

## Education for Rural Development in Iran

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**Abstract:** Most of the human capital literature pertaining to developing countries focuses on the returns to education in rural development. In developed countries education has an important role in the processes of rural development. But in third world countries there are some important barriers in face of education for rural development. This paper looks at the barriers of education for rural development in rural communities of Iran. The objective of this study is, through reviewing the available evidences, analyses and experiences in the role of education in rural development, to identify weaknesses pertinent to basic education achieving rural development and to come out with some conclusions that can be taken into consideration in policy making or planning successful basic education and training for rural development.

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### 1. Introduction

The greater proportion of people in the world lives in rural environments. The World Bank (1975) defined rural development as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people- the rural poor. The contribution of rural areas to economic development is usually limited; however, the future potential for their contribution is great, especially in developing countries. Therefore, rural development will become a key factor during the next decade or so in the overall economic development of many developing countries (Navaratnam, 1986). Rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better access to natural, physical, human, technological, and social capital, and services, and control over productive capital, that enable them to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable and equitable basis (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003). Rural development becomes a major focal issue in national and international development agendas. One of the strategies set to poverty reduction is provision of equitable and quality basic education and for this targets have been set as education for All (Abdulahi, 2008).

Education is one of the mechanisms to empower people to take part in rural development. It was launched as a key strategy of rural development. Increased education is a means to achieve development to resolve the rural problems (Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001). Education may directly influence rural agricultural productivity via one or

more of the routes described above. Education may also indirectly increase output through its interaction with other institutional variables (Weir, 1999). Governments and their development partners have recognized the importance of education for rural people and placed great emphasis and adopted policies and strategies to increase or improve access to quality basic education (Abdulahi, 2008). Education and training are two of the most powerful weapons in the fight against rural poverty and for rural development. Unfortunately, these are also among the most neglected aspects of rural development interventions by national governments and by donors. In most countries public policies fail to integrate rural development and basic education (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, Battig, Moore, & Noakes, 2002). The paper illustrates from the macro standpoint the contribution of education in rural areas. It stresses that education in rural areas is the foundation for both macroeconomic trends, and other educational activities contributing to rural development. The paper also emphasizes that mere primary education in rural areas is insufficient to cope with the needs of rural development in the present world. Although, education has economic and noneconomic benefits to educated individuals and to the social as a whole, this study intended to focus on the aspect of economic benefit of education to rural areas. It reviews some critical issues that are related to education and

training in the context of rural development in developing countries especially in Iran. This study begins with an overview of educational issues and economic benefits in rural context. For this study, pertinent articles and reports on critical issues of education in rural development are reviewed. Despite effort to improve access, equity and quality of basic education in rural areas, they still remain problematic (Abdulahi, 2008).

## 2. Methods

The research was performed as a qualitative library in which the researcher had to refer to relevant and related sources. I have used a number of articles and official websites of the various Iran known organizations. For existing analyses, I looked at the research literature on rural education in developing countries and the World Bank Education.

## 3. Education for Rural development

There is little dispute that education—often characterized as the reading, math, and other skills and knowledge taught in the first four years of primary school—is critical to economic and social development. Without basic skills, according to one definition, a person cannot comprehend the instructions on a bottle of medicine or a bag of fertilizer or read a government notice. Neither can the person compute a bill or write a letter. Without basic skills, it is impossible to develop one's potential or to contribute in anything more than a rudimentary manner to society (Moulton, 2001).

Education is widely accepted as a key factor in achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development. However, the vast majorities of world's poor, depending on small-holed fanning, live in developing countries mainly in rural areas with insufficient or lack of access to basic education. The discussion about education in rural areas is closely related to the broader rural development concept. Education has emerged as an essential prerequisite for improving agriculture, reducing poverty and living conditions of rural people (Abdulahi, 2008). Education may enhance farm productivity directly by improving the quality of labour, by increasing the ability to adjust to disequilibria, and through its effect upon the propensity to successfully adopt innovations. Education is thought to be most important to farm production in a rapidly changing technological or economic environment (Shultz, 1964, 1975; Weir, 1999).

Recent research shows that improvements in education boost local development prospects. Higher educational levels lead to faster income and employment growth, and better schools can produce

higher academic achievements and improve long run economic prospects for students. According to a study of rural South Carolina in the 1990s by researchers at Clemson University, a small but significant link occurs between school quality and employment growth in the local community (Gibbs, 2005). Education has a desirable controlling influence over development of the rural individual, community, and society, leading to reduced poverty, income and controlled unemployment (Navaratnam, 1986). Education is a phenomenon of affluent contemporary societies is a particularly difficult concept in communities in developing countries to grasp. Education improves the individuals choices available to peoples as well as an educated population provides the type of labor force necessary for industrial development and economic growth (Fägerlind & Saha, 1986). Much of the theoretical debate about the role of education in rural development and economic growth has focused upon whether education is productive in an economic sense. There is much evidence that levels of schooling amongst the population are highly correlated with levels of economic development (Oxaal, 1997).

In attempts to understand factors that prevent communities from being involved in formal education, Shaeffer (1992) found that the degree of community participation is particularly low in socially and economically marginal regions. This is because such regions tend to have the following elements: (a) a lack of appreciation of the overall objectives of education; (b) a mismatch between what parents expect of education and what the school is seen as providing; (c) the belief that education is essentially the task of the State; (d) the length of time required to realize the benefits of better schooling; and (e) ignorance of the structure, functions, and constraints of the school (Uemura, 1999).

Education that contributes to rural development includes basic education, rural adult education, vocational education and higher education (UNESCO, 2002). The impact of education on rural development and correlation between education and development have been analyzed by social scientists for a long time. Helliwell and Putnam (1999) also find 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 Iran, this paper will focus on the part played by education in rural development.

World Bank studies demonstrate education raises the production of farmers. Four years of schooling on the average appears to increase the output of farmers by about 8%. The rate of return to rural education in Korea, Malaysia and Thailand was at least 20%. The study also reveals farmers with four years of primary schooling had higher crop yield than those had never been to school (Abdulahi, 2008; Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985). Education has long been recognized as a potential means for rural development. In many developing countries education has been seen as a panacea for national development (Hegtveldt-Willson, 1984). However, the movement of young adults from rural to urban areas for college means that much of the potential benefit to earnings from improving schools will be lost to the local community. This effect weakens the rationale for supporting good schools, especially if these improvements are perceived to encourage outmigration (Gibbs, 2005).

#### 4. Barriers of Education in Iran

Education has an essential role to play in rural development. Understanding barriers of education for rural development 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 (F. Aref, 2010). 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. Following are the main barriers:

-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 requires facing and 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)

#### *Rural barreirs*

Because rural areas are less densely populated than urban areas, rural schools are farther apart, requiring many children to walk long distances or pay for transportation and to lose valuable time in walking that could otherwise be spent helping at home. Some families are unwilling to send their children down long roads alone.

-Rural children, more than urban children, are required by their parents to supply labor on the farm and in the home.

-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 (Moulton, 2001).

#### *Organizational barreris:*

The ministry of education faces physical, social, and economic limitations in rurals.

-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 remote rural areas.

-Long distances, poor roads, and inadequate shipping vehicles make it difficult to get building materials, furniture, equipment, and textbooks to remote rural schools.

-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. When the curriculum goes beyond basic math, reading, and writing, teachers use little discretion in adapting it to what students know and what their needs and interests are.

-While urban parents and communities sometimes play an active oversight role in their schools, this rarely happens in rural communities, where parents are less skilled at holding officials accountable, reviewing financial statements, and even feeling confident that they can ask questions.

-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).

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Education is a critical part of rural 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, in which basic education is essential (Moulton, 2001). In any effort to promote education for rural development, it is necessary to assess the communities' 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. This paper suggests that there are strong justifications for government of support for rural education. It outlines several important and broad issues, including the need for and challenges of broad approaches to provide formal and non-formal education in rural areas. Hence, Education contributing to rural development must be locally controlled, practical, applied, problem-posing, and focused on functional specialization. The following is the ways which education can contribute to the development.

-Boosting morale of school teachers

-Raising budget for rural schools

-Constructing, repairing, and improving school facilities

-Recruiting and supporting teachers

-Monitoring and following 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 factors contributing to educational problems (Uemura, 1999; Aref, 2011).

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