SUMMARY
A causal and comparative study of the status of school education in rural and urban areas of Mazanderan Province of Iran.

The present study has been conducted on Mazandran province. According to the Census report of 1976 the area of Mazandran is 46200 square kilometers which is 2.8 per cent of the total area of Iran. According to the same Census, Mazandran province ranks the fourth populated province of Iran, with 2387171 persons out of which 1,197,591 are male and 1,189,580 female. This is about 7.75 per cent of the total population of Iran. The density of population is above 51 persons per square kilometer. About 65 per cent of the people in this province are in rural areas and 35 per cent in urban areas. The population of Mazandran was estimated above 3,000,000 in 1986.

Although literacy figures of Mazandran compare very well with the literacy figures of Iran as a whole showing this province in the lead, yet the status of rural and female education does not present a bright picture. In the last Census report of 1986 the percentages of enrolled students at all the three levels of school out of the total school-age children was 66.75 percent with 74.14 per cent male and 59.30 per cent female students in the whole province. These figures were 60.14 per cent in rural areas constituting 69.89 per cent males and 50.77 per cent females against 79.78 per cent in urban areas with 81.92 per cent males and 77.40
per cent females. There are also wide disparities in percentages of enrolled students at different levels of school education in the province as well as in rural and urban areas. The percentages of students enrolled at different levels of school regarding their respective age-groups in the whole province were 87.88 at primary level with 92.39 per cent males and 83.15 per cent female students, 70.80 per cent at lower secondary level constituting 82.36 per cent males and 58.85 per cent females, and 27.92 per cent at higher secondary level with 34.77 per cent males and 21.57 per cent females. In rural areas these figures were 87.67 per cent at primary level with 93.53 per cent males and 81.47 per cent females, 58.93 per cent at lower secondary level constituting 75.63 per cent males and 42.61 per cent females, and only 7.95 per cent at higher secondary level with 11.93 per cent males and 4.8 per cent females. In urban areas these rates were 88.39 per cent at primary level with 89.70 per cent male and 87.03 per cent female students, 92.42 per cent at lower secondary level constituting 93.72 per cent males and 90.93 per cent females, and 59.83 per cent at higher secondary level with 64.43 per cent males and 54.34 per cent females. Despite an upward movement of education, the disparities between rural and urban and male and female education have still persisted. The question arises as to why these disparities have been persisting for the last eighty years after adoption of Organic National Education Act of
November, 1911, in which under article 3 primary education is made compulsory and unconditionally free for all children in Iran. The causes of these disparities have never been studied intensively. So the present study was taken up to find out the disparities and to determine the responsible causes of disparities as considered by parents, students and teachers. Then the above mentioned three categories were classified into rural and urban groups to find out the seriousness of the causes in rural areas and to study the possible suggested measures to overcome the disparities.

The Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

(1) To compare the status of school education in rural and urban areas of the Mazandran province and study the disparities if there are any.

(2) To find out the disparity in status of school education between rural and urban areas of the province.

(3) To study the disparity in status of male and female education in rural and urban areas of the Mazandran province.

(4) To find out the disparity within male education in rural and urban areas of the province.
(5) To study the disparity within female education in rural and urban areas of the Mazandran province.

(6) To search out the responsible causes leading to the disparity in status of school education in rural and urban areas of the province.

(7) To determine that the causes of disparity in status of school education are considered more serious in rural areas of the province than in urban areas.

(8) To bring out suggestions to overcome the disparities in status of school education in rural and urban areas and in male and female education as well.

Procedure

Two methods of research were employed at two different stages. The study was started with document analysis method of research at the first stage in order to trace the status of school education in rural and urban areas of the Mazandran province and to find out disparity. Descriptive Survey method of research was employed at the second stage to determine the responsible causes of disparity and seriousness of these responsible causes in rural areas which result in disparity. The sample of this study consisted of three categories. Each category was further divided into two sub-categories: (i) rural and (ii) urban. First, the sample was grouped into three categories: (i) parents (240), 120 rural and 120 urban;
(ii) students (240) 120 rural and 120 urban, and (iii) teachers (120) 60 rural and 60 urban. Later, on the basis of area the sample was grouped into two categories, namely; (a) rural group (300) 120 parents, 120 students and 60 teachers (b) urban group (300) 120 parents, 120 students and 60 teachers. For the present study the sample was selected at three stages. Purposive sampling was employed at the first stage to pick one province from a total of twenty four province in the country. Stratified sampling technique was employed at the second stage to pick up five cities out of fifteen cities and 25 villages out of 125 villages of the province. All the cities and villages of the province were divided into five strata, cities in the north, south, east, west and centre. One city and five villages were selected from each strata. Random sampling method was employed at the third stage to select the samples from the selected cities and villages.

In the present study three tools were employed to collect the relevant data: (a) educational documents, (b) questionnaire, and (c) structured interview. Questionnaire was administered to the teachers, students and literate parents. Illiterate parents were interviewed personally. Then the selected factors which were thought to be responsible for disparities were classified under four basic variables, namely; administrative cause, economic cause, social cause, and curricular cause. These basic factors were hypothetically tested through the use of
descriptive statistics e.g. the measures of central tendency like mean, median, the measures of dispersion like standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis, and t-ratio were worked out to compare the opinion of each group on the responsible causes of disparity amongst the three groups, namely; parents, students, and teachers, and also to compare the opinion of rural and urban groups on the seriousness of causes, and to find out the significance of opinion of the subjects.

The Findings:

The findings of the study have emerged as follows:

1. The percentages of enrolled students show a significant disparity in rural and urban areas of the Mazandran province at all the three levels of school education.

The percentages of enrolled students in most of the fifteen districts and the province as a whole at all the three levels of school in urban areas are higher as compared to the percentages of enrolled students in rural areas. The differences in percentages of enrolled students at primary level in rural and urban areas are negligible, but as the level of school rises from primary to lower secondary and then to higher secondary level the differences start rising particularly at higher secondary level where the differences are extremely wide. The percentage of students enrolled at primary level is 88.39 in urban areas against 87.67 per cent in rural areas. This rate at higher secondary level is 59.83 per cent in urban areas.
against only 7.95 per cent in rural areas. This indicates that a large majority of the rural students enrolled in the schools could not reach beyond primary level, which shows a significant disparity.

2. **The enrolled students figures reveal a large disparity in male and female education at all the three levels of school education in rural and urban areas of Mazandran province.**

The enrolled figures of male students are higher as compared to the enrolled figures of female students, as a whole as well as separately in urban and rural areas at all the three levels of school education. The result also indicates that as the level of school rises from primary to lower secondary and then higher secondary level, the percentages of enrolled students start falling considerably especially at higher secondary level. The rate of the fall in percentages of enrolled students is deeper among female students mainly in rural areas. The percentages of male and female students enrolled at primary level do not differ much between rural and urban areas, but the differences are considerably high at higher secondary level. The percentage of male students enrolled at higher secondary level is 64.43 in urban areas against 11.93 per cent in rural areas. This rate for female students is 54.34 per cent in urban areas against only 4.80 per cent in rural areas. This means that a large majority of students particularly female students in rural areas drop out
after primary level and do not reach higher secondary level. Therefore the status of both male and female education in rural areas is very poor as compared to the status of male and female education in urban areas, which results in disparity.

3. The percentages of enrolled students indicate a disparity within male education at all the three levels of school education between rural and urban areas of the province. The percentages of enrolled male students differ at all the three levels of school. It is high at primary level, but falls as the level of school rises. The differences are still higher in rural areas of the province. Though the percentages of enrolled male students at primary level of schools in rural areas are slightly higher than it is in urban areas, 89.70 per cent against 93.53 per cent, yet it is lower at lower secondary level and particularly at higher secondary level where the differences are extremely wide and in favour of male students in urban areas, the ratio is 11.93 per cent against 64.43 per cent. It reveals a very poor status of male education in rural areas.

4. The figures of enrolled students present a wide disparity within female education at all the three levels of school between rural and urban areas of the province. The percentages of enrolled female students differ at all the three levels of school education. The percentages of enrolled female students are satisfactory at primary level, but it falls considerably at lower secondary level and particularly at higher secondary level, where the rate of fall is extremely deep.
The enrolled female student figures also indicate a wide disparity between rural and urban areas. The differences in percentages of female students enrolled at primary level in urban areas are slightly higher as compared to the female enrolled percentages in rural areas, the ratio being 87.03 per cent against 81.47 per cent. As the level of school education rises the differences also rise considerably, especially at higher secondary level where the differences are extremely wide at 54.34 per cent against 4.80 per cent. This leads to a poor status of female education in rural areas.

5. There are various causes responsible for disparity in status of school education in the rural and urban areas of the province.

The result of the analysis of relevant data on the four basic causes assumed hypothetically for being responsible factors of disparity, namely; administrative cause, economic cause, social cause, and curricular cause lead to the conclusion that the subjects of the three groups, namely; parents, students, and teachers have positive opinion with regard to administrative cause, economic cause and social causes as being a serious causes and a responsible factor of disparity, whereas on curricular cause all the three groups considered it not as serious as the other three causes. The rank-wise sequential order of the causes in the whole province faced by all the three groups are economic at the top followed by administrative, social, and
curricular cause respectively. Therefore it indicates that all the four hypothetically assumed causes are responsible factors, which result in disparity.

6. The responsible causes of disparity are considered more serious in rural areas than in urban areas.

The results of the analysis of relevant data on all the 80 educational problems under four basic causes and all the causes together reveals that these causes are considered more seriously by the rural group of the sample than the urban group. The analysis also indicates that the problems are considered serious in both rural and urban areas of the province but their level of seriousness is considered higher in rural areas, which leads to disparity. The rank-wise sequential order of the causes in rural areas faced by rural group are administrative cause at the top followed by economic, social and curricular causes respectively, whereas in urban areas economic cause was the most serious followed by social, administrative and curricular causes respectively.

Suggestions

The parents, students, and teachers have made certain suggestions for the removal of the disparity in status of school education in rural and urban areas of Mazandran province. Their suggestions have been pooled together:
(1) Education should be compulsory and unconditionally free for all the children in the province. (2) The cost of reading and writing materials and school uniform should be low and if possible free. (3) Education should be job-oriented. (4) Co-curricular activities should be encouraged in all the schools. (5) Audio-visual aids should be employed effectively in the schools. (6) Hostels and mess should be made available in the cities for the rural students who wish to continue at the cities beyond primary level. (7) More lower secondary and higher secondary schools should be built in the villages. (8) Educational facilities like, library, laboratory, sport equipments, and power and water facilities should be made available at all the schools. (9) Mid-day refreshment and medical care should be freely provided to all the students. (10) The people should be acquainted about the importance of education in national and economic development of the province and the country as a whole, through all available mass-media. (11) Old customs, traditions and beliefs which prevent rural female children from formal schooling should be abolished. (12) In the areas where the medium of instruction is different from mother tongue, the local teacher should be employed who can explain the students in both languages. (13) The school curriculum should be locally relevant and according to the needs of the society. (14) The salary of the teachers should be increased.
Suggestions for further research

(1) The causes of disparity in status of school education in rural and urban areas should be further investigated in detail through factor analysis method. (2) Disparity in status of school education between different sub-societies should be found out. (3) The province should get some studies conducted on the most obvious causes of disparity in literacy figures and solutions should be evolved with the help of the concerned parties. (4) To determine policies, programmes, targets and priorities for the expansion and improvement of status of education in different fields. (5) The causes of disparity in literacy figures of males and females in rural and urban areas should be investigated in detail.