

Status of Higher Education in Rural Areas of Jammu And Kashmir State

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ABSTRACT

Education is an indispensable for the development and prosperity of both a nation and society. It acts as a pillar of support and hence provides skills and development for effective employment in the future. Apart from primary and secondary education, higher education is the backbone of the contemporary society. The Indian higher education system has exhibited remarkable development over the last decade to become one of the world's largest systems of higher education. Around 65% of the state's population lives in rural areas. The higher education system in rural areas of developing and underdeveloped countries are facing many challenges. The limited accessibility and challenges to education are attributed mainly to political, economic and social issues. The current status of higher education in rural areas is characterized by low enrolment, poor completion rates, poor physical infrastructure, and high drop out. The institutions of higher education located in rural areas are lacking in the implementation of best practices in higher education and quality. There are number of higher educational institutions located in remote, rural, and backward areas, striving to achieve excellence. J&K state also has several renowned institutions of higher learning. There are some institutes providing higher education in the fields of arts, medicine, engineering and management. The state is marching ahead steadily on the path of modernization and prosperity. Despite that, J&K, a northern state of India, consisting of 72.79 percent of rural population (according to census 2011) is still struggling to provide better higher education facilities in rural areas. In this state majority of the higher educational institutions are urban centric where it is not practicable for all the youth to stay away from their families as they may be the only bread earner of their families. Apart from this poor communication and transportation system of the rural areas also hinders equal access of higher education. As a result of that rural population are deprived in higher learning. The inequalities among the higher educational institutions located in rural and urban areas are quite remarkable. It is in this context; the aim of this paper is to find out the status of higher education in rural areas of J&K state and tries to find out the problems that the rural population is suffering in regard to higher education. The investigator also suggests suitable measures and recommendations to overcome those barriers.

Keywords: Status, Higher Education, Rural areas

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INTRODUCTION

"College education is largely an urban proposition. I would not say it is an unmitigated failure as Primary education certainly is, but the results are fairly disappointing"

..... M.K. Gandhi

Higher education has always been important but perhaps never more so in man's history than today. In a science-based world, higher education is fundamental to the entire developmental process of a country, its welfare, progress and security. In the rapidly changing world of today, one thing is certain: yesterday's higher educational system will not meet today's, and even less so, the need of tomorrow. With the extension of awareness at global level, the education sector especially the higher Education system has mushroomed recently throughout the world to meet the ever-increasing need of trained manpower for getting higher economies of the world. In fact, higher education has been a potent force in shaping the civil society and also the vehicle for weird economic growth and generation of employment opportunities for millions of young people. Therefore ensuring access to quality education for all,

in particular for the poor and rural population, is central to the economic and social development.

The rapid expansion of higher education system has brought several appropriate issues related to the standards of its quality and equal availability of higher education facilities to all the categories of people of the society. In J&K, a large number of populations fall under middle class family and lower middle class families. At the same time lower economy class families also exist in large numbers. Now, when a large number of families and their youth are struggling hard to fulfill their basic needs, they naturally have to compromise with the higher education specially the youth of rural and remote areas.

Normally it is observed in J&K state, higher education institutions are mostly located in cities, main towns etc.; where it is not possible for all the youth to stay away from their families as they may be the only bread earner of their families. Apart from this poor communication & transportation system of the rural areas also hinders equal access of higher education. The most important problem in the higher education system in India as well as in our state is the lack of quality of the institutions in rural areas. The

quantitative development is not satisfactory. The inequalities among the institutions located in rural area and urban area are quite remarkable. The institutions of higher education located in rural and socio-economic backward areas are lacking in the implementation of best practices in higher education and quality.

There are number of colleges located in remote, rural, backward and hilly areas, striving to achieve excellence. In these colleges the student's enrolment is from the socio-economic backward families. Most of the students are the first generation learners of higher education. More than 70% of the students are scholarship holders as they are belonging to socio-economic backward families. There are no criteria for admission in the college, any students seeking higher education; who has passed the last qualifying examination, can enroll his name. The colleges are bound to enroll them, because they were established for these students. They were established with the objectives to provide education to these economically, socially and educationally weaker section of the society. In the assessment and accreditation by NAAC, such colleges get poor grades only because of the high dropout rates. The high dropout

rate of the students in such colleges is a most important problem, which is to be solved.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- Determine the status of higher education in rural areas in J&K state.
- Know the problems of higher education in rural areas.
- Find out best possible remedies to cope out those problems.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper the research is based on secondary data. The data is taken from different research reports, journals, websites, research papers and economic survey, 2013-14 (J&K). The research is based on the study of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of higher education in Urban and Rural areas of J&K state.

AREA OF THE STUDY

Jammu and Kashmir is the Northern-most state of India and it shares borders with Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, and the neighboring countries of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan. The state consists of three regions: Jammu, the Kashmir valley and Ladakh. The area of the state is 2, 22,236

sq.kms. As per Census figures of 2011, the population of the state is 1, 25, 48,926. Urban population of J&K is 31, 14,106 where as rural population is 91, 4,820. Most people in Jammu and Kashmir reside in rural areas. There is a large gap in the male female literacy. Jammu & Kashmir is the only state where education is free up to university stage. Yet the state is educationally backward. Against the national literacy rate of 74.04% the state has a literacy figure of 68.74% literacy among male is 78.26% and that of female is 58.01 % (according to 2011 census). In the national educational scenario, J&K is subsumed as educationally backward with reference to the established indices namely, literacy rate, teacher - pupil ratio, drop-out rate and the absorption pattern of the educated persons.

STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The Department of Higher Education is charged with the responsibility to monitor and regulate the dissemination of Higher Education above 10+2 level in the state by extending education facilities by opening of the Colleges and Universities. The access to Higher Education is measured in terms of Gross Enrolment ratio. The Gross Enrolment ratio for the state of J&K was 10.36% in 2007-08 which has increased to 18.2% (provisional) in 2011-12 which is higher than the national GER of 15%. The enrolment has accordingly increased from 77,000 in 2004-05 to 1, 35,264 in 2012-13.

YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF ENROLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION
2007-2008	10.36%
2011-2012	18.2%

Table 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education

The overall enrollment in the Higher Education Sector including Universities, Private Institutions and Agriculture/ Medical Institutions has increased approximately to

2, 77,000 in the 11th Five Year Plan. The enrolment in Higher education for the academic year 2013-14 is 179398, which includes Govt. Degree Colleges 136163,

B.Ed. Colleges 26080 and Universities (Kashmir University, Jammu University, Baba Gulam Shah Badshah University & Islamic University of Science and Technology, Pulwama). The Govt. of India,

MHRD has set GER target of 22% at the national level to be achieved by 2020. The State is also aiming at achieving this GER target of 22% by the end of 2020.

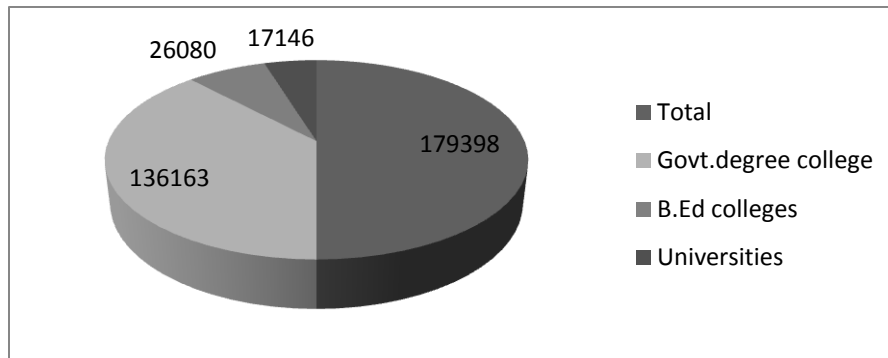


Fig.1: Enrolment in Higher Education 2013-14

However, it requires a matching expansion in capacity of educational institutional viz-a-viz the strategy centered on enhancing the intake capacity of educational institutions. For every two lakh population in the age group of 18-23 an additional university is required to be established and for every one lakh population in the age group of 18-23, 10 Colleges are required to be established. Based on these projections there is still scope for establishment of more universities and Colleges in the state. To reduce the disparities based on gender, caste and region and to provide equal opportunities of higher education to the age group of 18-23 is major challenge to be overcome. The GER in urban areas is higher compared to rural and

backward areas and same is the case with male/ female disparities in the enrolment rate. The GOI has identified 374 districts as educationally backward out of which 11 districts are in the J&K State. All these districts are being covered with one College each with 50% state contribution. To bridge the gap between the male and female enrolment, it will be endeavored to provide one Women College in all the districts which are at present without a Women College.

The Central Government has, however, taken a number of initiatives in the area of higher education including in the state of J&K some of which are as under:

- 1) Setting up of model Degree College in each of the identified 374 higher

educationally backward districts where gross enrolment ratio for higher education is less than the national GER. Under this scheme the central govt. shall provide central assistance to the extent of one half of the capital cost for establishment of each college limited to Rs 4.00 crore for special category state such as J&K. Under this plan, Anantnag, Badgam, Baramulla, Doda, Kargil, Kathua, Kupwara, Leh, Poonch, Rajouri and Udampur districts in J&K have been identified as higher educationally backward states.

2) Under the Prime Minister Reconstruction Plan (Phase I & II) it has been decided to open 24 colleges in

J&K. These are in addition to the 4 colleges approved by UGC at (1) Uri (Baramulla), (2) Ramban (Doda), (3) Bijbehara (Anantnag), (4) Billawar (Kathua).

3) Scheme for establishment of new polytechnics- under this scheme financial assistance of Rs.36.48 crores has been provided to the Govt. of J&K for setting up new polytechnics in 18 districts- Kupwara, Baramulla, Badgam, Pulwama, Anantnag, Doda, Udampur, Poonch, Rajouri, Kathua, Bandipura, Kulgam, Ganderbal, Kulgam, Shopian, Ramban, Kishtwar, Reasi and Samba.

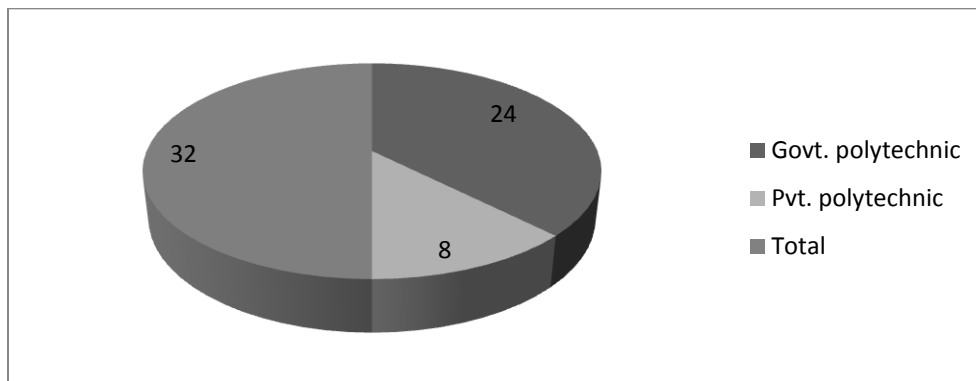


Fig 2: Enrolment of Technical Education Department

4) A scholarship scheme entitled “Special Scholarship Scheme for J&K (SSSJ&K) has been launched by Department of Higher Education, from the academic year 2011-12. Students

belonging to the state of J&K, pursuing general degree courses, medical courses, engineering courses etc. outside the state, may apply for

scholarship under this scheme, through the institute in which they are studying.

Organization of New Degree Colleges in J&K

- 22 Degree Colleges were already established in 2007-08 which include 14 Degree Colleges under PMRP Phase-I and 08 Degree Colleges under State Plan. In addition to this, 23 Degree Colleges were sanctioned/ made functional during 2010-11 & 2011-12 which includes 11 Model Degree Colleges in Educationally Backward Districts. A total of 45 Degree Colleges out of total of 95 Degree Colleges stand established in the State during the 11th Five Year Plan which signifies the importance attached to higher education by the State.

- Colleges mostly in rural areas have been provided transport facilities by purchase of 50 buses during the last three financial years. Under Special Plan Assistance, an amount of Rs 39.98 crore stands utilized for creation/ up-gradation of infrastructure in all the Government Degree Colleges of the State. All the existing degree colleges were covered under the scheme by way of providing basic facilities viz. canteens, common girls rooms, additional

classrooms, up-gradation of laboratories, scientific equipments, books, buses, etc.

- In view of introduction of the new centrally sponsored scheme- Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in the Country by the Ministry of Human Resources Development/ UGC, the Higher Education Department has already conveyed its willingness to the MHRD for participation in the scheme. Being an umbrella scheme, RUSA shall subsume the other existing schemes in the Higher Education Sector. The scheme would be spread over the two plan periods (XII and XIII), and would be an over arching scheme for funding the State Universities and Colleges in order to achieve the aims of equity, access and excellence.

Infrastructure Development:

Under Prime Minister's Re-construction Plan (PMRP) Phase-I, the construction work of all the 14 College buildings have been completed and the construction work of all the ten degree colleges sanctioned under phase 2nd of the scheme stand taken up.

NAAC Accreditation & ICT initiatives:

Two Women Degree Colleges one each at Parade, Jammu and Gandhi Nagar, Jammu for the first time has been assigned "A" Grade Accreditation by NAAC after

inspection from the Peer Team. 53 Degree Colleges were covered under ICT Mission and provided Broadband facilities through BSNL in the first phase. EDUSAT facilities under auspices of ISRO have also been provided in two hubs, one each at Govt. Women Degree College, Gandhi Nagar and Govt. Women Degree College, M.A. Road, Srinagar and these Colleges are connected to nearly 53 Govt. Degree Colleges through Satellite inter active terminals for transmitting quality study material to them.

If we look at the higher education system of our J&K state, deficiencies and shortcomings are obvious at every stage and everywhere. Our state without having a concrete policy and planning has tried to make a mushroom growth of institutions in the shape of colleges and Universities. The establishing of colleges and Universities has taken place more on the basis of political rather than on societal/ideological considerations. This is a salutation step because the J&K State has been in the drought of institutions of higher learning which could be accommodative and productive in nature. The J&K has not been able to compete in educational venture with the other States of the country and a slight notion to compare its educational standard

with the world standard is to blow one's own horn.

PROBLEMS

1) The higher educational institutions of rural areas are barrier to grade in the lower side since quality of input is very low, higher ratio of teacher-students, poor communication etc. and due to this grants are also given on the lower side which hinders improvement in physical infrastructure.

2) Quality of teaching depends upon quality of teachers. Availability of adequate and qualified faculty is a necessity of quality education. Quality teachers always prefer better colleges in the sense better input, standard teacher-student ratio, better communication, better physical facilities, better research facilities etc. and due to which the rural institutes as well as rural youth has to suffer.

3) In rural areas of J&K state the school dropout rate is more than urban areas. Even during college life also because of family burden, poor infrastructural facilities, lack of monetary support, apathy towards education etc. we can see high percentage of drop out among rural students.

4) Poverty is one of the main issues and indicates a condition in which a person fails to maintain a living standard adequate for a comfortable lifestyle. Mere growth of economy cannot bring social justice and balanced development unless it is coupled with poverty alleviation and employment generating opportunities for deprived and marginalized sections of the society. The survey conducted by the State during 2007-08 put the BPL population at 21.63 percent. A host of poverty alleviation programmes are in operation in the State mostly with central assistance.

5) One of the main factors of lower enrolment in rural area is the cost of education. Even sometimes it is seen that normal higher education expenses cannot be afforded by some of the families coming under lower middle class tag.

6) On one hand Gross Enrolment ratio (GER) stands low for the overall population, while on the other there are large variations among the various categories of population based on urban or rural habitation and rich and poor. Due to regional disparity in economic development and uneven distribution of institutions of higher education, the higher education is not

equally available to the different sections of the society.

7) The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), measures, the access level by taking the ratio of persons in all age groups enrolled in various programs to total population in age group of 18 to 23 in rural areas. The access to higher education for all eligible in the state is a major issue before the policy makers.

M.K.Gandhi himself from an article in his views paper, Harijan, of 9th July, 1938:--

"I am not an enemy of higher education. But I am an enemy of higher education as it is given (now). Under my scheme there will be more and better libraries, Laboratories, research institution. Under it we should have an array of chemists, engineers and other experts who would be real servants of the nation, and answer the varied and growing requirements of a people who are becoming increasingly conscious of their rights and wants. And all these experts will speak, not a foreign language, but the language of the people. The knowledge gained by them will be the common property of the people."

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions have been put forth for conflict resolution and peace

building through higher education among youth of the state:

- 1) To assess the availability of various policies programs and facilities in higher education, there is an urgent need to access and find out from the students their awareness and utilization of facilities, as also to cross check the availability of the facilities in institutions where they are enrolled.
- 2) There is a need to rationalize the scheme of providing free education at all the levels in the state and to reconsider the decision of providing free education at the university level. As higher education is directly related to the employment sector, the stress should be on vocational education leading to better placement in the job market. The need of the hour is to learn the latest technologies available and government institutes need to be equipped with the latest infrastructure so that students of rural areas are better informed.
- 3) All plans for expansion must have a major thrust on enhancing quality of education. Hence due care must be taken for developing skills of teachers for enhancing teaching-learning transaction, creating conducive academic environment, improving the learning infrastructure,

putting technology enabled learning into practice wherever possible ,generation of employment and alleviation of poverty in rural areas to bring about the desired socio-economic development of Jammu and Kashmir. It is also essential that the schemes proposed under selected sectors in order of priority are completed quickly and become available to the people living in the border villages.

- 4) The utilization of funds for rural development schemes in the state should be increased. To build a high quality education system, adequate funding must be made available by the Central and State governments to improve quality, at the same time, making higher education affordable to all specially for the families of rural areas where income level of the people is low and thus increasing access.

- 5) Establishment of research centers of excellence in various areas of local relevance must be pursued and these should be affiliated with the existing universities and institutions of national importance. The Govt. of J&K should focus more on research-based support to the universities and colleges. It should help in developing bench-marking in teaching and research, support curricula updating, develop norms

for efficient governance, establish and support large number of inter university centre like institutions that will facilitate institutions of higher education towards quality and excellence in teaching and research.

6) Higher education system should take interest in their feeder area or supply chain to improve quality and drop out as a priority need of the community and duty of higher education system and for their own growth i.e., higher education system.

7) The grant provided by Central, State govt. as well as other bodies to the educational institutes is how effectively utilized is a matter of doubt. Administrative bodies of the uses the funds as per their own profitability rather than priority of the institute for greater social interests of the stakeholders. The regulatory bodies should ensure proper use of funds on the basis of priority.

8) Degree Colleges, Colleges of Education and other Higher Educational Institutions should be opened in a planned manner. They should be opened keeping into consideration population of the area. Colleges should be opened in approachable areas and be furnished beforehand.

9) Steps should be taken to ensure a higher ratio of enrolment among girls. As the existing infrastructure is not sufficient, adequate infrastructure, training and learning material should be made available. Locally employed teachers should be encouraged to minimize absenteeism in schools especially in the remote areas. As in the case of Madhya Pradesh, village panchayats have been associated with the supervision of functioning of schools in the villages. This experiment has met with considerable success in reducing absenteeism on the part of teachers in Madhya Pradesh. The government of Jammu and Kashmir could try this experiment too.

10) Steps should be taken to ensure that the standards of the centers of advanced study, whether in the major or other universities, are extended, as early as possible, to other departments and to affiliated colleges.

CONCLUSION

Education in College and Post-Graduate level beyond Primary and Secondary level is important because it needs to meet the challenges of changing demands for advanced knowledge and technologies. However, expanding higher education is

quite expensive, but State Government has made several efforts to take it to every nook and corner of the State. Recently, according to the newspaper (Greater Kashmir, Dt. 28/09/2012), the Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, N. N. Vohra informed the President about the Higher Education in the state in recent years, and also informed about the establishment of many new Universities and Colleges across the state and highlighted the problems being presently faced. The Government has also decided to open Model College in every district of the state during 12th five year plan, which started on April 2012. The model college will have modern facilities and infrastructure that can be shared by other institutions nearby for collective growth. The Home Minister recently announced vocational training and subsequent employment to 40,000 J & K youths over 5 years through a special project

called UDAAN. State Cabinet has also approved 22 new colleges for Jammu& Kashmir. Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India has launched “Himayat” programme a special project for J&K Skill Empowerment and Employment (SEE J&K) for a period of five years with an allocation of Rs. 235.00 crores. Under this special project 1, 00,000 youth of the state would be provided placement linked skill training. A target of 19000 youths has been fixed for training during the current financial year. So far 8000 youths have been trained and placed. The retention rate is about 75%.

No doubt, Higher Education is reaching at every door-step. It is good to see the rural areas being covered. Hope the new Colleges would be equipped with requisite physical infrastructure and staff (both teaching and non-teaching) in rural areas of J&K state so that we empowered our youth in all respective manner.

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