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A STUDY OF INTER-DISTRICT DISPARITIES IN ENROLMENT OF GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH FROM THE ACADEMIC SESSION 2007-2008 TO 2011-2012

ABSTRACT:

Secondary Education is a crucial stage in educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and entry into the world of vocational arena. Keeping into consideration the importance of this aspect the present study related inter-district disparities in enrolment of secondary school students in Himachal Pradesh from the academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-2012 was undertaken. This present study tries to consolidate various data about school education especially secondary education in Himachal Pradesh which is not consolidated in any one department yet. The study is expected to bring about certain crucial issues which are considered important for bringing qualitative improvement in school education. The relevant data was collected from multiple sources and analyzed. The study revealed that in districts Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti there is a decline in the enrolment of secondary school students from the academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-12. Further in case of districts Kangra, Hamirpur, Sirmour, Chamba, Mandi, Una, Shimla, Kullu, Bilaspur and Solan a growth in the enrolment of secondary school students was noticed from the academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-2012.

KEYWORDS: *Disparities, Secondary Education and Enrolment.*

INTRODUCTION :

Secondary Education is a crucial stage in educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and entry into the world of vocational arena. With the liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy, the rapid

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changes witnessed in scientific and technological world is a general need to improve the quality and to reduce poverty, it is essential that school learners acquire higher level of knowledge and skills than what they are provided in eight years of elementary education, particularly when the average learning of a Certificate School holder is significantly higher than that of a person who had studied only up to class VIII. It is also necessary that besides general education up to Secondary Education, opportunities for improvement of vocational knowledge and skill should be provided at the higher secondary level to enable some students to get employment. Secondary Education is the link between the Primary Education on the one hand and the University Education on the other. While Elementary Education provides the basic information necessary for survival and opens up the gates of knowledge, University Education enlarges the bounds of that knowledge and may be an end in itself. Secondary Education on the other hand is a connecting link between these two stages and seeks to provide future leadership to the society in the various walks of life. All the teachers engaged in the propagation of knowledge at the elementary level as well as those engaged in imparting social education to the illiterate masses are mostly from the class which has acquired benefits of secondary education. At the same time, the Secondary Schools are the feeding line to the universities and colleges. "Secondary Education has, therefore, a vital role to

play in any programme of education for the community. It provides teachers for both primary and adult education. It also prepares pupils for the universities and other institutions of higher learning. The number of students who are in search of avenues for Higher Education cannot take full advantage of the wider opportunities offered by the universities unless they have received their grounding in a system of sound Secondary Education. If for no reasons these considerations alone demand that Secondary Education must be of the highest quality, if it is to satisfy the needs of the modern age”.

Several factors work against universal education in India. Although Indian law prohibits the employment of children in factories, the law allows them to work in cottage industries, family households, restaurants, or in agriculture. Secondary and middle school education is compulsory. However, only slightly more than 50% of children between the ages of six and fourteen actually attend school, although higher percentage is enrolled. School attendance patterns for children vary from region to region and according to gender. But it is noteworthy that national literacy rates increased from 43.7% in 1981 to 52.2% in 1991 (male 63.9%, female 39.4%), passing the 50% mark for the first time. There are wide regional and gender variations in the literacy rates, however, for example, the southern state of Kerala, with a 1991 literacy rate of about 89.8%, ranked first in India in terms of both male and female literacy. Bihar, a northern state, ranked lowest with a literacy rate of only 39% (53% for males and 23% for females). School enrollment rates also vary greatly according to age. To improve national literacy, the central government launched a wide-reaching literacy campaign in July 1993. Using a volunteer teaching force of some 10 million people, the government hoped to have reached around 100 million Indians by 1997. A special focus was placed on improving literacy among women. A report in 1985 by the Ministry of Education, entitled ‘Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective’, showed that nearly 60% of children dropped out between grades one and five. (The Ministry of Education was incorporated into the Ministry of Human Resources in 1985 as the Department of Education. In 1988 the Ministry of Human Resources was renamed the Ministry of Human Resource Development). Of 100 children enrolled in grade one, only twenty-three reached grade eight. Although many children lived within one kilometer of a secondary school, nearly 20% of all habitations did not have schools nearby. Forty percent of secondary schools were not of masonry construction. Sixty percent had no drinking water facilities, 70% had no library facilities, and 89% lacked toilet facilities. Single-teacher secondary schools were commonplace, and it was not unusual for the teacher to be absent or even to subcontract the teaching work to unqualified substitutes. The improvements that India has made in education since independence are nevertheless substantial. From the first plan until the beginning of the sixth (1951-80), the percentage of the secondary school-age population attending classes more than doubled. The number of schools and teachers increased dramatically. Middle schools and high schools registered the steepest rates of growth. The number of secondary schools increased by more than 230 percent between 1951 and 1980. During the same period, however, the number of middle schools increased about tenfold. The number of teachers showed similar rates of increase. The proportion of trained teachers among those working in secondary and middle schools, fewer than 60% in 1950, was more than 90% in 1987. However, there was considerable variation in the geographical distribution of trained teachers in the states and union territories in the 1986-87 school year. Arunachal Pradesh had the highest percentage (60%) of untrained teachers in secondary schools, and Assam had the highest percentage (72%) of untrained teachers in middle schools. Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh, and Pondicherry (Puduchcheri) reportedly had no untrained teachers at either kind of school. Various forms of private schooling are common, many schools are strictly private, whereas others enjoy government grants-in-aid but are run privately. Schools run by church and missionary societies are common forms of private schools. Among India's Muslim population, the madrasa, a school attached to a mosque, plays an important role in education (see Islamic Traditions in South Asia, ch. 3). Some 10% of all children who enter the first grade are enrolled in private schools. The dropout rate in these schools is practically nonexistent. Traditional notions of social rank and hierarchy have greatly influenced India's secondary school system. A dual system existed in the early 1990s, in which middle-class families sent their children to private schools while lower-class families sent their children to underfinanced and underequipped municipal and village schools. Evolving middle-class values have made even nursery school education in the private sector a

stressful event for children and parents alike. Tough entrance interviews for admission, long classroom hours, heavy homework assignments, and high tuition rates in the mid-1990s led to charges of "lost childhood" for preschool children and acknowledgment of both the social costs and enhanced social benefits for the families involved. The government encourages the study of classical, modern, and tribal languages with a view toward the gradual switch from English to regional languages and to teaching Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states. As a result, there are schools conducted in various languages at all levels. Classical and foreign language training most commonly occurs at the post secondary level, although English is also taught at the lower levels.

This present study tries to consolidate various data about school education especially secondary education in Himachal Pradesh which is not consolidated in any one department yet. The study is expected to bring about certain crucial issues which are considered important for bringing qualitative improvement in school education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives.

1. To study the inter-district disparities in enrolment of secondary school students in Himachal Pradesh from the academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-2012.
2. To provide suggestions for improving quality of secondary education in government institutions of Himachal Pradesh.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study was delimited in its scope to the following aspects.

1. The study focused only on secondary level of education i.e. from academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-2012.
2. Only Government schools were taken for the present study.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Following terms have been used in the study.

1. Inter- District Disparities in Secondary Education: In the present study it refers to inter-district differences in the enrollment of secondary school students studying in the institutions managed by the Government of Himachal Pradesh.

2. Secondary School Students: Secondary school students refer to the students studying in government institutions in Himachal Pradesh from class IX-XII.

RESEARCH METHOD ADOPTED

In the execution of the present study descriptive survey method of research was employed. Descriptive surveys investigate phenomena in their natural setting. Such surveys, however, provide information useful to the solution of problems, making future improvements and at times provide data to form the basis of research of a more fundamental nature.

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

In order to achieve the objectives of the present study all the districts of Himachal Pradesh was selected. To have the first hand information regarding different aspects of problem under study, the information was collected through observation method, and questionnaire developed for school teachers. In the present study, a desk work has been done in the various libraries including Himachal Pradesh University, District Library, Secretariat Library and various Ph.D. Thesis, M.Phil. Dissertations, M.Ed. Dissertations, Dissertation Abstracts International, Educational Survey, Journals and News Papers etc. were further consulted. The data was collected through various secondary sources which are listed below:

- Annual reports of SSA published by State Govt. /Central Govt.

- District Abstracts and State Abstracts of Economics and Statistical Department, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh.
- Implementation Framework for SSA published by Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India.
- Reports of Educational Statistics published by SPO, SSA, Govt. of H.P.
- Status Reports of SSA published by different State Governments in India.

TOOL USED

A schedule was developed for obtaining the data pertaining to district-wise enrolment of government secondary school students from the academic session 2007-08 to 2011-12.

DATA ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

The district-wise enrolment of government secondary school students in Himachal Pradesh from 2007-2008 to 2011-12 are shown in Table-1.

Table-1: District-Wise Enrolment of Government Secondary School Students in Himachal Pradesh from 2007-2008 to 2011-12

Districts	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Growth/Decline
Bilaspur	20140	24506	21202	18903	21156	+1016
Chamba	24274	24061	19663	26458	37432	+13158
Hamirpur	30968	30497	37423	37152	37021	+6053
Kangra	72933	75948	76618	80121	86178	+13245
Kinnaur	3490	4000	3857	3410	3198	-292
Kullu	24812	19461	19144	23445	25692	+880
Lahaul&Spiti	1887	1738	1714	1971	1504	-383
Mandi	56922	56734	57525	58730	61496	+4574
Shimla	49524	51333	53709	53385	62874	+13350
Sirmaur	37674	42505	40604	45750	49439	+11765
Solan	23543	23596	23475	24437	26780	+3237
Una	26672	26565	26953	27688	29308	+2636

Source:

- District wise statistical abstract of concerned district. Department of Economics and Statistics, Himachal Pradesh.
- Statistical Branch, Directorate of Education, Himachal Pradesh, Shimla, Census, 2012.
- District Information System of Education.
- Deputy Director Office of the concerned District.
- Analytical Report, Serva Shiksha Abhiyan, Directorate of Elementary Education, Government of Himachal Pradesh
- It is evident from the Table-1 that in case of districts Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti a decline in the enrolment of secondary school students was recorded from the academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-12.
- In case of districts Kangra, Hamirpur, Sirmaur, Chamba, Mandi, Una, Shimla, Kullu, Bilaspur and Solan a growth in the enrolment of secondary school students was noticed from the academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-12.
- In districts Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti the enrolment of government secondary school students has decreased from 3490 in 2007-2008 to 3198 in 2011-12 & 1887 in 2007-2008 to 1504 in 2011-12 respectively.
- In Shimla, Kangra, and Chamba districts of Himachal Pradesh maximum increase of 13350, 13245 and 13158 secondary school students was noticed from the the academic session 2007-2008 to 2011-12 respectively.

- The enrolment of secondary school students has increased in district Bilashpur from 20140 in 2007-2008 to 21156 in 2011-12, in district Hamirpur from 30968 in 2007-2008 to 37021 in 2011-12 and in district Kullu from 24812 in 2007-2008 to 25692 in 2011-12.
- Similarly the enrolment of secondary school students has increased in district Mandi from 26922 in 2007-2008 to 61496 in 2011-12, in district Sirmour from 37674 in 2007-2008 to 49439 in 2011-12, in district Solan from 23543 in 2007-2008 to 26780 in 2011-12 and in Una district from 26672 in 2007-2008 to 29308 in 2011-12.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the present study have following implications for education.

- ❖ The government must take steps to introduce softer aspects like 'smarter uniform' and greater discipline in the schools. It must ensure that each and every child gets a chance to participate in all the activities organized in the school.
- ❖ The physical presence of the teachers during teaching days must be ensured by the Education Department. Different programmes like workshops and seminars etc. should be planned and organized during vacations and teachers attending programmes should be compensated for the same
- ❖ The government should take steps to equip the classrooms with modern teaching facilities to make classroom teaching more attractive in its schools. The libraries should be made functional so that the students may take advantage of the same. It must engage agencies for the cleanliness and maintenance of the toilets in the schools. The government should ensure that all government schools are well equipped to take students, so that students are not left with the sole choice of going to private schools.
- ❖ The curriculum of different classes must be revised from time to time. It should be as per the market forces. The teachers should be well trained to make it student centered by employing participatory approaches. The Academic Authority of the state must conduct workshop and engage subject experts having expertise in text book writing to design curriculum and text books as per the levels of the students

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