



Education Sector Related Rural-Urban Gap in Pakistan and Programs to Reduce It Promoting Integrated Development

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Abstract— The wide-prevalent rural-urban gap in Pakistan regarding education has adverse consequences on its development. The work is an attempt on suggesting remedies. Through the course of research six indicators were selected to illustrate the gap. The existing programs are discussed before concluding.

Keywords— Education, rural-urban gap, development.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a diversified world of today where uncertainties are great, there emerges a need to think about the planning and development work more systematically than ever before. The solution to such a situation can be brought about through a process that has got a strong element of research and evaluation. So the adoption of a holistic perspective and methodology, diversified knowledge systems – scientific and indigenous – can be called at proper stages so that these specialties may also incorporate their input appropriately. The experts in the field of human development are working to bring about social change that is highly needed. Similarly the experts in the field of education exclusively have also been in a constant effort to alleviate the curse of illiteracy. The oncoming pages deal with this aspect especially regarding Pakistan.

Not more than 54 percent of the population of Pakistan can be reported as literate by any definition [1]; what is the yardstick used in Pakistani scenario to mark between literates and illiterates is, however, another point to ponder. About 67 percent of our population still lives in the rural areas and the situation of literacy and education regarding our rural areas exclusively is rather devastating. The illiteracy undoubtedly becomes hindrance in the way to development. Development of the rural areas of Pakistan, therefore, demands higher education and literacy rates. Since the Universal Primary Education and Adult Education are two wheels of the vehicle of development as the education on one hand helps people become aware of the pros and cons of various aspects of life; and on the other hand it guides towards the suitable avenues those may lead citizens to the destination of sustainable development and prosperity, so giving due consideration to education is really important.

2. SELECTED INDICATORS TO ILLUSTRATE RURAL-URBAN GAP REGARDING EDUCATION SECTOR

The following six indicators are considered here to illustrate the rural-urban gap and disparity regarding education sector (these indicators are solely selected by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and I have just quoted here with appropriate referencing [2]:

1. Adult literacy rate
2. Primary school enrolment rate
3. Secondary school enrolment rate
4. Primary school drop-out rate
5. Primary school continuation rate
6. Access to primary school

Table 1

Sr.	Indicators	Rural		Urban		Total	
		1995-96	1998-99	1995-96	1998-99	1995-96	1998-99
1	Adult literacy rate	31	36	57	65	39	45
2	Primary school gross enrolment rate	68	60	92	93	75	68
3	Secondary school gross enrolment rate	NA	31	NA	60	NA	40
4	Primary school drop-out rate	19	18	11	11	16	15
5	Primary school continuation rate			Male 70.6			
				Female 60.6			
6	Access to primary school	64	92	NA	NA	64	92
		55	69	NA	NA	55	69

Source: [2]

2.1 Adult Literacy Rate

At the time of Independence in 1947, Pakistan had a large population of those who could not read or write. In 1998-99, however, 45 percent of the adult population (10 years and above) was literate. The fact is that after such a long period, the majority of population still remains illiterate. Table 1 shows that between 1995-96 and 1998-99 the literacy level was increased by 6 percent. The difference between the literacy rates of rural and urban areas has fluctuated between the range of 27 and 30 percentage points over a period spanning 26 years without showing any signs of decline. There are at least two aspects of regional disparity in literacy rates that make it a particularly serious matter; majority of Pakistan's

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population living in rural areas is the first aspect. Therefore, the low literacy rates prevailing in the rural areas are more representative of the literacy rates for Pakistan. Due to disparities the resulting gap in literacy rates is almost unbelievable. According to the 1972 census data, while about 50 percent males living in urban areas were literate, only 6 percent rural females fell in this category. In 1981, these figures were 55 percent and 7 percent respectively. Data obtained from the latest census conducted in 1998 indicate that 80 percent females living in rural areas are still illiterate while percentage of illiterate males in urban areas has fallen to 27 percent.

2.2 Primary School Enrolment Rate

The enrollment capacity of the primary school system may be regarded as a proxy measure of the supply of educational services while participation of pupils in the system provides a measure of demand for primary education. Gross enrollment rates are often used as indicators of the general level of participation and capacity. Table 1 also sets out data on gross enrollment rates for Pakistan. Alarming, the gross enrollment rate has declined from 75 percent in 1995-96 to 68 percent in 1998-99. This decline was observed mainly in rural areas. It, however, is difficult to explain this declining trend in the presence of Social Action Program (SAP) designed particularly to promote primary education in the country.¹ It may partly be attributed to the recent rise in unemployment and poverty, and also to decline in real wages. Probably for several parents in rural areas it has now become difficult to enroll their children in schools.

The gross enrollment appears to be quite impressive for the urban areas where it was more than 90 percent in 1998-99. It can be inferred from this figure that, given enough demand, primary schools in the urban areas of Pakistan are capable of accommodating more than 90 percent of children who are in the primary school going age. The gross enrollment rate, however, takes into account all the pupils who are enrolled in a primary school, irrespective of their age. Since late entry and grade repetition are common phenomena in the country, a large proportion of these pupils do not fall in the official primary school age (5-9 years).

2.3 Secondary School Enrolment Rate

Table 1 also provides information on secondary school gross enrollment rates for Pakistan. Forty percent of children who were in the secondary school going age (10-16 years) in 1998 were enrolled in schools. The enrolment rate for girls (27 percent) was about half the rate for boys (53 percent). This gender disparity was even worse in rural areas where compared to 47 percent of boys, only 13 percent of girls were enrolled in secondary schools. In urban areas the gender gap in terms of enrolment in secondary school was relatively low. The secondary school enrolment (for both boys and girls) was higher in Sindh than in other provinces. However, enrolment rate for boys

was highest in Balochistan, followed by Sindh, North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Punjab. For girls, it was lowest in NWFP, only 13 percent.

2.4 Primary School Drop-Out

Pupils who cannot continue in the next grade fall into two categories, namely, those who opt out of the school system altogether and those who are required to repeat a grade, presumably because they have not acquired enough knowledge and skills. Dropout rates for Pakistan are given in Table 1. These rates are for two time periods. Dropout rates are affected by internal efficiency of the school system, in addition to several other factors. The latest available figures indicate that the dropout rates (the first grades of primary school) in 1995-96 were reduced during 1998-99 - 16 and 15 percent respectively.

2.5 Continuation Rate

The figures reveal that quite a large proportion of the students are not able to continue to grade 2 - 39.4 percent for females and 29.4 percent for males enrolled (Rural-urban specific data could not be accessed). We, however, may assume that if we are able to push a student to grade 2, his/her chances of going to further ahead may increase considerably. It is also observed that repeating grade 1 sometimes becomes reason for drop-out from the school; introduction and strengthening of pre-primary educational programs can be helpful in increasing continuation rate to grade 2.

2.6 Access to Primary School

Another important aspect is the access to primary school regarding which the figures show that in 1998-99 as much as 92 percent of the males had an access to the school in the rural areas in contrast with 69 percent females. However, the data is not given in Table 1 regarding the urban areas. It is assumed on the basis of overall visits to the urban areas across the nation that the primary school are quite adequately accessible in almost all the urban areas of Pakistan - private, if not public.

3. EDUCATION POLICY AND UNIVERSALIZATION OF EDUCATION

Since Human Resource Development may not yield short-term results, governments should formulate both short-term and long-term policies. In translating policy into practice, the government should attend to socio-cultural factors surrounding implementation and involve the implementers in the process. It may need to strengthen the institutional structures, mobilize and facilitate the use of other resources like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), communities and private sector to supplement its efforts. It is also important to experiment, try out new ideas and collect information about experiences, as also try and improve policy and program effectiveness [3].

4. PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS ATTEMPTED TO REDUCE THE RURAL-URBAN DISPARITY AND PROMOTING

¹ However it can be argued that had the SAP not been there the situation would have even been worse.

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS OF PAKISTAN

This is heartening to mention that various efforts have already been done in Pakistan regarding the field of education. Hereafter is a description of the programs and the projects those attempted to reduce the rural-urban disparity and those tried to promote integrated development between the rural and urban areas of Pakistan.

5. EFFORTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Education Sector Reforms (ESR) 2004

Mission Statement: Developing human resources in Pakistan as a pre-requisite for global peace, progress and prosperity.

The Vision: Quality Education enabling all citizens to reach their maximum potential;

- Produce responsible, enlightened and skilled citizens;
- Integrate Pakistan into the global framework of human-centered economic development

Thrust Areas under the ESR

- National Literacy Campaign – Integrated Approach to Poverty Reduction
- Mainstreaming Madrassahs
- Universal Primary/Elementary Education
- Improving the Quality of Education: Curriculum Reform, Teacher Education & Training, Exam Reform and Assessment
- Technical Stream at Secondary Level
- Higher Education Sector
- Public Private Partnership

The Education Sector Reforms (ESR) aims at the development of the education sector on the whole, with a special focus on Education For All (EFA). The ESR Action Plan addresses the development of the education sector comprehensively through investment in school rehabilitation, examination and assessment system reform, teacher training, an adult literacy campaign, mainstreaming the *madrassahs*, a pilot school nutrition program and technical stream in secondary schools. This plan aims at introducing a skill development stream in the ninth and tenth grades, parallel to the existing science and arts group, in 1,200 existing secondary schools and 60 new model technical high schools. Training will be imparted in selected trades for creating employment linkages. This component of ESR specifically targets the youth and will be supplemented by the provision of micro-credit. The Education Sector Reform Agenda has clearly spelt out its priorities, including universal primary education, adult literacy up to 86 percent by 2015, reducing illiteracy by focusing on reducing gender gap and quality education.

6. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (NCHD)

This is a major initiative, which reflects the resolve and commitment of the Government to meet the goals and targets of MDGs/PRSP (Millennium Development Goals/Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers). NCHD has the mandate to enhance and improve services at the district level in primary education, literacy, and provision of basic health services. It also helps the line departments in capacity building of the government functionaries working in the social sectors. It also supports capacity building and training of NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the areas of health and education. NCHD has established strong monitoring and information management system and is strengthening delivery of social services at the grass root level.

7. NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA)

This is an international commitment made by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) for Education For All at Dakar. An EFA Plan of Action has been developed through broad-based consultations with the principal actors of EFA and other stakeholders. The Ten Year Perspective Development Plan 2001-2011 links education with other social sectors and views EFA as the centerpiece of human capital formation. The basis for planning the goals of the National Plan of Action for EFA (2001-2015) is the six Dakar Goals. Emphasis is placed, however, on three main priority areas, namely:

- Universal primary education and quality EFA.
- Adult literacy rate.
- Raising the net participation rate of early childhood education.

The Ministry of Education launched the National Plan of Action for Education For All on 3rd April 2003, for achieving universal primary education by 2015. Disparities are being narrowed through mixed primary schools, compensatory programs, and appointment of more teachers in all schools - whether urban or rural. According to EFA goals and targets, by 2015, all children should have access to completely free education. Secondly it aims at eliminating disparities by 2005, and achieving equality in education by 2015. Guided by the objectives of "Education For All", the government aims at improving the access to and quality of primary education both in urban and rural areas – with more emphasis on rural areas as a priority.

8. RESOURCE TRENDS FOR CHILDREN

Over the last five years, pro-poor expenditure increased by an average of 16.6 percent per annum. A large part of the pro-poor expenditures (50-54 percent) is allocated to human development mainly in Education and Health sectors. The human development expenditure, as percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), rose steadily from 1.88 in 2000-01 to 2.42 in 2003-04 and then declined to 2.26 in 2004-05. Likewise, the pro-poor spending on education as percentage of GDP rose from 1.36 in 2000-

01, to 1.77 in 2003-04, and then declined to 1.56 in 2004-05.

9. RESOURCE ALLOCATION FOR EDUCATION SECTOR

In the education sector, the total expenditure was Rs. 75887 million in 2000-01, which increased to Rs. 132918 million in 2004-05. The increase in expenditures from 2000-01 to 2004-05 was 75.2 percent. The federal expenditures on education increased from Rs. 12238 million in 2000-01 to Rs. 36281 in 2004-05, showing the remarkable increase of 196.5 percent. The provincial expenditures on education also increased significantly from Rs. 63648 million in 2000-01 to Rs. 96637 million in 2004-05. This amounts to 51.8 percent increase in expenditures.

The pro-poor expenditures on education also increased from 1.51 percent of GDP in 2001-02 to 1.78 percent of GDP in 2004-05 showing the increase of 17.9 percent. The expenditures on primary education increased by 14 percent from 2004 to 2005; and expenditures on secondary education increased by 16 percent from 2004 to 2005. Provincial expenditure on primary and secondary education has also increased over the period. The mid-term development framework plans to spend Rs. 103.44 billion for basic and college education for the period 2005-10. An additional amount of Rs. 107 billion is required for skills based literacy and technology education at elementary and secondary level.

10. NATIONAL EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (NEMIS)

Ministry of Education provides data collected through NEMIS on regular basis. Both, the

Ministries of Health and Education, hold regular inter-provincial ministerial meetings, to address issues related to effective monitoring and evaluation of policy interventions and programs. They also aim at improving the management information system.

11. PROGRESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH MDG GOAL 2-3

Education, specifically primary education is the birth-right of every child and its provision is not only the responsibility of State but also requires societal and parental commitment. Primary education creates awareness, opens avenues for life long learning as well as self-advancement and improvement, and is a step towards halting the inter-generational transfer of poverty. Pakistan has been signatory to a number of international declarations such as the basic right of education to all of its citizens, Millennium Development Goals, and the Dakar World Education Forum 2000. The Government has taken several policy measures and initiatives to achieve these international goals. For primary school education two indicators namely Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) are used. According to PRSP report, GER has increased from 72 percent in the year 2000-01 to 80 percent in the year 2004-05, which is quite impressive. Net Enrollment Rate

(NER) has also shown upward trend as it increased from 42 percent in the year 2000 to 52 percent in the year 2004-05. Pakistan seems to have made sound progress in NER at primary school level. Gap in NER at the primary school level remains unchanged at national level between periods of the year 2000-01 to 2004-05. However, overall gap in the GER has considerably been reduced. This can be attributed to increase in enrollment rate during the same period. Fact of the matter is that disparity in education sector is one of the major challenges in Pakistan and this target would be hard to achieve, as envisaged.

According to Pakistan Millennium Development Goals Report (PMDGR-2004) by the Government of Pakistan (GoP), a fair assessment of the status and trends relating to Goal 2 is difficult owing to a number of reasons. Major discrepancies arise due to differences in the methods used for data collection, the use of different definitions of variables, and the time-lag between data collection and publication. The discrepancies are sometimes significant, for example, between the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) and the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS). There is greater consistency, however, in the rates of change implied by these sources.

12. EFFORTS AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Lahore, Punjab

Present efforts at the provincial level in Punjab have made use of advertisement and other effective propagation tools; the following wording on boards displayed at different prominent points in Lahore conveys the message [4], for instance:

I'm not asking for any world;

I'm asking for just education' (A child's words)

Qadeer [5] has given a detailed picture of the trends of population in Lahore. The residents of Lahore, as elsewhere in Pakistan, present a very awkward picture in different walks of life, excluding not the traffic and transport [6]. Lahore being an important urban centre from many respects and having a rich background attracts population from various parts of the country as well as the rural vicinity of its own. The quantitative and the qualitative problems are but natural to emerge in such a situation. The quantitative problems demand more units to appear to cater for the needs of the illiterate along with making room for the oncoming population and the qualitative problems demand the planners to make arrangements for the up-gradation of the present stock as well as the vicinity on the whole.

13. NORTH WESTERN FRONTIER PROVINCE (NWFP)

Incidence of poverty was 33% in Pakistan for the year 1998-99 - with urban as 24 percent and rural as 36 percent exclusively. The respective three figures were 43 percent, 31 percent and 47 percent for the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) of the country. Over the decade, however this scenario has changed significantly.

The following characteristics were used in NWFP:

- NWFP faces difficult challenges due to its geography, history and location
- NWFP is the poorest Province of Pakistan
- NWFP has poor social indicators and highest disparity
- Gaps tend to be wider in rural areas than in urban areas of NWFP.
- Gaps in NWFP are found to be larger than for the country as a whole
- Land ownership in rural NWFP is less concentrated than for the rest of the country, and there is prevalence of small landholdings, low agriculture productivity and high rural poverty

A large proportion of the paid employees in the urban sector of NWFP are engaged as wage labor in the informal sector, which is a significant employer in urban areas. The overall picture of consumption /income poverty in NWFP corresponds closely with that of Pakistan as a whole—higher concentration of the poor in rural areas, lower average consumption levels in rural areas, and relatively higher inequality in urban areas. The high rural-urban gap has all the more significance - since the province is much more rural than the country as a whole. Around 85% of the NWFP population lives in the rural areas. Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) from September to December 2001 ranked Peshawar number 1 and Shangla the lowest in terms of urban population. The higher (relative to the country) rural male primary enrollment rate in NWFP is consistent with the almost universal availability of male primary education, female primary enrollment in NWFP lag behind rural Pakistan, in spite of the far higher incidence of girls' schools in the province.

14. A COMMENT ON THE EFFORTS

Education is inevitable also in the light of the work of Cruces and Wodon [7] according to which they believe that investment in human capital pays off not only in terms of returns, but also in terms of income stability; they support their view by regression analysis of the determinants of risk-adjusted income that revealed that the risk was not uniform across the household rather the households with better educated members were not only richer but also experienced lower levels of income variability. In 1998-99, only 45 percent of the adult population was literate. Females were 29 percentage points away from males in terms of literacy rates. The primary school gross enrolment has declined recently, particularly in rural areas. In view of the work of Baulch and others [8] we can say that all right, it makes no sense to acquire more education for the households those remain in farming, but it is worth-noting that modest level of education also serves to reduce the number of economic opportunities open to them off-farm. They say that the school enrolment rates can be considered as rough and ready indicators of the quality of life community lives, as mostly the school enrolment rates

are correlated with the income. Net enrollment rate is a more precise measure of school participation, as it gives the percentage of the *school age population* that is actually enrolled in school. They are considerably lower than the gross enrollment rates, indicating that despite availability of enrollment capacity, a significant proportion of school age population opts for staying away from primary schools. They probe, 'Why are the ethnic minority households so poor (in Vietnam)? They may lack endowments (physical and human capital) or they may have low returns on their endowments, perhaps because of discrimination, or for cultural or informational reasons. The low endowments and returns thereon are, in turn, partly due to remoteness of many ethnic minority households'. They further elaborate, 'people may be poor if they lack endowments. The main 'factors of production' are land, physical capital and human capital (education); to the extent that a household lacks these endowments then it is likely to be relatively poor'. According to the results of decomposing a set of expenditure equations they suggest that geographic and cultural remoteness is important. The decomposition analysis further showed that this would lessen the gap between the living standards of the majority, i. e; Kinh and Hoa, households and the minorities hardly by one third even if minority households owned the same endowments as the majority does. They thus conclude that the minority households have a low return on their endowments for some reasons. above all, their children had lesser NER (Net Enrolment Rates) than others!

Common reasons for low school participation in Pakistan are: distance to school, particularly in rural and mountainous areas; teachers' frequent absence from school; lack of parents' interest in the education of their children; involvement of children in income-generating activities to support their poor households; inability of non-local teachers to motivate parents to enroll their children in school; population pressure; and youth unemployment.

According to Laws and Marcus [9], the problem of developing countries is two-fold as they are stuck up on one hand in being unable to find out proper reasons of their problems and on the other hand in finding the solutions. Moosa [10] is also of the same view while his debate on the quality assurance in Education. In order to bring about primary education and if the goal of Universalization of education is to be achieved; there is a need of all-round reforms in education. The reforms should include [3]:

- Fiscal reforms to find out and redistribute resources and invent cost-effective solutions.
- Management reforms that ensure quality and quantity along with cost-effectiveness.
- Curricular reforms that provide the right kind of curricula and attract and retain students in school.
- Reforms to strengthen teachers' education.

Community participation and decentralization become very important strategies to ensure effective implementation of these reforms. Every government in

the world has a national set-up of governance that needs to be facilitated at the further sub-levels in order to run the machinery of the government well; this is achieved through decentralization. '...Appropriate decentralization reform relies on a greater involvement of local government authorities in achieving better service delivery; and on local representative institutions in enabling citizens, especially the poor and the marginalized, to influence decision-making of direct relevance for their livelihoods' [11].

Citing examples of Wangala in India and Sawankhalok (Heaven on earth) in Thailand Epstein and Jezeph [12] suggest a rural-urban partnership development paradigm to make people more village-introverted. They further say that certain preconditions need to be met before we can expect a success of this paradigm. Amongst the ten preconditions they include the appropriate and decentralized education and training along with training facilities and rural infrastructure. Regarding appropriate and decentralized education along with training facilities they ensure that the students from villages acquire appropriate skills without their studies alienating them from their rural background; whereas regarding rural infrastructure they state that rural infrastructure have to be improved to ensure ready access to education ...etc; 'Such public works ventures will have the beneficial by-product of offering many de-centralized income-earning opportunities', they argue further.

Rigorous planning and persistent effort with a focus at rural areas is necessary to salvage the situation of rural-urban disparity. As Pakistan's spending on education and health as percentage of GDP is already low by South Asian standards, there is a need to increase spending further in these areas to empower the poor section of the society.

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