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Original Article

Equal Educational Opportunities and Human Development Process (with Emphasis on Educational Gaps in Sistan and Baluchistan)

Khalilollah Sahebddd Zehi^{1*}, Majid Tavasoli Roknabadi²

¹Ph.D. Student of Political Science, Department of Political Science, College of Law and Political Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

²Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, College of Law and Political Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

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ABSTRACT

In the most recent definition provided by UN about human development, benefiting from sufficient knowledge and literacy has a considerable position. Public access to knowledge in the light of equal educational opportunities is one of the legal rights of human and governments attempt to provide their citizens with such opportunities. Inequality of educational opportunities will in turn lead to deprivation and lagging behind the development train. Dimensions of unequal educational opportunities include different physic of educational institutions, unequal quality of educational services provided by above said institutions, unequal ratio of teacher to student and different educational and scientific capabilities of teaches in various regions of the country. Sistan and Baluchistan has lowest ratio of teachers, educational, sportive and training spaces all around Iran. Such limited educational opportunities are even distributed unequally among various cities and regions so that southern part of the province have considerably less educational opportunities and forces compared to northern part. Aforesaid inequality contributed directly to the abandonment of educational cycle by students and spread of illiteracy and this province has the highest level of illiteracy in Iran and lagged behind the development process as well. As such, in ranking of provinces according to the index of human development, Tehran ranks first and Sistan and Baluchistan ranks last.

Introduction

In modern age, education plays a pivotal role in determination of the quality of future life of people so that any creative change and development is not possible without sufficient attention to efficient human force and such force will be provided through equal educational opportunities. Moreover, education is the most effective mechanism of the society to confront the biggest challenge of the century – sustainable development. In

other words, science is the main building block of the development and educational system is the pathway for approaching knowledge. Consequently and contrary to pioneers of development theory who always emphasized on the importance of creation and extension of financial and framework resources, today, owing to significance of training and education in people and societies' life, educational expenditures are referred to as a fundamental investment. Study of the factors contributing to the growth and development of modern

societies reveals that all of them have a powerful and dynamic educational system and provided all people with equal educational opportunities. Manifestation of such education is obvious in extension of literacy, improvement of social skills, training committed, expert, efficient and justice-seeking people. On the other hand, human development is itself comprised of two terms; development and human.

Development can be considered as a range of essential changes toward making suitable circumstances for human according to the system accepted by the society and education is also a regular effort toward training, direction and creativity of human. Coombs, one of the leading theorists of educational planning believes that appropriate development and educational planning results in equal educational opportunities and to achieve this goal, accessible educational resources must be extended to all levels and various components of educational system including all male and female students (Maroufi, 2000: 62). In addition, necessity of having education and equal educational opportunities – as definite right of people – is emphasized in global treaties and conventions. Accordingly, governments are obliged to provide education for all of their people. Legal right of access to education is a bridge to enjoy all other human rights and ignoring it endangers humanity (Thomas Wesley, 2006: 1).

Theoretical background

Educational equality

Idea of public education was introduced in enlightenment period in 18th century Europe. It was believed that through providing public education, it is possible to help everyone to flourish their own talents and internal capacities. In modern world, one of the indicators of social progress is the way people benefit from educational system. Consequently, various countries intend to provide equal educational opportunities for their entire nation to access to education. However, what is the purpose of equal educational opportunity. Without being trapped in verbal and intellectual altercations of the concept of equality and inequality, we highlight our purpose of equal educational opportunities. In present paper, equal opportunity means elimination or reduction of discrimination among people based on sex, race, physical status, age, language and social class. Equality of opportunities in in macro-dimensions brings about a humanistic and justice-seeking look which is considered as an indicator for developed societies. However, in micro-dimensions, equality of opportunities and educational justice is a tool and mechanism leading to flourishing of creative thoughts and possibility of development of capabilities for all (Teimouri, 2015: 44). Equal educational opportunities manifest themselves in various dimensions among students the most obvious of which are different physic of educational institutions, unequal quality of educational services provided by

above said institutions, unequal ratio of teacher to student and different educational and scientific capabilities of teaches in various regions of the country as well as social limitations and economic poverty of families.

Concept and index of human development

Before 1970s, per capita income of each country was taken into account as the indicator of social progress and development of life quality. Although per capita income and GDP growth were necessary for achieving higher level of welfare, it could not cover important aspects of life. Hence, UN development plan claimed that per capita is not a sufficient index for evaluation of its contribution to quality of people's life and emphasized that economic growth is not enough, but method of its distribution and its stability in growth is of importance. It must be observed that how governments spend profits arisen from economic growth and increase in per capita with fair distribution in order to reduce poverty and improve people's welfare or instead, they spend it for extending militarism and making social and political limitations for their people. As a result, in 1990s, a new index entitled "human development index" was introduced for the first time according Amartyasen – winner of Noble Prize in Economy – and a Pakistani economist – Mahboub al-Hagh – which at the same time was taken and used by UN as the new measure. Such development affects health, life expectancy and quality of people directly through improving educational level and affects efficiency indirectly and in turn contributes to improvement of people's life quality (Karimi Moghari and Abbas Pour, 2011: 97).

According to definition provided by UN development plan, human development stands for the extension of the process of choosing people. Concept of human development illustrates that the main goal of development is to actually benefit human or improving human's life quality. Human development puts human at the center of development models not in the margin. The main theme of human development is that development must be something more than increasing income and properties. Development must focus on human and along with it, major goals such as fundamentally reduction of poverty and possibility of benefiting from economic, social, educational and health opportunities must be followed.

Emphasis on the key role of human as actuator of development and human empowerment in a fair and free environment is the main purpose of development. Another implication of human development process is that way is not away from goal, but the process of achieving development is as important as development itself. Humanistic approach for development prompts us to select a process in which human dignity is protected and poverty, illiteracy, lack of health, deprivation from social and economic participation, ignorance of social rights, being deprived of determining destiny and so on

all imply to violation of human dignity. An approach for development in which goal and way are not compatible will undoubtedly lead to an end in which end justifies the means (Mahmoudi, 2009: 127). Furthermore, deprivation in this approach doesn't mean deprivation from income, but whatever threatens human's ability for action and choice is considered a type of deprivation. Of course, lack of income is a type of deprivation. According to this viewpoint, lack of access to social opportunities and economic facilities is another type of deprivation. In fact, deprivation means lack of freedom. Report of human development which is disseminated by UN relies in general upon three important and fundamental indices including long life with health, access to knowledge and benefiting from life satisfactory standard and indices of measuring access to knowledge are estimated by two following relationships:

- a. Average of educational years of adults including 25 years old and higher
- b. Educational expectancy of children upon entrance to school which is the number of years expected to study in school upon entrance to school (Fotros et.al, 2011: 112).
- c.

Definition of concepts and indices

Concepts and indices which represent the status of education and development and are defined as follows:

Educational transition rate: transition of students from an educational course into another one and is calculated as follows (Mashayekh, 1998:71)

$$\text{transition rate} = \frac{\text{number of students in grade } g \text{ in year } t}{\text{unmber of students registering in grade } g + 1 \text{ in year } t + 1} \times 100\%$$

Equal educational opportunities: it means that various educational regions and zones have same chance of benefiting from education and using educational resources and facilities including teacher, school and classroom proportional to population (Mashayekh, 1998: 74).

Coefficient of actual educational coverage: this coefficient represents the rate and level of study among population corresponding to various educational courses and is evaluated as follows: (Dabiri, 1997:8)

$$\text{actual educational coverage} = \frac{\text{number of students of an age group in an educational course}}{\text{overal number of population in that age group}} \times 100\%$$

human development: has two aspects one of which is the formation of human capabilities such as improvement of health level, knowledge and skills as well as application of acquired capabilities in creative targets, achieving relaxation and activity in cultural, social and political affairs (report of human development, 1995). This report adds: if criteria of human development fail to make balance between these two aspects, it may lead to sense of failure.

Human development index (HDI): this index reflects achieving highest level of basic human capabilities; i.e. having long life, awareness and enjoying a good and standard life.

Conceptual model of research

How equality of educational opportunities affects indices and components of the process of human development is illustrated in following diagram.

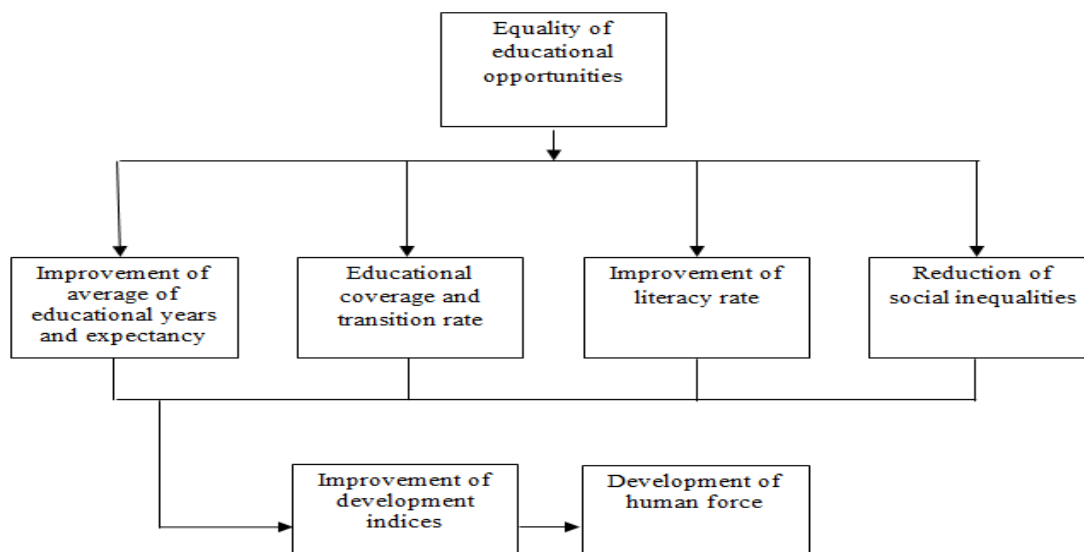


Fig. 1: Equality of educational opportunities

Research ecology

Sistan and Baluchistan province with 178,502km² are a much as 11.4% of Iran approaches from north to southern Khorasan, from south to Oman Sea, from east to Afghanistan and Pakistan and from west to Kerman and Hormozgan provinces. Moreover, it ranks first in Iran with respect to having 6553 villages. At the same time, by having 14 people per km² and literacy rate as much as 76.36%, have highest sparsity and lowest literacy of Iran.

Inequality aspects

Literacy rate index: first aspect of educational inequality lies in different and lower literacy rate. Trend of study in Sistan and Baluchistan progressed slowly in Pahlavi period so that at the end of 1976, only 39% of its population could read and write. Although this trend improved to some extent after Islamic Revolution, this province has already lowest rate of literacy in Iran. Following table summarizes the percent of literacy among men and women during 1976-2011.

Table 1:

number of literates of the province according to men and women during 1976-2011

2011	2006	1996	1986	1976	Year	
1504251	1378548	802825	3117533	153703	Number of literates	
77.7	74.4	65.4	46.3	39.2	Men	Literacy %
65.4	61.4	48.8	25.3	19	Women	

According to population and housing statistics taken in 2011, 6 years old and higher population of the province were 2,101,765 persons from which 597,804 persons as much as one fourth of the population were illiterate; while this statistics corresponds to all residents; either indigenous or non-indigenous. Essentially, educational status and literacy of non-indigenous persons who are mainly employees of public organizations and offices is better.

Educational space: second aspect of educational inequality manifests itself in the physic of educational institutions in which significant differences can be observed since building and facilities are among the first factors which give the student the sense of individuation and motivates their sense of belonging right upon entrance. When physical space of a school is not pleasing and students don't feel individuation and pride in it, humanistic interactions forms between students and teachers in an irrational manner and as a result of unsuitable space of school especially if internal facilities and space of the classroom is not appropriate for the

student population. In this regard, Sistan and Baluchistan is the only province in which a lot of students study in muddy and shed schools.

According to report of the administration of Sistan and Baluchistan province schools retrofit and equipment, there are 249 exhausted and unusable schools in this province which demand emergency retrofit (administration of Sistan and Baluchistan province schools retrofit and equipment, 2014). Average per capita for educational space in Iran is 4.5m² while in this province, this value is only 2.9m². Average per capita of sportive space in Iran is 0.218m² and the average value in this province is as much as 0.12m² which is less than half of that of country. Per capita of training space in this province is considerably less than sportive and educational spaces.

According to this report, highest percent of multi-grade classrooms in elementary schools are located in Sistan and Baluchistan province especially that many of them are managed in a mixed manner and female students are the main victims of aforesaid limitations. Average of multi-grade classrooms of Iran are 16.74% while this index in Sistan and Baluchistan reaches 25.87%.

Table 2:

Comparison of the status of educational, sportive, training and multi-grade spaces

Multi-grade classrooms	Training space per capita	Sportive space per capita	Educational space per capita	
16.74	0.62	0.218	4.5	Country average
25.87	0.18	0.12	2.9	Province average

(Four-year plan of province development, 2014: 4)

Educational staff: human resources of education including principal, teacher, and officer and so on, play key roles in quality of training and education and accordingly, empowerment of human force. Appropriate distribution of educational staff among various regions and provinces can be useful for reduction of inequalities in educational opportunities, improvement of study continuance and educational transition as well as educational coverage.

Average ratio of student to teacher in Iran is 18.3 while this value in this province is as much as 22.56. Moreover,

average ratio of students to official and contractual employees is 11.5 while in Sistan and Baluchistan it approaches 14.57. Actual rate of transition from elementary to middle school in Iran is 97.09 while above index in Sistan and Baluchistan is as much as 90.57. Average of educational coverage of middle school in Iran is 85% and 56% in Sistan and Baluchistan (Four-year plan of province development, 2014: 4).

Table 3:

comparison of educational staff, transition rate and educational coverage of country and province

Persistence rate	Actual educational coverage of middle school	Actual educational coverage of elementary school	Transition rate	Educational staff			
				Teacher to employee ratio	Student to employee ratio	Student to Teacher ratio	
67/14	85	98/7	97/09	62	11/5	18/3	National average
34/58	56	89/84	90/57	64/3	14/57	22/56	Province average

(Four-year plan of province development, 2014: 4)

Such limited opportunities given to students of this province are considerably unequal distributed as a result of imposing limitations and discriminations. Studies performed over the issue of educational inequalities in various regions of the province notice three types of educational inequalities: first, inequalities between province and country, second, among various regions of the province and third, inequality among male and female students. Rate of educational transition in Tehran province ranks first while Sistan and Baluchistan ranks

26 and last among provinces (Sarvestani, 2001: 16). In a research carried out for investigation of the status of educational opportunities in various regions of the province in 1996-7, regions were classified into deprived, moderate and affluent. Gini factor illustrates the presence of a considerable inequality among various parts of the province. On one hand, rate of educational coverage is an evidence for difference with average in national level and on the other hand, it represents the differences between various parts of the province.

Table 4:

Educational coverage of female and male students in triple educational levels in province and its comparison with national average in 1996-7

National and provincial difference	National average	Province average	Max-min difference	Value	Minimum coverage	Value	Maximum coverage	Sex	Educational level
18	89	62	3/37	/81	Nosrat	0/18	Zabol	Female	Elementary school
20	92	72	36/80	50/15	Nosrat Abad	86/95	Bampour	Male	
35	67	32	71/09	2/93	Dashtyari	74/02	Zabol	Female	Middle school
28	72	44	53/04	18/47	Rask	71/51	Zabol	Male	
33/97	47/80	/83 13	60/74	0/15	Nosrat Abad	60/89	Zabol	Female	High school
20/17	46/70	/53 26	53/47	1/91	Nosrat Abad	55/38	Zabol	Male	

(Nabi Zadeh Sarabandi, 2005: 164)

One of the factors contributing to benefiting from educational opportunities is the method of distribution of educational forces including employees, official and administrative. Referring to results of people and housing statistics in 2003-4, it can be seen that

educational forces are unequally distributed among various cities and provinces. Following table shows the distribution of aforesaid forces in cities of the provinces in elementary level.

Table 5:
Students and educational and official employees in province cities

Nikshahr	Sarbaz	Saravan	Zahedan	Zabol	Khash	Chabahar	Iranshahr	City
32302	22865	37545	80548	49500	19792	38291	41334	Student population
557	371	967	3641	3252	583	684	1292	Number of employees
17	16	26	45	66	29	18	31	Number per 1000 students

(Statistical calendar of Sistan and Baluchistan province, 2004: 511)

As can be seen in above table, the most deprived city of the province with respect to benefit from educational staff is Sarbaz city in which for every 1000 students, there are only 16 employees. The most benefited city in this respect is Zabol which has 66 employees per 1000 students. In other words, in the most deprived city – Sarbaz – for 63 students there is one educational staff while in the most benefited city – Zabol – for every 15 students, there is one staff.

This ratio in other cities is as follows:

In Iranshahr, for every 32 students, there is one staff, in Chabahar, for every 55 students, in Khash, for every 34 students, in Zahedan, for every 22 students, in Saravan, for every 38 students and in Nikshahr, for every 59 students. Although statistics reveals the growth of literacy after revolution and announces a better future

for the province, educational gaps in various parts of the province according to official statistics are great challenges for achieving a comprehensive and sustainable development there. After revolution, valuable and considerable efforts are taken toward elimination of illiteracy in the province whose results are reflected in annual statistics. However, criteria of literacy and method of education as well as giving certification of literacy and even quality of official education are not in agreement with realities of Sistan and Baluchistan province. In addition, quality of education and low rate of transition in province are alarming. According to statistics available in statistical calendar of the province in 2011, a limited percent of students who enter elementary school are able to complete high school education.

Table 6:
Number of male and female students in 2011

Pre-university		High school		Middle school		Elementary school		2011
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
4551	6211	53737	41690	71379	54387	160813	148359	Daily
1047	1053	8159	4101	478	312	-	-	Nightly

(Statistical calendar of Sistan and Baluchistan province, 2004: 510)

As can be seen in the table, a lot of students of elementary school fail to enter to middle school and a great part of remainder fail to approach high school level. Increase in the number of nightly students in middle and high school as well as pre-university levels illustrates the low quality of education. Students who enter nightly schools failed to gain required mark for entering daily schools.

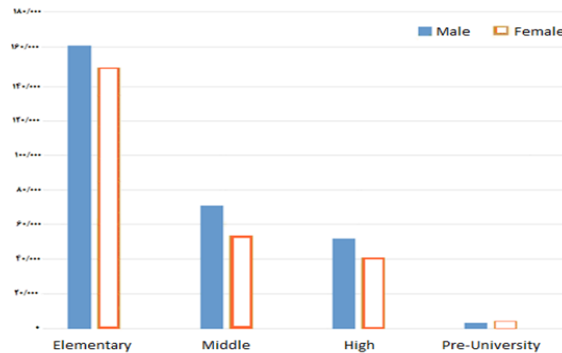


Fig. 2: number of students of province based on educational level in 2011-12.

In a research carried out for comparison of educational opportunities of high school female students of various educational regions and zones of the province, inequality and discrimination in giving educational opportunities are obvious. In this research, provincial zones and regions are classified into five groups; i.e. very affluent, affluent, moderate, deprived and very deprived and according to this work, Rask with lowest selection index as much as 1% is the most deprived and Zabol with highest one as much as 2.76% is the most affluent educational zone.

In simpler words, it can be explained that each student in Zabol benefits 2.76 times of that of Rask city from educational opportunities (Nabi Zadeh Sarabandi, 2005: 68-9). According to results, transition rate of female students from elementary to middle school is as much as 75.62% being 17.13% lower compared to national index. This index for male students is 14.32 lower than national index as well. Undoubtedly, various factors contribute to such low indices some of which are cultural, economic, social and even biological contexts.

In addition to unequal distribution of educational opportunities among province parts which is considered as one of the main and even the most important factor in low rate of educational transition of students, ratio of student to teacher, educational quality, motivational beliefs and learning approaches presented by teachers contribute mainly to reduction of educational inequalities. While teachers of a city or region don't feel that they are in a competitive and selective environment by principals and parents, they don't bother improving their knowledge level and improvement of their teaching method and of course, design of such environment depends upon the number of teachers; while according to report of research assistant of the public administration of training and education, 37% of teachers have two times of their obligation time. Further, 2036 more teachers are needed for high school level in 2014-15 (Four-year plan of province development, 2014: 8-13). Therefore, in such circumstances, not only competition for improving quality of teaching won't occur from teachers' side, but also teacher does whatever s/he can though with lower quality for training and management of classroom.

Admission of indigenous students

Strategy of admission of indigenous student was enforced to reduce university expenditures for welfare and facilitation of admission for students in cities near their residence city and preventing social abnormalities. Despite of benefits of above plan for higher education and cultural policy makers, from providing equal educational opportunities' point of view for students, it may seem unfair since students who are deprived from benefiting from educational spaces and experienced teachers, will become once again deprived from admission to first class universities of the country which are mainly located in affluent regions.

With this system of indigenous students, over 90% of Sistan and Baluchistan students are admitted to provincial universities and finally employed in neighbor provinces' universities which are mainly non-industrialized and less-developed regions lacking scientific and research facilities. As educational opportunities and facilities including ratio of student to teacher, per capita of educational, sportive and training spaces and number of laboratories and libraries and educational quality of the province is less compared to other provinces, consequently, university facilities such as diversity of majors, number of professors and lecturers are lower compared to big universities of the country and hence, system of indigenous admission leads to deepening unequal educational opportunities.

Conclusion

The first consequence of educational inequality is leaving school by students and getting out of educational cycle and spread of illiteracy. According to results of UN researches which explore development indices in various countries, index of average educational duration in Iran was reported to be 7.2 by 2010 and in this index; Iran ranks 97 among 169 countries (Fotros et.al, 2011: 121) while Sistan and Baluchistan with highest rate of illiteracy and lowest level of educational years in Iran is considerably far from UN index.

Rate of educational transition is another index which is utilized for measurement of human resources development. According to results of present paper, in this index as well, Sistan and Baluchistan has lowest rate in all educational levels. Unequal distribution of educational, sportive and training spaces provided students with unequal opportunities and led to non-uniform development of human force. In provincial level, unbalanced and unequal distribution of the educational opportunities resulted in reduced academic motivation, getting out of educational cycle, reduced average duration of studies and finally reduced motivation for continuing education for children entering schools. In this way, as a result of unequal educational space, capabilities and capacities of children of the province for playing pivotal role and collaboration in the process of development will not flourish. In addition, educational inequality promotes and induces a type of fixed obedience and prevents formation of a creative and asking mind while going through development process demands a curious human with a creative and asking mind.

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