio- Vision will be used here so that they can replicate it for their own needs and purposes.

9.4. Workplace improvement programme (WIP)

The objective of this intervention will be to reduce the level of hazards children face at their workplaces, where immediate withdrawal of working children would not address their basic needs and aspirations. There is significant interest within the business community for initiatives to improve workplaces that offer tangible business benefits. Children face hazards at work, and withdrawing them and providing them with alternatives takes time and may not meet the needs and aspirations of all children. In this context, it makes sense to consider options for removing the hazards as well as the children from workplaces. WIP is a practical recognition of the rights of working children and adults alike to a safe workplace and the link between workplace safety and better business.

In this area, open and distance learning (ODL) strategy will be very effective to improve workplace. Especially designed materials, available materials and documentaries can contribute here.

9.5. Advocacy and social mobilization

The objective of this strategy is to reach and connect with children, guardians, employers, stakeholders and partners, and leaders and policymakers. In particular, the advocacy and awareness programme focussed on three components. **Mass awareness** raising aimed to sensitise the general public to the issue of child labour and its causes and consequences. **Advocacy** work targeted specific groups such as teachers, employers, NGO staff, civil servants and politicians. **Community mobilization and participation** activities aimed to mobilize communities against child labour, emphasising their role and responsibilities in this process.

Electronic materials such as TV/radio, audio/video, documentaries and print materials such as posters, flyers and calendars took the message into communities and to other stakeholders.

10. CL learning centres (CLCs)/Multi Purpose Centres (MPCs)

For child labour education MPCs/ CLCs will be entry point. They would be focal points for:

- **Service delivery**, including both the core services of NFE, SDT, and WIP, and the supplementary services provided through Strategic Partnerships, such as nutrition and health services

- Community **awareness-raising**, **mobilization** and **participation**, including the participation of beneficiaries, and other relevant community members in Centre Committees.

The MPCs will be such places where children, guardians and the community at large would feel comfortable. Their varied roles would make them centres of learning and recreation, as well as social protection. As spaces where a number of different service providers come together and interact, they would also provide for the pooling of experience and resources and the exploitation of synergies and these will enable community for ownership and sustainability. MPCs can potentially make an important contribution to the sustainability of change in community attitudes and mindsets concerning child labour, by providing a space in which all stakeholders can come together and share new ideas and understandings.

CL learning centres/Multi Purpose Centres (MPCs) will be the resource centres for all five components. If every centre is equipped with TV, Radio, Computer, CDs, Videos, especially designed self-instructional materials it is hopefully be

congenial for all stakeholders to use all technology and they will be able to contribute directly or indirectly to eliminate child labour and poverty.

11. Community Radio

Community Radio also can play a vital role to educate, inform al the stakeholders because this is sufficiently be able to address the issues like education, health and society, rights of women, community development environment, culture etc. for marginalized people.

12. Recommendations

a. **ILO and COL** jointly can initiate one study on "The use of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) strategy on Child Labour/ Worst form of child labour Education". The study team will comprise of Child Labour Specialist, Education Specialist and Distance education Specialist.

b. Since 1992, ILO-IPEC is using education and skill training interventions extensively in its programmes worldwide directly and under Time Bound Programme (TBP). COL-ILO and/or any donor, development partners can introduce piloting there. Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sree-Lanka may be the best place for piloting.

c. In Bangladesh TBP is very sound. There are nine components under the TBP programme all are aims at targeting to child labour issue. Among which Urban Informal Economy (UIE) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) are going on. Here ODL can be adapted and adopted.

d. Open Universities all over the globe, UNESCO, COL, CEMCA and myriad of such institutions have their own ODL materials and it can be gathered, compiled and documented for the purpose of child labour education delivery.

13. Conclusion

This is the era of "Fourth Revolution". This revolution is the profound intervention through technology and media in development arena. In the field of teaching and learning, we cannot sweep aside the technology and media. Use of innovation and technology for development purpose is not contrary. Development will be accelerated if there is possibility to use technology in proper way. Considering the above ideas, we can say that technology based distance education is quite relevant for viable alternative to eliminate child labour and to alleviate poverty. This paper will be outset endeavour as a guiding force for future policy and provision among policy makers and practitioners to adopt ODL strategy in the field of child labour education.

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