

Impact of insurgency on education in Kashmir

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Abstract

Jammu and Kashmir is the only state in India that has made education free to all its citizens at all levels. Nonetheless, literacy at 54% lags behind the all-India level of 65%. The discrepancy is slightly larger from women (42% compared to the national figure of 54%) and for men (66% compared with a national level of 76%). The census figures on literacy show stark discrepancies within the state, except for Srinagar District, the valley of Kashmir has literacy rates of 41% and 47% on a par with Bihar, the least literate state in India. In these same districts, female literacy is below 30%. On the other hand Jammu district has a literacy rate of 77% one of the highest in India.

Keywords: Jammu and Kashmir, literacy, districts

Introduction

Government spending on education is relatively generous, in line with the patterns observed elsewhere in this report that the Kashmir economy is highly dependent on Government funds. Official estimates for 1998-1999 show public expenditures on education at 6% of the state domestic product. The number of schools per thousand population was sharply higher than the national average; figures of 2001 shows 7.89 primary schools and 4.93 secondary schools compared to national figures of 5.05 and 2.75 respectively. If taken at face value, the state government's figures on teachers and school enrollment suggest an educational system in great trouble. At the primary level the number of schools remained about the same from 1996 to 1999, but the number of teachers rose by 81% and the number of students by 27%. At the middle and high school levels the number of schools rose 13 and 17% respectively and the number of teachers went up by 18%, but the number of students fell sharply, the number of boys in middle schools fell by 44%, the number of students in high school fell by 24% including both boys and girls.

One should be cautious in drawing conclusions, especially since the likelihood of flawed statistics is high. Anecdotal evidence and journalistic descriptions suggest that education has been badly disrupted in those districts that are most affected by insurgency. This could help explain the drop in male high school enrollments further the low standard of law, order and security provisions are responsible for the dropout of school enrollment for both boys and girls.

Objectives

- To study the Impact of insurgency on education in Kashmir

Methodology

The data for the present study has been collected from secondary sources. Government of Jammu and Kashmir digest of statistics, books, journals, newspapers, published and unpublished research work, various search engines, are also used. Growth rate, the simple regression model has also been used for showing the relationship between the employment and production.

Main idea

Definitions

If we mention certain definitions of education of great educators of the east and west, we may have a clear picture of the importance of education.

- Universal declaration of human rights, "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. It shall promote understanding tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activity of United Nations for the maintenance of peace"
- Plato, "Education develops in the body and soul of the people all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of"
- Aristotle, "Education is the creation of sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty specially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth goodness and beauty"
- Rabindranath Tagore, "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence"

Kashmir education historical overview

In order to systematically assemble the current picture of education in a particular area of conflict, it is important to study the history of the region. Given the lingering history of the conflict, there are many issues affecting the educational development in the state. In the case of Kashmir as well as the other societies, the beginning of modern education system traced back to religion and colonialism.

Education in Jammu and Kashmir was modeled after the British education system due to the affects of colonization. A movement towards the western definition of education marginalized the traditional religious schools, and had a modernizing effect on the population educated by western standards. The first western and modern boy's school in Kashmir was founded in "1880 by Reverend J Hinton Knowles" in the premises of Missionary Hospital in Srinagar, founded as the "Church Mission Society Boys School" it is now called the "Tyndale Biscoe School" named after "Cecil Earle Tyndale Biscoe" a British missionary who became the school's principal in 1891. Biscoe is often attributed with founding the modern education system in Kashmir, through western modernization and rejection of local traditions.

The 250 students in the beginning phase were all "Brahmin Hindus" who initially refused to partake in many of the school activities including Soccer, for touching the leather would render them unholy. The Muslim majority was again ignored by the leaders. However, Biscoe introduced social parity and individualism to those selected students, who believe in the caste system and collectivism. Biscoe served the Church Mission Society Boy's School for many decades. In 1890 there were 10 schools functioning in the state on these modern lines. There was also a regular school inspector, and the schools in Jammu and Kashmir were affiliated with Punjab University's syllabus and curriculum and examinations were given every six months. The mission school in Kashmir was educating and modernizing a selected group of elite Brahmin Hindu class, the highest caste in the caste system.

In 1899, the Mirwaiz (Muslim head priest of Kashmir) Molvi Rasool Shah, founded an organization called "Anjuman-i-Nusratul Islam" (ANI) to promote religious education among the almost illiterate majority of Kashmiri Muslims. Eventually with the help of small grants from the Dogra Maharaja, the Mirwaiz transformed the seminary in to a school offering both religious and secular education. ANI spread its network of schools throughout the valley, and enabled thousands to receive education through their Islamia Schools. Girl's education in Kashmir faced a more problematic situation. In the 1890s, a girl's school was started in Kashmir by one of the women from the British Church Mission. The effort to educate Kashmiri girls regained momentum in 1912, when a Church Mission Society Girls School opened with 17 students. The principal of this school noticed in 1914 that "not a trained Kashmiri woman teacher is to be found in Srinagar. During 1925 the education system had made an incredible amount of progress for the Hindu Kashmiri Pandit population that it served. There was one technical institute, two colleges, two teacher training institutes, 11 high schools, 42 middle schools, and 583 primary schools. Two thirds of the government schools were free, and followed a set curriculum and standards for enrollment into Punjab University, so that the best students could eventually be employed in prestigious government positions. Entrance examinations were competitive, and if a student did not receive high marks they would resort to unemployment. The student would remain unemployed due to the Kashmiri Pandit society's discernment with manual labor, the only other form of employment besides State service. The educated yet unemployed group is a recurring phenomenon in Kashmir, where educational development has preceded economic development.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, also known as the 'Lion of Kashmir', was part of the very small educated yet marginalized Muslim Kashmiri Community. He also feel discrimination on the grounds of education, but finally he became the first Kashmiri Muslim to have obtained masters degree in Chemistry. He then applied to the Jammu and Kashmir Government to pursue a Doctoral course in chemistry in England, but again he was rejected. However by this time Abdullah was influenced by liberal and progressive ideas and became convinced that feudal system was responsible for the disparity of Kashmiri people. In 1931, there was a Kashmiri uprising led by Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues against the Dogra Maharaja. If the Kashmiri Muslims were historically given equal educational opportunities as the Hindu elites, perhaps there would be a more peaceful Kashmir today. By the time the 1947 partition of Pakistan and India materialized, there were 2,158 educational institutes, and the education budget was 7% of JK's revenue. Just a year after partition, in 1948, a Textbook Advisory Board was established as well as the University of Kashmir. By 1960, State education from pre-primary to higher education was completely free, and there were 5,133 primary schools, 1,354 middle schools, 559 secondary schools, 19 technical institutes, and 9 colleges. The 1965 Indo-Pak war led to the creation of the current Line of Control between Pakistan administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir. The war also uprooted many students from their homes, and negatively affected their school routine. After that in 1970s the state Government of Jammu and Kashmir established its own educational board, (Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education). In 1980s the system of education has improved very rapidly. However, economic development and employment opportunities did not expand correspondingly, which lead to a rise in unemployment among the educated. Frustrated and jobless, many unemployed yet educated

youth fell into the 'gun culture' of the late 1980s, which eventually led to the insurgency and consequential military uprising during the 1990s. JK officials stated that the several hundred damaged or burnt down school buildings in the 1990s had negative implications to the overall education system, all of which were related to the ongoing conflict in Kashmir. When Indian Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor inaugurated the first army school in Kashmir in early 2008, he stated that the education system in Kashmir was totally demolished by two decades of insurgency. The education system has slowly rebuilt itself after the two decades of continuous violence and uprisings. In the past decade, BOSE opened over 3,500 primary schools and renovated over 3,300 middle and high schools with substantial funding from India. As a result, the dropout rate from schools in Jammu and Kashmir decreased from 19% in 2003 to 5% in 2008.

Conclusion

The process of education in Kashmir since past as well as in current are facing many challenges and the question here arises how to tackle these challenges in order to bring improvement in the field of education. In fact the insurgency in past as well as in today is a major obstacle which turned the education of valley into detestable conditions. Insurgency has created many problems like the frustration among unemployed youth, less visible economic development, psychological tension and these incidences are considered as a major factor when studying the educational structure of Kashmir. It is the need of the hour to study these issues on historic lines which will help us to understand why these issues begin. Further it helps the policy makers to develop a concrete strategy towards the educational sector of Kashmir. The ongoing insurgency is a major hindrance in the promotion and development of education in Kashmir. As quoted by former Indian president, Pratiba Patil, "Education is a key to Kashmir's peace and prosperity," (AOL India news 2008)

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