

The barriers of educational development in rural areas of Iran

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Abstract

This paper looks at the barriers of educational development in rural areas of Iran. The study is a descriptive-qualitative-library research. The results obtained from qualitative research, indicated that there are some barriers at the national level for rural educational development (lack of understanding of the educational policy and lack of access to new information in rural areas). The findings also indicated that there are some obstacles at the local and organizational levels, such as: the poor conditions of rural school, irrelevant rural educational programs, long distances, poor roads, and unavailable instructional materials and equipment. The findings of this study can assist rural developers in the implementation of educational development strategies based on the national, local and organizational barriers.

Keywords: Barriers of education, Rural development, Poverty.

Introduction

Education is the major component of human capital. It plays an important role in fostering economic growth and enriching the overall quality of life. Developed economies have already achieved high in terms of the average education of their population. Despite the thrust on national commitment on education supported by international efforts there still remains some uncertainties on issues like equity of access along different dimensions of deprivation- gender being an important one, balancing the demand and supply of education, the relative importance of basic education for capability creation and social cohesion versus mid-level education for knowledge diffusion or higher education for knowledge generation (Irfan, 2006). Hence, discussion of these issues is important for educational development for rural areas of Iran.

Education in all its forms has the potential to empower rural people, by increasing their self confidence, their capacity to improve their livelihoods and their participation in wider processes of social and economic change (FAO & UNESCO, 2003). More than half of the world's population and more than 70 per cent of the world's poor are to be found in rural areas where hunger, illiteracy and low school achievement are common. Educating a large number of people in rural areas is crucial for achieving rural sustainable development.

Rural areas are a space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only a small share of the landscape; a place where activities are affected by a high transaction cost, associated with long distance from cities and poor infrastructures (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003).

Poverty reduction strategies are now placing emphasis on rural development that encompasses all those who live in rural areas. Such strategies need to address the provision of education for the many target groups: children, youth and adults, giving priority to gender imbalances. This complex and urgent challenge should be addressed systematically, through an intricate

set of policy measures, at all levels of education systems (FAO & UNESCO, 2003).

Rapidly changing technologies and increasing globalization also suggest that better education and training have become essential for sustainable livelihoods and the competitiveness of the rural economy (FAO & UNESCO, 2003). Education for a large number of people in rural areas is crucial for achieving sustainable development (UNESCO, 2002). Education in rural areas takes place at many different levels. In many countries economic development have been organized by providing not only basic education, but also specific training to improve techniques employed in the rural economy. Furthermore, recent work on social capital shows that knowledge constitutes a key element for strengthening rural communities and facilitating their adaptation to change (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003).

Education in rural development processes can support and uphold local culture, tradition, knowledge and skill, and create pride in community heritage (Lacy *et al.*, 2001). Education has been shown to have an impact on individual workforce outcomes such as a higher income, but the impact is greater than that. Literacy and formal schooling are linked with reduced fertility rates, improved health and sanitation practices and an increased ability to access information and participate in various social and economic processes (UNESCO, 2002).

Education that contributes to rural development includes basic education, rural adult education, vocational education and higher education (UNESCO, 2002). Education and food security influence each other, they are closely interrelated. Education- especially education for girls- is a key meeting the basic needs of millions of people throughout the developing world. Education is crucial in helping people to achieve sustainable food security and to reduce malnutrition. Without an adequate education, the next generation will never be able to break the cycle of hunger and poverty (UNESCO, 2002). Helliwell and Putnam (1999) found that education is correlated with typical measures of social capital: trust

and social participation. However, only recently have studies attempted to determine whether education exerts a causal influence on rural development, or whether the correlation arises because both education and civic participation are jointly influenced by unobserved factors (Riddell, 2006). Education may increase the probability of success in each of these endeavours and, in so doing, diversify household income sources to reduce risk and improve economic security. Since farming is the primary activity in rural areas of Iran, this paper will focus on the part played by education in rural development (Riddell, 2006).

Education and training need to be placed at the forefront of the rural development agenda in order to fight the evident extreme poverty and hunger in rural areas; to break the poverty-induced poverty-result cycle of rural life; to ensure sustainable agriculture, and to build the human capacity needed for development (UNESCO, 2002). Education can help provide a sense of normalcy in an unfamiliar and confining environment and it can provide information and skills that learners will need when they return home or when they resettle elsewhere (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003).

Methods

This study was performed as a qualitative research. It is also called as a library research since it is not held in a field but the researchers used books, articles, and other writing to support the analysis. A qualitative research is a natural research which produces descriptive data in both oral and written forms from people, behaviour, or another data that can be observed by the researcher. It derives data from observation, interviews or verbal interactions (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). In this case we have used a number of articles and official websites of the various Iran known organizations. For existing analyses, we also looked at the research literature on rural education in developing countries and the World Bank. All data were studied and analyzed by comprehend reading and deep understanding based on the related and appropriate approach. Then, as the result of analysis, the data were interpreted through description based on the subject matter.

Findings

Despite the efforts invested since the 1960s and the mobilization of the international community declared at the Jomtien Conference in 1990, the rural areas of many developing countries are still lagging behind where education is concerned. The fact that the slow pace of progress towards universal basic education is largely due to the persistence of low enrolment rates in rural areas is often overlooked. The rural space is also often at a standstill in terms of economic development. The big challenge of the new century is the reduction of poverty. Virtually all countries and donors agree on the importance of reducing poverty and its attendant problems of inequity, lack of respect for basic human rights, ill health,

lack of knowledge and skills and marginalization of large numbers of people (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003).

The lack of basic learning opportunities is both a contributing cause and an effect of rural poverty in the low-income countries (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003). Understanding barriers of educational development in rural areas is important when a community is getting organized for involvement in development planning. This understanding can help community and organizations more effectively impact the educational policy-making process (Aref, 2011). Further, it is important for government to understand that educational system also face barriers that can hinder its progress in responding and recognizing the priorities of local communities in Iran. Overcoming the barriers to education will serve to facilitate the policy making process. There are several literatures that directly deal with the barriers of communities particularly in third world countries, especially in Iran. The main barriers include: Inability to analyze the changing socio-cultural dimensions of educational system; Lack of understanding of the educational policy; Lack of access to new information.

Involving rural communities in the education planning has to tackling a number of challenges. While the evidence for links between basic education, economic development, and poverty alleviation is abundant, and funding agencies are investing significantly in basic education, it remains more difficult to provide good-quality basic education to children in rural areas than to those in urban areas. One set of factors lies in the rural's perception of education, and the other is that facing the ministry of education (Moulton, 2001; Aref, 2011a).

Local barriers for education

It includes: Irrelevant rural educational programs; As many incidences of household poverty in most countries are likely to occur in rural areas, children who attend school often suffer from poverty ailments; Some parents see school as a funnel to urban areas where there are jobs; Even where a primary school is accessible, there may be no secondary school within commuting distance; Finally, in spite of the poor conditions of schools, parents are usually asked to pay fees, official and unofficial, in addition to other costs (Aref, 2011; Moulton, 2001).

Organizational barrier for education

It includes: Long distances, poor roads, and inadequate shipping vehicles make it difficult to get building materials, furniture, equipment, and textbooks to remote rural schools. Far fewer teachers want to serve in rural schools. Most individuals who have the education credentials that would qualify them as teachers have had some urban or quasi-urban experience, if only in teacher training school. Many are reluctant to be posted to rural areas. While in many cases, building materials and furniture can be locally supplied, instructional materials are not available. These include not only textbooks but also the visual materials that decorate classrooms and stimulate learning, as well as simple scientific lab

equipment, radios, and other audio-visual equipment that has become a standard part of many classrooms. Communication between ministry offices even provincial and/or district offices and schools is difficult, so school principals and teachers get little if any guidance from a professional support network. It is difficult to bring teachers, principals, parent groups, and other school supporters, together for training and information centers. The curriculum may not be relevant to rural communities (Aref, 2011b).

While urban parents and communities sometimes play an active oversight role in their schools, this rarely happens in rural communities. Support services for remote rural schools are not always fully institutionalized. Unlike systems of agricultural extension, most systems of school supervision merely attempt to link rural schools through the bureaucratic structure to central ministry offices. The ministry often lacks the resources to help these links function as channels of support (Moulton, 2001). Thus, discussion of these issues in a regional comparative context is important in understanding and suggesting education policies for rural areas of Iran.

Education is widely accepted as a key factor in achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development. Individuals who have had some education are better farmers and more capable of finding off-farm employment. The rural sector also benefits from the overall development of the national economy and the alleviation of poverty, for which basic education is essential (Moulton, 2001). In any effort to promote education for rural development, it is necessary to assess the rural capacity to carry out what they are expected to achieve in a long run. It is a process that facilitates the realization of improving educational quality and the promotion of democracy within society. The relevance of basic education is a major concern in rural areas of the developing world. The problems of education quality and relevance in rural areas need to be recognized and addressed through coherent, explicit policies and strategies (FAO, 2006). The ways which education can contribute to the development include: Motivating rural teachers; Raising budget for rural schools; Constructing, repairing, and improving school facilities; Recruiting of supporting teachers; Monitoring and follow-up on teacher attendance and performance; Actively attending school meetings to learn about children's learning progress; Providing skill instruction and local culture information; Garnering more resources from and solving problems through the education; Providing security for teachers by preparing adequate housing for them; Identifying other factors contributing to educational problems that may arise time- to- time (Uemura, 1999).

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