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**RURAL-URBAN DISPARITY IN
KINDERGARTEN QUALITY IN
EGYPT,
A FIELD STUDY**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate rural-urban disparity in the quality of Egyptian kindergarten, in order to realize how much the fulfillment for the indicators of the second goal of Millennium Development including: Children need to be “ready for school” in all respects in order to enroll in and complete primary school, without grade repetition.

Many early childhood development programs, particularly in rural and poor urban areas, aim to address challenges facing that matter. However, programs are often limited and unevenly distributed. Differences may exist in program quality, and many suffer from inadequate funding, poor co-ordination, and unsustainability. In light of increasing interrelationships between individuals’ needs and rights and national development processes, governments play a particularly crucial role in creating fit environments that allow children to develop into healthy, well-balanced and responsible adults.

The program of total quality has been applied officially for all kindergarten in Egypt since January 2009, permitting accreditation gaining via the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (NAQAAE). The process for having the educational accreditation comprises stages ended at field investigation carried out by NAQAAE authorized reviewing teams. The criteria and parameters identified by NAQAAE for evaluating a kindergarten applicant for accreditation are compiled in two domains: institutional capacity, and educational effectiveness.

The study depends upon data compiled from the field during a period of nearly three years (April 2010 – February 2013) by the author as an authorized reviewer for the investigated kindergarten for having the credit of NAQAAE. The surveyed kindergartens are ten, six rural and four urban. They comprise three types: governmental ordinary, governmental experimental, and private. Their locations spread upon seven governorates,

which may be regarded an adequate representation of the Egyptian case.

Reaching significant results, the study discusses the following points, through an analytical comparative approach:

- Environmental background of kindergarten location
- Types of kindergarten institutions
- Evaluation of quality according authorized standards
- Discussion for evaluation results
- Perspectives for the future.

Key Words:

Kindergarten quality, Rural-urban disparity, Egypt

تباين جودة رياض الأطفال بين الحضر والريف في مصر – دراسة ميدانية

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ملخص

الغرض من هذا البحث هو دراسة وتقويم التباين بين الريف والحضر في جودة رياض الأطفال المصرية، للتحقق من مدى الوفاء بمؤشرات الهدف التنموي الثاني للألفية المتضمن: وجوب أن يكون الأطفال "جاهزين للمدرسة" من جميع النواحي من أجل الالتحاق بالمدرسة الابتدائية وإكمالها، دون إعادة للصف الدراسي.

وتهدف العديد من برامج تنمية الطفولة المبكرة، لا سيما في المناطق الريفية والمناطق الحضرية الفقيرة، إلى معالجة التحديات التي تواجه هذه القضية. ومع ذلك، فغالباً ما تكون البرامج محدودة وموزعة بشكل غير متساو، فقد توجد اختلافات في جودة البرامج، ويعاني الكثير منها من عدم كفاية التمويل، وسوء التنسيق، وعدم الاستدامة. وفي ظل زيادة العلاقات المتبادلة بين احتياجات الأفراد وحقوقهم وعمليات التنمية الوطنية، تلعب الحكومات دوراً حاسماً بشكل خاص في تهيئة بيئة مناسبة تسمح للأطفال بالتطور إلى أشخاص بالغين أصحاء ومتوازنين ومسؤولين.

وقد تم تطبيق برنامج الجودة الشاملة بشكل رسمي على جميع رياض الأطفال في مصر منذ يناير ٢٠٠٩، مما أتاح لها الحصول على الاعتماد من الهيئة القومية لضمان الجودة والاعتماد (NAQAAE). وتتم عملية الحصول على الاعتماد التعليمي بمراحل من التحقيق الميداني الذي تجريه فرق مراجعة معتمدة من قبل الهيئة المشار إليها وفق معايير محددة تخضع لها الروضة الطالبة للاعتماد في مجالين: القدرة المؤسسية، والفعالية التعليمية.

تعتمد الدراسة على بيانات تم جمعها من الميدان خلال فترة ما يقرب من ثلاث سنوات (أبريل ٢٠١٠ - فبراير ٢٠١٣) من قبل المؤلف بوصفه مراجع معتمد من الهيئة القومية لضمان الجودة والاعتماد (NAQAAE) شارك في زيارة وفحص وتطبيق معايير الجودة للعديد من مؤسسات التعليم قبل الجامعي، ومنها عشرة منروضات الأطفال هي محل الدراسة الميدانية الحالية، ست منها في قرى (ريف) وأربع في مدن (حضر)، وهي تتألف من ثلاثة أنواع: حكومة عادية، وتجريبية حكومية، وخاصة، وقد تنوزع مواقعها في سبع محافظات، ومن ثم قد تعتبر تمثيلاً مناسباً للحالة المصرية.

وللوصول إلى نتائج ذات دلالة، تناقش الدراسة النقاط التالية، من خلال منهج تحليلي مقارنة:

- الخلفية البيئية لمواقع رياض الأطفال
- أنواع مؤسسات رياض الأطفال

- تقييم الجودة وفق المعايير المعتمدة
- مناقشة لنتائج التقييم
- وجهات نظر للمستقبل

كلمات مفتاحية:

جودة رياض الأطفال ، التفاوت بين الريف والحضر ، مصر

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- Preface

The purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate rural-urban disparity in the quality of Egyptian kindergarten, in order to realize how much the fulfillment for the indicators of the

second goal of Millennium Development including: Children need to be “ready for school” in all respects in order to enroll in and complete primary school, without grade repetition.

The pre-school education system prepares children of 4-5 years old physically, socially and cognitively for the rest of their education. It is stated that the quality of education remains a major challenge that hinders the capacity of children to develop to their full potential.

The Egyptian Ministry of Education coordinates the preschool education. In 1999-2000 the total enrollment rate of pre-primary students was 16 percent and that increased to 24 percent in 2009. Ministry of Education is getting support from the international agencies, such as the World Bank to enhance the early childhood education system by increasing access to schools, improving quality of education and building capacity of teachers (ARE, ME, 2007). The UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education to use standard quality assurance tools, in preschools education programs in three governorates, applying pilot community-based models of kindergartens. The good practices and lessons-learned from this pilot are being mainstreamed and scaled-up by the Ministry of Education to increase pre-school enrolment rates (UNICEF, 2005). It has been conceived that the needs to be done include: expanding pre-primary school educational programs, and ensuring sustainable education systems, delivering quality services and retaining professional staff (UN, DPI, 2008).

The program of total quality has been applied officially for all kindergarten in Egypt since January 2009, permitting accreditation gaining via the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (NAQAEE). The process for having the educational accreditation comprises stages ended at field investigation carried out by NAQAEE authorized reviewing teams. The criteria and parameters identified by NAQAEE for evaluating a kindergarten applicant for accreditation are

compiled in two domains: institutional capacity, and educational effectiveness.

The study depends upon data compiled from the field during a period of nearly three years (April 2010 – February 2013) by the author as an authorized reviewer for the investigated kindergarten for having the credit of NAQAAE. The surveyed kindergartens are ten, six rural and four urban. And comprise variant types: governmental ordinary, governmental experimental, and private. Their locations spread upon seven governorates, may be regarded an adequate representation of Egyptian case (Annex I).

Reaching significant results, the study discusses the following points, through an analytical descriptive approach:

- Environmental background of kindergarten location
- Types of kindergarten institutions
- Evaluation of quality according authorized standards
- Discussion for evaluation results
- Perspectives for the future.

I- Environmental background of kindergarten location

The location of kindergarten is attributed to an administrative division from one hand, and to rural/urban position from the other, as shown in (Table: 1) and figure:1.

(Table: 1) The spatial distribution of investigated kindergartens

Governorate	Rural	Urban	Governorate	Rural	Urban
Alexandria		1	Dakahlia	2	1
Beheira	1		Sharqia	1	
K. El Sheikh	.2		Qalyubia		1
Gharbia		1	Total	6	4

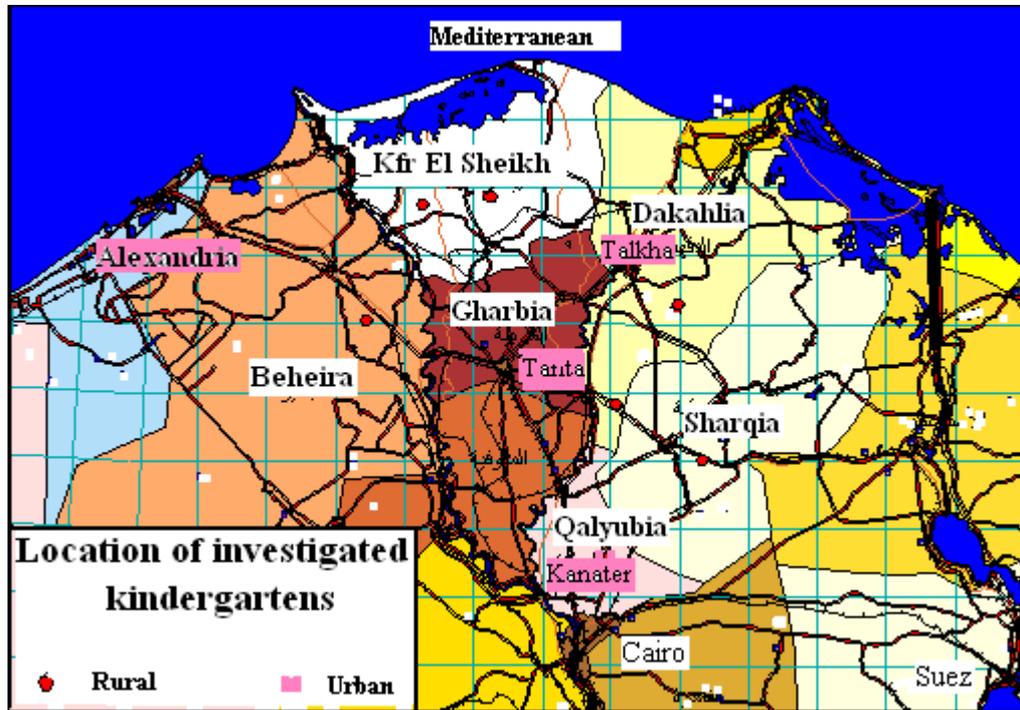


Figure: 1

There are four investigated urban kindergartens located in four Egyptian urban settlements. One (San Marc College) is situated at **Alexandria**, the second largest city in Egypt, known as "The Pearl of the Mediterranean", has its ambience and cultural heritage, with a distance actually only 225 km. from Cairo.

Another one (Al Nasr) is situated at **Tanta** city, the capital of Gharbia Governorate Tanta is located in the middle of the Nile Delta, 92 kilometers to the north of Cairo, the Egyptian capital, and it is considered to be the most civilized and urbanized city after Cairo and Alexandria.

The third one (Hasan Abo Bakr) lays in **El Kanater El Khairia**, a major town of El Qalyubia Governorate, 22 km away in the north of Cairo, where the Nile splits off into the Damietta and Rosetta Branches, marking the beginning of the Nile Delta. The site, admired for the wide range of gardens, parks and

agricultural area surrounding, is a preferred resort for both the local and foreign tourists.

The fourth urban kindergarten (Roudat Talat Harb) exists in **Talhha**, a town of Dakahlia Governorate, placed on the west bank of the Damietta branch of the Nile, forming an urban agglomeration with Al Mansoura city, the capital of Dakahlia Governorate at the east bank, about 120 km northeast of Cairo in the Delta region.

The rural located kindergartens are six, from which, two are located at Dakahlia Governorate. The first is at Tafahnah Al Ashrāf village, Meet Ghamr District. A famous Egyptian village for establishing three colleges belonging to Al-Azhar university (Shariaa, education, and humanities). The second is at Sandoob village, El Mansoura city periphery, having more than twenty thousand inhabitants.

Other two rural kindergartens are located in Kafr El Sheikh governorate, the first at Sarawa village, and the second (Ali Ben Abi Taleb) at Kbreet village. The two villages are of middle size agricultural population.

Another rural kindergarten is located at Zarzaramoon, a principal village, Hehya district, Sharqia governorate. The sixth rural one (Roudat Gamil Aziz) is that of Kafr Mistnad, a middle size village, Shubra Kheet district, Beheira governorate.

II- Types of kindergarten institutions

The kindergarten institutions in Egypt are attached to schools of basic education. The latter consists of: pre-primary (kindergarten), primary and preparatory levels of education (ARE, ME, 2007). Hence, it is worthy to elucidate the main two kinds of school in Egypt;

1- Government schools, which contain two types :

- Arabic Schools, wherein the governmental national curriculum in the Arabic language. English language is taught starting at first Primary year.

- Experimental Language Schools, teach most of the government curriculum in English, and adds other foreign language in Preparatory Education.

2- Private schools, that comprise four types::

- Arabic schools, their curriculum is quite similar to that of the government schools, but more attention is paid to the students and to the school facilities.

- Language schools, teach most of the government curriculum in English, and add French or German as a second foreign language.

- Religious schools, as Al Azhar schools, or Catholic schools affiliated with churches.

- International schools, that follow another country's curriculum, like a British, American, or French system.

Thus, the ten investigated kindergartens belong into three types of institution:

- Government Arabic schools, in seven cases: Tafahna AlAshaaf

- Roudat Sandoob - Sarawa, Joint prep - Roudat Zarzaramoon -

- Ali Ben Abi Taleb - Roudat Talat Harb - Roudat Gamil Aziz

- Government Experimental Language Schools, in two cases: Hasan Abo Bakr, and Al Nasr.

- Private Religious schools, in one case, that of: San Marc College, a Catholic oriented.

III- Evaluation of quality according authorized standards

At 2009, the author submitted PhD. dissertation proposed standards for total quality of kindergarten in countryside composed of: 10 principal domains, 33 secondary domains, 100 standards, 200 indicators. The principal ten domains are:

Children – Curriculum – Mistresses – Management and following up – Assisting and supporting staff – Development of man power - Kindergarten environment – Family and society partnership – Health and nutrition – Evaluation (Solayman, M.A., 2009).

In Egypt, two National standards for total quality in kindergarten have been produced and declared on January 2009, one by the National Authority for Quality, Assurance and Accreditation in Education (NAQAAE), and other, by the Early Childhood Educational Enhancement Project (ECEEP). The authorized one for application is that of (NAQAAE).

Three versions of NQAAE National standards for total quality in kindergarten have been issued and used as shown in the following table 2.

(Table: 2) Versions of NQAAE standards for kindergarten total quality

Version	Domain	Component	Criteria	Indicator	Practice
2009-2010	2	9	22	35	102
2010-2011	2	9	19	29	100
2012-2013	2	8	17	26	64
Solayman, 2014: 169.					

The last version of educational accreditation issued by NAQAAE at 2013 comes in two domains including eight main criteria as the following:

- Institutional capacity:

1- Vision and mission of kindergarten, 2- Leadership and governance, 3- Building and equipments, 4- Community partnership, 5- Quality assurance and accountability

- Educational effectiveness:

1-Child, 2- Teacher, 3- Educational environment

There are four levels for educational quality evaluation, each has value limits. This study regards center level value as shown in the following table: 3.

(Table: 3) Values of educational quality evaluation levels

Variables	Numerical values			
Assessment level	1	2	3	4
Level limits	- 50	50 - 64	65 – 79	80 +
Mean value	-	57	75	85

The numerical results of quality evaluation for the ten kindergartens located at rural and urban sites are shown in tables: 4 & 5.

(Table: 4) Evaluation scores for rural located kindergartens

Componen ts	Tafah na	Sando ob	Sara wa	Zarza ra moon	Ali.B. A Taleb	Gam il Aziz	Mea n
Vision/ Mission	85	85	75	85	75	75	80.0
Leadership governanc e	75	75	75	75	75	57	72.0
Building, equipment s	75	75	75	75	75	57	72.0
Communit y partnershi	75	75	85	75	75	57	73.7

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Assurance, accountability	75	75	75	75	75	57	72.0
Child	75	85	75	75	75	57	72.0
Teacher	75	75	75	85	75	57	73.7
Curriculum	75	75	75	85	85	57	75.3
Educational environment	75	75	75	85	75	75	76..7
Total	685	695	685	715	685	549	667.4
Mean	76.1	77.2	76.1	79.4	76.1	61.0	74.2

(Table: 5) Evaluation scores for urban located kindergartens

Components	Hasan A.Bakr	Al Nasr	Talat Harb	San Marc	Mean
Vision/ Mission	85	75	75	85	80.0
Leadership governance	85	75	75	85	80.0
Building, equipments	75	75	75	85	77.5
Community partnership	85	75	75	75	77.5
Assurance, accountability	85	75	75	85	80.0
Child	85	75	75	85	80.0
Teacher	85	75	75	85	80.0
Curriculum	85	75	75	85	80.0
Educational environment	85	75	75	85	80.0

Total	755	675	675	755	715
Mean	83.9	75	75	83.9	79.5

For the sake of quantitative analysis, it is suitable to use the range ratio measure (Sherman and Poirer, 2007: 27), which is calculated by dividing the highest value by the lowest value in a study component's distribution for a given indicator, a ratio of 1.0 would indicate perfect equity, whereas increasing values for the ratio suggest increasing disparity between components at the ends of the distribution.

Applying that measure, the difference between total values of kindergarten quality for both rural (74.2) and urban (79.5) samples is merely 5.3. The range ratio is 1.07. The two figures are too limited indicating a tiny degree of disparity, though it indicates also the following remarks:

- Urban kindergartens as a whole have a quality evaluation score higher than that of rural kindergartens.
- Statistically, the quality evaluation scores for both urban and rural kindergartens lay the two at level 3.
- 50% of urban kindergartens lay in level 4, while no one of rural kindergartens belongs to that level. Moreover, one rural kindergarten lays at level 2.
- Some specific differentiations shown at the scale of the nine quality components. For example, Vision/mission is the highest (value 85) for the rural, while that value has been realized in seven components of the urban, neither two components (Building, equipments and Community partnership) having the value of 77.5.

The final outcome is that: a tiny rural-urban disparity in kindergarten quality does exist, but however, it is not of too regarded significance.

IV- Discussion for evaluation results

Although Egyptian countryside suffers a heritage of inadequate development by government and private institutions as a result of urban bias, the retard level of public services hasn't ultimately hinder promising abilities within rural people to realize remarkable promotion in educational fields. It is never unusual that a rural located kindergarten or a school catches the top in some competition of educational quality.

There are other shapes of regional disparities in Egyptian kindergarten mentioned within a World Bank report issued at 2007 about Improving Quality, Equality, and Efficiency in Egyptian Education, such as disparities of pupil teacher ratios that may contribute to some of the inequities inherent in the system. The same report also mentioned that Egypt displays inequity in the expenditures per pupil across governorates. Other factors that could contribute to such disparities would be the average seniority of teachers in more “desirable” governorates and myriad other factors that cannot be accounted for (World Bank, 2007: 36).

The school environment adversely affects completion rates as about one in five school buildings are not fit for use and lack functional water and sanitation facilities. Students suffer from rigid conventional style teaching techniques in which participation is not encouraged and corporal punishment is commonly applied. To-date, less than 10% of the total number of schools meets the national standards for quality education (NAQAA).

V- Perspectives for the future.

Some relevant regards have been noticed as factors enhancing the quality of kindergarten, such as: facilitating the pre- and in-service training of local staff, ensuring local staff members receive an adequate salary, fee or family services that will enable them to continue working long-term, and working with community development organization to ensure services reach intended participants (Vargas-Barón, 2005)

The UNDPI, 2008 reported that projections suggest that without further acceleration, 58 out of the 86 countries that have not yet reached universal primary education will not achieve it by 2015. The children most likely to drop out of school or to not attend at all are often girls and those from poorer households or living in rural areas (UN, DPI, 2008).

Kindergartens of Egyptian countryside need necessarily a lot of development and improvement through issues of total quality standards. The following recommendations are of high importance:

- Enhancing the right of the Egyptian rural children in good early education.
- Increase gravity factors within good performance in official Arabic kindergarten.
- Encouraging meetings and visits between kindergarten children and their peers.
- Construction separate buildings for kindergarten alone.
- Continuation of entertainment for the physical component of kindergarten.
- Increase numbers of experimental kindergarten in Egyptian villages and supply them by well qualified mistresses and directors.
- Constructing a complete system of educational guides qualified and experienced in early childhood education.
- Keeping continuous following devoted for rural scattered kindergarten by members childhood educational guide.

- Executing keen educational and occupational training for man power engaging in kindergarten.
- Setting up effective councils of honors, parents and teachers in kindergartens.
- Investing kindergarten buildings in social, cultural and summer activities.

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(Annex I)
Location of surveyed kindergartens

N	Name	Type	Address	Field Time
1	Tafahna AlAshaaf	G.A	Tafahna AlAshaaf village, Dakahlia	26-29/4/2010
2	Hasan Abo Bakr	G.E.	Kanater Khairiya town, Qalyubia	17-18/10/2010
3	Al Nasr	G.E.	Tanta, city, Gharbeya	29-30/11/2010
4	Roudat Sandoob	G.A	Sandoob village, Dakahlia	21-22/3/2011
5	Sarawa , Joint prep.	G.A	Sarawa village, Kafr El Sheikh	3-6/4/2011
6	Roudat Zarzaramoon	G.A	Zarzaramoon village, Sharqia	27-28/4/2011
7	Ali Ben Abi Taleb	G.A	Kbreet Village, Kafr El Sheikh	7-8/12/2011
8	Roudat Talat Harb	G.A	Talkha town , Dakahlia	9-10/4/2012
9	Roudat Gamil Aziz	G.A	Kafr Mistnad village, Beheira	19-20/11/2012
10	San Marc College	P.	Alexandria city	25-26/2/2013
G.A = governmental Arabic, G.E.= governmental experimental, P.= private				