Employment and Manpower Information in Pakistan: Identification of the "Invisibles"

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I. INTRODUCTION

Employment and manpower development (E&MD) considerations are appearing in Pakisan's development plans since the Fifth Five-Year Plan. These considerations, though improving upon earlier neglect and at times indifference, however, did not go beyond mere projection exercises–themselves point of considerable debate[1] – and calculations of employment impact of investment plans and targeted sectoral growth rates.[2] These plans (manpower plans) besides being devoid of education and training programmes also have no integration with the development plans, a prerequisite for a meaningful development exercise.

A general lack of awareness amongst the planners and policy-makers about the vital links between the E&MD and the development only partly explains the existing scenario. Absence of a reliable and adequate data base on E&MD related variables appear to be an important constraint for undertaking any meaningful exercise of employment and manpower planning.

Existing institutional mechanism of the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) in Pakistan is not responding adequately in addressing its three functions, namely (i) Labour Market Information, (ii) Labour Market Diagnosis, and (iii) Labour Market Intermediation.[3] The first two functions are required to provide detailed information on E&MD-related variables a subject of discussion of this paper. This non-responsiveness is mainly attributable to low E&MD considerations in earlier policy formulations. Such a neglect also resulted in a haphazard and un-coordinated development of the LMIS with the result that over-lapping and duplication of certain activities co-exist with almost nil or inadequate avail-

[1]For a critique of such exercises and their level of effectiveness see Amjad (1987).

[2]For details see Manpower Division (1981, 1984).

[3]Such division of the functions of the LMIS has earlier been made by Manpower Division (MD) (1984), National Manpower Commission (NMC) (1989) and Ghayur (1989).

ability of data on some others.[4]

A close scrutiny of the employment and manpower information mechanism, a part of the LMIS especially of its first two functions, indicates that most of its data collection activities are organisation-specific. They are undertaken with a narrow perspective i.e. without taking into account the usefulness from users point of view and/or for other institutions/purposes, especially for the E&MD-related activities. Alternately, there has emerged a general lack of (i) awareness about the nature of activities being undertaken by different institutions, (ii) co-operation among users and producers, and (iii) importantly cooperation amongst different producers of data.

Consequently, a situation has merged where there are two distinct cate-gories of institutions generating/possessing data. One category belongs to the visible and indentifiable institutions which are, directly or indirectly, responsible for generating E&MD-related data. The second category belongs to those in-stitutions, which either as a result of their administrative functions or by the typical nature of their existence, are in possession/have the potential to generate important E&MD-related data–presently they are, by and large, unknown in terms of availability of their data, hence are "invisibles". Importantly, some of these "invisibles" either possess or can generate data on those variables, as would be shown in a subsequent section, on which presently little or inadequate infor-mation is available.

The main purpose of this exercise is to (i) identify such "invisibles", the institutions and data, and (ii) indicate the type of data the main "invisibles" either possess or have the potential to generate. The scheme of presentation of this paper is such that after this Introductory Section i.e. I, a broad definition of the LMIS, of which the employment and manpower information forms the important part, and the requirements of the data for E&MD purposes is given in Section II. In Section III, we have presented "invisibles", the institutions and the data. The concluding remarks appear in Section IV.

II. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LMIS AND EMPLOYMENT AND MANPOWER INFORMATION?

An institutional mechanism facilitating proper development and effective utilisation of human resources thereby minimising, if not eliminating, the imbal-

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[4]For detailed discussions on duplication and overlapping of certain activities co-existing with almost nil informati n on others and for a critical evaluation of the LMIS, see NMC (1989) and Ghayur (1990a).

ances in the demand for and supply of manpower across regions, occupations, sectors and industries, is presently considered as essential operational objectives of the LMIS. The availability of such an information base is also a prerequisite for initiating any E&MD-related exercise. Such operational objectives then require from a LMIS (i) information on employment patterns, (ii) nature and extent of unemployment and underemployment, detailed and disaggregated to the extent possible, (iii) a continuous monitoring and analysis of changes occurring in the labour market, sectoral/occupational/regional, thereby identifying the target and vulnerable groups, (iv) undertake, on the basis of the first three, a comprehensive system of employment counselling, vocational guidance and employment service [Ghayur (1990)]. Extent of the nature and type of the availability of data on employment and manpower related variables largely determine the effectiveness of the E&MD planning.

III. IDENTIFICATION OF THE "INVISIBLES"

The term "invisibles" is defined here as concerning to those institutions which either possess data on any aspect of the E&MD or have the potential to generate such data but presently are either unknown or even not undertaking such an exercise. Similarly, any data having similar characteristics would also be the "invisibles". It is interesting to see from Table 1 that these "invisibles" possess/ have the potential to generate data on the most inadequately covered areas of the existing LMIS. These "invisibles" as may be seen from Table 1, can generate data on (i) urban informal sector, (ii) rural non-farm sector, especially E&MD-related data on rural areas, (iii) employment impact of development schemes, (iv) returning migrants, (v) formal sector employment, and (vi) the unemployed. Some of these data are on the neglected/inadequately covered areas of the existing LMIS in Pakistan. While the others can significantly supplement the existing sources of data. Discussions that follow deal with each of these "invisibles" separately.

Urban Informal Sector

The most glaring omission of the existing LMIS is its coverage of the urban informal sector (UIS). Presently, little is known about the nature and type of activities being underway in this sector. There is, however, detailed information available on the UIS with the "invisibles". The field offices of the Provincial Directorates of Labour, by virtue of enforcing certain labour laws and especially the weekly holiday, register all shops/establishments by different localities in an urban area. As may be seen from Table 2, they have almost a complete record

Table 1

Identification of Invisible Sources of the Employment and Manpower Information

S. No	Type of Data/ Information	Institutions Either Possessing or Having the Potentials to Generate Data			
I.	Urban Informal Sector	I. District Offices of Provincial Labour Departments	II. Local Bodies including the Cantonments	III. Trade Bodies and Associations	
II.	Rural Non-farm Sector/E & MD-related Data for Rural Areas	I. Union Councils	II. Regional Profiles prepared by the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan		
III.	Employment Impact of Development Schemes	I. P. C. I. Proforma of the Planning Commission for the final Approval of the Project	II. P. C. IV Proforma after Completion of the Project	III. Project Proposals/Feasibilities of the Development Financial Institutions	
IV.	Returning Migrants	I. Disembartation Card	II. Registers of Pakistani Missions Abroad		
V.	Formal Sector Employment	I. Annual Reports of the Public Sector Organizations	II. Education Cess	III. Employees Old Age Benefit Institutions and Employees Social Security Institution	IV. Employment Exchanges
VI.	Unemployed	I. Employment Exchanges	II. Union Councils	III. Annual Reports of the Public Service Commissions	

Note: This Table is a modified and improved version of information as contained on the "invisibles" in Ghayur (1990a).

Table 2

Type of Urban Informal Activities in Karachi City

Broad Groups					
Food Items	Textiles	Wood	Paper	Chemicals	Non-metallic
Grain Milling	Hoisery	Wood Mills	Printing	Soap Making	Battery
Bakeries	Leather Products	Furniture Making	Book Binding	Tyre Volcanizing	Concrete Products
Hotels/Restau-rants	Garments	Card Board Making	Paper Box Making	Plastic Moulding	
Sweet Making	Made up Textiles			Perfume Making	
Food, n. e. c.	Carpet Weaving	Sports			
Metallic Products	Basic Metals	Repairs	Service	Retailers/ Wholesellers	Misc.
Steel Furniture	Welding	Water/Gas Repair	Photo	Fruit/Vegetable Mutton Shop TV/ Fridge/Electricity	Jewellery
Agricultural Equipments	Bolt Making	Bicycle Repair	Laundry	Booksellers	Handicraft
Sewing Machine Assembly		Motor Car Repair	Tailoring	General Merchant	Petrol Pump
Surgical Goods		Electric Repair Machinery Repair	Embroidery Hair Dresser	Cloth Merchant Chemist	
Products, n. e. c.		Repair, n. e. c.	Shoe Making/ Polish	Tobacco Shop	
			Photo Copy Service, n.e.c.	Lunda (Second Hand Clothes) Spare Parts Ready Made Garments Timber/Wood	

Source: Relevant Registers in the office of the Joint Director, Directorate of Labour, Karachi.

of the informal sector activities, excepting the vendors and hawkers. Presently this information is, however, lying in an unprocessed form i.e. lying only in the relevant registers of these field offices. But a systematic collection and proper processing can generate adequate information on the UIS.

The local bodies including those in the cantonments undertake a similar exercise for their own purposes. They even go a step further i.e. they also register all the vendors and hawkers–this is done by registering and giving licences to all these participants.

Similarly, in the urban areas and especially in the large cities, there is a specific trade body/association for each trade/activity, excepting vendors and hawkers. Hence, each association has a register of all their members.

A systematic collection and proper processing of all this information in an integrated manner can lead to a comprehensive data base on the activities in the UIS[5].

Rural Non-farm Sector/E&MD Related Data for Rural Areas

The rural non-farm sector is the second area being covered inadequately by the existing LMIS. Obviously an exercise to extend the data collection machinery to rural areas is financially and technically neither feasible nor practicable. But certain basic information on the rural non-farm sector is easily obtainable through the use of "invisibles" i.e. the Union Councils. This can be done, if the questionnaires designed to get such information are properly prepared and these Councils are integrated with the over all data collection mechanism. Such an integration of the Union Councils can also generate important E&MD related data for the rural areas.[6]

In addition to the Union Councils, the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan (ADBP) with its over 400 branches and more than 1300 Mobile Credit Officers (MCOs), one MCO responsible for 10–25 villages, is undertaking regular exercises to generate important development statistics even at its branch level by rural/urban classification. Important amongst them is the statistics on agro-based industries by types and numbers. This exercise can be easily extended to cover

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[5]Suggestions as how to integrate the UIS with the LMIS can be seen in Ghayur (1990b). While considerations on an integrated institutional machinery for LMIS appear in NMC (1989) and Ghayur (1990b).

[6]This has been borne out by a survey of Rural Barani Areas. In this survey "Key Informant's Approach" was used to get E&MD related information from Union Councils. For details see Ghayur (1991).

the whole non-farm sector and E&MD-related data.[7] The ADBP has the necessary expertise, manpower and resources to undertake such an exercise which would in fact mean a mere extension of their work.

This would, however, require a proper preparation of the questionnaires, systematic collection/processing of information and a meaningful integration of these sources/institutions with the overall institutional mechanism of the LMIS. Such an arrangement can lead to meaningful information on non-farm sector and E&MD-related variables for the rural areas.

Employment Impact of the Development Schemes

Very little information is compiled, hence available on the likely employment impact of the development schemes, both at the construction/development stage and after its completion. This information nonetheless is obtainable from the PC-I Proformas. All the development schemes emanating from various federal and provincial government organizations are required to be submitted on the prescribed PC-I form for the final approval. It is important to note that part C of the PC-I form contains detailed information on E&MD-related variables but confined to the project/proposal area. Similarly, the PC-IV form is required to be submitted after completion of the development phase and when the project is made fully operational. Such information, however, is presently neither prepared properly nor processed and evaluated. The project proposals/feasibilities prepared for the banking and financial institutions which are presently inadequately attending to E&MD-related variables, however, have the potential to generate meaningful information.

Appropriate preparation of the relevant parts of the PC-I and IV forms and insertion of E&MD-related variables in the project proposals/feasibilities, their proper collection and processing can generate meaningful data on employment impact of development schemes.

Returning Migrants

Contrary to the well-documented process of overseas migration, the reverse flow of return migration is not attended to properly. Little information is available on the number and characteristics of workers returning annually. Few ad-hoc surveys cannot reflect the actual situation for the return flow of workers. This gap, however, can be adequately filled by utilizing the "invisible" i.e. a modified

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[7]For details see ADBP (1989).

disembarkation card. A few questions if inserted in this card for the purpose of getting information on nature of the visit to Pakistan can largely fill the vaeuum on the process of return migration.[8]

This information can be supplemented further by a regular feedback by the Pakistani Missions abroad. Most of the returning migrants generally approach them either to get the Transfer of Residence Certificate or to get necessary documents, such as those concerning income certificates, import of car, etc. The returning migrants are also required to inform the missions about their departure. A proper registration of all such persons by these missions and sending this information to Pakistan can generate important information on the process of return migration.

Formal Sector Employment

Existing sources of data provide significant information on the formal sector employment. The data of different sources are, however, not compatible. For instance figures on employment in the formal and manufacturing sectors of the economy as given by the Censuses of Manufacturing Industries (CMIs), Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) and Annual Establishment Enquiries (AEEs) are not compatible with each other.

These sources of information can be supplemented by a proper integration of the "invisibles". These "invisibles" are the registers of (i) education cess, (ii) old age benefits institutions, and (iii) employees' social security institutions.

Another potentially important source for generating comprehensive information on the formal sector employment is the network of Employment Exchanges. The realisation of this potential is, however, linked with the enactment of the necessary legislation concerning compulsory notification of vacancies to the employment exchanges by all the formal sector establishments.[9]

Some additional information on formal sector employment can be generated by incorporating a few tables on the employment position in the annual reports of the public and private sector organisations.

Unemployed

Presently a clear picture as to the nature and extent of unemployment is

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[8]The National Manpower Commission have reported that necessary approval has been granted by the concerned authorities to reflect the required changes in the disembarkation card. For details see NMC (1989).

[9]In India similar legislation has led to a meaningful and detailed information on formal sector employment. For details, see Richter (1978).

not forthcoming from the existing LMIS. The employment exchanges have the potential to generate detailed and disaggregated information on this phenomenon. They would, however, require necessary legislative support in the form of compulsory registration of the unemployed with them. In the rural areas, similar support would be needed for the Union Councils.

Nature and extent of unemployment amongst the high level manpower especially the post-graduates is obtainable from the Public Service Commissions. This can be done if they ask the candidates to indicate their existing employment status in the application forms and the Commissions reflect such information in their annual reports.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The existing employment and manpower information system is not responding adequately in terms of providing a meaningful data base.

Interestingly, in this system, overlapping and duplication of certain activities/data co-exist with almost nil or few information on others. This is the outcome of inadequate attention paid to E&MD in our policy formulations, which has also resulted in the uncoordinated institutional building, especially those dealing with data collection.

A foreign environment to the E&MD in our policy formulations also led to a situation where certain institutions, in the process of their own activities, are possessing/have the potential to generate important and relevant data. But presently all these, by and large, are unknown-"invisibles". Some of these "invisibles" are on those areas for which very little is known.

An attempt has been made in this paper to identify these "invisibles" the data and the institutions. These "invisibles" can generate data on (i) Urban Informal Sector, (ii) Rural Non-farm Sector and Rural Areas, (iii) Employment Impact of Development Schemes, (iv) Returning Migrants, (v) Formal Sector Employment, and (vi) Unemployed. Some of these are scantily covered by the existing LMIS, while others can significantly strengthen the existing sources.

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employment services have their own information needs which are to be met by LMIS. Moreover, the individual and organised sectors need to be informed of developments in manpower demand and supply. Jones has summed all these into a practical definition that it is an institutional mechanism which provides information concerning the size and composition of the labour force or any part of the labour market, the way it or any part of it functions, its problems, the opportunities which may be available to it and the employment related intentions or aspirations of those who are part of it. It should however, be recognised that the information being generated under the LMIS can never become a routine or a finished product which will satisfy all consumers.

In order to meet and serve the varying needs and interests stated earlier, the output of LMIS is needed to be comprehensive, timely, accurate and easily accessible. It is, foremost a dynamic institutional mechanism, says Richter, "to keep the performance of labour markets under constant observation and analysis and to make the results available for decision-making by different consumers dealing with a broad range of manpower and employment problems and taking the appropriate action on them". It is from this angle that the place and efficacy of 'invisibles' as identified by the author are to be looked at.

While identifying the 'invisible' sources of labour market information for the urban informal sector, the author has referred about the information being collected by Provincial Directorates under various labour legislation such as Factory Act, Return on Labour Welfare, Registration of shops/establishment etc. Which in his view can generate adequate information if collected and processed properly. The scope of coverage of information by these sources, in my view, is so limited that it may only marginally complement the desired information. The author has identified a very important institution at the grassroot level i.e, union councils which, in fact, have a great potential to generate data and to institutionalise the concept of manpower planning at the smallest unit of the administrative set-up. If the information being collected by employment exchanges is to be made of any use, it may be possible only after the provision of compulsory notification of vacancies and registration of the unemployed, which the author has also recognised. In identifying other 'invisible' sources for generating information in his paper, the author deserves all praise for making them visible which, indeed, is a first systematic attempt.

It may, however, be recognised that in view of the fact that employment and manpower information is expected to serve the needs of wide range of users including job-seekers, workers, employers, planners, programme administrators

and others, the visible sources of LMIS deserve first priority for being strengthened and information needs to be extended from the national aggregate policy level to the regional and local levels instead of decentralizing the information base. In this direction, many developing countries have recently taken a close look at their existing labour market information through institutional coordinating structures such as manpower councils, advisory committees etc. to strengthen those sources which will upgrade national labour market information capacity. However, faced with the inadequacy of existing employment and manpower information sources, specially from the point of view of required disaggregation, and cost considerations, we will have to embark on a search for supplementary sources of information which finds its justification in the form of the paper on 'invisibles' by the author.

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