

Status of Higher and Technical Education in Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir, India)

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Abstract

Higher and technical education is critical to India's aspirations of emerging as a major player in the global knowledge economy. Ladakh society for a long period experienced education given by monasteries, which at best provided basic education to the students. However, even this education was highly concentrated in Leh city and in a few monasteries. The conservative village people of Ladakh were somehow reluctant to send their children for formal education until 1981. Last decade 2001-2011 has significantly improved the literacy rates in Ladakh Division for both for both gender groups among rural and urban areas. Significant progress has been made to enroll students in the formal schools. However, net enrolment rates at middle, high and higher education levels are still, less as compared to Jammu & Kashmir overall average.

The present paper examines the access, enrolments, infrastructure, quality challenges and opportunities for the higher and technical education system in Ladakh The study results depict strong need of improving higher and tertiary education in Ladakh with public-private partnership in order to have competitive edge for maintaining higher economic growth rates and improving Knowledge Development index in the region.

Keywords: Knowledge Economy, Higher Education, Skill Deficit, Public-Private Partnership, Gross Enrolment Ratio

Higher and technical education is critical to India's aspirations of emerging as a major player in the global knowledge economy. Expansion, inclusion and quality are the cornerstones of national goal in education policy programmes of governments across globe. The role of education to

meet basic learning needs of every person- child, youth and adult in shaping human development have been emphasized through several cross cultural studies. Development economists have shown that more educated and literate educated parents have healthier lives, reduced fertility and less disease prone children. There has been significant positive impact of the quantity of primary and secondary education (measured as enrolment ratios or average years of schooling) on aggregate economic growth. The education needs comprise of both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) which are required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time. Refer: (Chabbott and Ramirez, 2000); (Topel, 1999), (Weiner, 1991) (Hannum and Buchmann, 2004, Walter, 2000), (Abadzi, 2006), (Duflo and Breierova, 2002; Schultz, 2002), (LeVine et al., 1991, 2001, 2004), (Stash and Hannum, 2001), (UNESCO. 2008) (Zutshi, B 2006)

Education and health are the most neglected sectors in the public policy framework in India. Education sector needs a paradigm shift in development strategy for generating a mass movement to take the process of universalization of elementary education forward as poverty and deprivation still remains India's biggest challenge for inclusive education development. India needs to improve education services in rural areas especially for girls and other marginalized communities (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled tribes and other backward classes) otherwise India's trumpet of being the third largest country with scientific and technical cadre in World and sixth nuclear power of the world and the fourth country to have sent mission to moon means very little for the masses. It is irony that majority of the northern states which has more than 40 percent population of the country are educationally poorer than some of average sub-Saharan countries.

India had a long history of organised education prior to the British Rule; the GURUKUL system was perhaps the oldest system of education in the World. The testimony of flourishing higher education in India is depicted by presence of several higher education learning centres at Nalanda, Takshila, Ujjain and Vikramshilal University. British record also shows that education was wide spread in 18th century with a school for every temple, mosque and village. But these traditions were not carried forward by colonial powers which introduced English education that increased segmentation of education policies to meet their ends. (Andre Beteille, 2008)

Unfortunately, after the independence, despite creative thinking and numerous recommendations from over 100 Committees and Commissions concerned with reforming education, very little has changed in the policy prescription penned and presented by Thomas Babington Macaulay and Sir Charles Wood during the British rule. Government policies have in fact pronounced educational segmentation in an already inequitable society. There were indeed efforts by philanthropists, nationalists and social reformers to introduce elementary education in specific regions and among some communities like Marwaris started elementary education for their social community. Similarly, Arya Samaj and Christian organizations stated introducing elementary schooling for meeting their own ends. Rev. Kushok Bukola also introduced syncing of Buddhist learning alongwith modern education in Ladakh region of Jammu & Kashmir. But the coverage was limited and confined to a minuscule minority.

Ladakh society for a long period experienced education given by monasteries, which at best provided basic education to the students. However, even this education was highly concentrated in Leh city and in a few monasteries. The conservative village people of Ladakh were somehow reluctant to send their children for formal education until 1981. Kushok Bakula Rinpoche – a visionary realized that, if Ladakh society has to join mainstream development programme, the role of developing quality higher and technical education would be essential requirement. He emphasized that at least one child should go to school for proper and formal education. In addition to learning modern scientific education, he also emphasized preserving Ladakhi tradition and culture. He was firmly against gender discrimination in education and played important role in making families understand education requirement for women.

He is rightly referred as architect of Modern Ladakh. He realized that, if Ladakh Society has to develop and create niche in the Globalised World, education and knowledge economy, especially quality of education at higher and technical education levels is the key for transformation of Ladakh Society. He firmly believed that education, knowledge and information must be in sync in the culture and traditions of the society and therefore local traditions and cultures must be part and parcel of education system for sustainable development. He believed that in addition to the easy accessibility of educational institutions for higher enrolments, the quality of education must be major concern. Quality to a large extent depends upon access and conducive conditions like good infrastructure and qualified human resource for higher enrolment and retention of students in schools and colleges.

In 1949 with the tireless efforts of Bakula Rinpoche the Government of India, sanctioned scholarships for eighteen Ladakhi Students to obtain

modern education at Sarnath, Varanasi. In 1961 another five young monks were sent to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka. In 1963 with his effort the Ladakh Institute of Higher Studies was established in Delhi with students from various Himalayan regions such as Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Mezoram etc. (Government of India Report, 2014)

He made significant contribution to make Ladakh society, understand the value of higher and technical education. He emphasized that at least one child should go to school for proper and formal education. In addition to learning modern scientific education, he also emphasized preserving Ladakhi tradition and culture. He was firmly against gender discrimination in education and played important role in making families understand education requirement for women. He was a role model and the torch bearer of the entire Ladakhi society in transforming Ladakh from highly traditional society to modernity. In his vision of developed and modern Ladakh, he gave the highest priority to education as he believed that education alone could transform the lives of the people of Ladakh and enlighten them about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a free and democratic India. He encouraged the development of public schools, which the common people could afford, as opposed to private schools, which only rich people afford. He influenced the government to introduce Ladakhi language as a medium of instruction in the early stages of primary education, so that children can participate and understand the knowledge imparted to them. “Kushok Bakula Rinpoche worked very sincerely for the spread of education in Ladakh. Ven. Kushok Bakula Rinpoche tried to inspire the children of Ladakh to make education one of the most important aspects of their life.” In order to spread higher education in Ladakh, he founded the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies at Choglamsar, Leh in the year 1959 and he urged the Buddhist monks and scholars that Buddhist philosophy could be studied along with science and scientific research in this institute. In this way Ven. Kushok Bakula Rinpoche sowed the seeds of modern education in Ladakh and now we are reaping the harvest. (Shakspo, Nawang Tsering and Kyle Gardner, 2010)

It is interesting to note that Ladakh’s link with the rest of the country, was first established through air service. An air strip in Leh was built in 1947 to rush the Indian army from Srinagar to protect Ladakh from Pakistani invaders, and the road to Ladakh from Srinagar was built only after the Indo-China war in 1962. Prior to that time, the region had no road connection to any part of the world. Hence, people used domestic animals, such as yak, zo and horses or mules for the transportation of goods to and from the plains of the country and Tibet, including certain parts of Central Asia. Prior to the Indo-China war in 1962, Ladakhis went to Tibet for religious education and

it was rare for the Ladakhi youth to visit Srinagar, or any other part of the country, for modern education.

High schools were opened in Leh and Kargil for the first time in 1950. Shortly afterwards, enterprising Ladakhi students started visiting Srinagar and Jammu for pursuing higher education. The absence of paved road to Srinagar meant that arduous journey on foot would take almost twenty days. Obtaining decent education for Ladakhi's remained a daunting task. For that reason, both the state government and Ladakhi society especially the Buddhist monks under the leadership of Kushok Bukola created tremendous awareness nationally as well as internationally to elevate the educational services for the children and youth from the difficulties of Ladakh's remote location. Under the expansion programme of the education services in the region, two Degree college one in Leh and another one at Kargil were established in 1994. Prior to that, a chain of primary, middle, high and higher secondary schools were opened throughout the Ladakh region covering inaccessible parts of Leh and Kargil districts. The colleges in Leh and Kargil are co-educational institutions and the pass percentage shows that the colleges are doing well despite certain drawbacks. Now two more colleges have come up, one in Zaskar and another one in Nubra. (Rehman Samina, 2013)

Ladakh like other parts of India, had been incorporated into a homogenized national Education system, with multiple different boards of education. These schools include State government funded Schools, Central Government funded schools, private funded institutions, as well as monastic and other religiously founded schools. (Stahl Emma, 2014) The state and Central Government funded school system offers a generalized, uniform education, without taking into account the linguist various and cultural sensitivities. The problem in the education system of Ladakh was intensified by the fact that there is no standard written form of colloquial Ladakhi. As a result, the the children were obliged to pursue their studies in a foreign language either in Urdu (the official language of the state administration) and English for the higher secondary stage from the early stages. Hence children were unable to comprehend the concept. (Dana Juliet, MR, 2007)

Ladakh being a completely separate (culturally and linguistically) group from the rest of the Indian regions of Jammu & Kashmir, was imposed with an education system which was not easily understandable to the students in their earlier level of education. (Pavlickova, Martina and Others, 2011). Need of the region was to make a balance between educating students for an ever- changing, globalizing world, while still maintaining and instilling Ladakhi culture, values, and stressing an importance for learning and preserving a traditional language. Discussion with several groups of people indicated that "The education scenario in Ladakh was not good, as

students did not understand and comprehend the education that was taught to them at primary level.” This phrase was usually heard in regards to the education provided by the government from the early 1970s until recently. (Mellore Beth, 2001)

There are two boards of education found within Ladakh, one being the national board, which is centralized in Delhi, and the other being the Jammu and Kashmir board (J&K Board), which is centralized at Srinagar. The government schools located within Ladakh fall under the J&K board, which sends out a centralized curriculum, with homogenized tests and teachers, who rotate around the state of Jammu and Kashmir, serving mandatory placements in different areas for two years. Their curriculum consists of math, science, social studies (referred to as “the arts”), Hindi, Urdu, and English, which the students are tested on in tenth, eleventh, and twelfth standards of their schooling. If the students are unable to pass one of these exams, they have to wait until the test is distributed the next year, to see if they are able to pass another time around and move on in their schooling. (Government of India, 2014). Majority of teachers were teaching concepts from situations foreign to the students and medium of language was also either Urdu/ Hindi/ English, which majority of students could not comprehend.

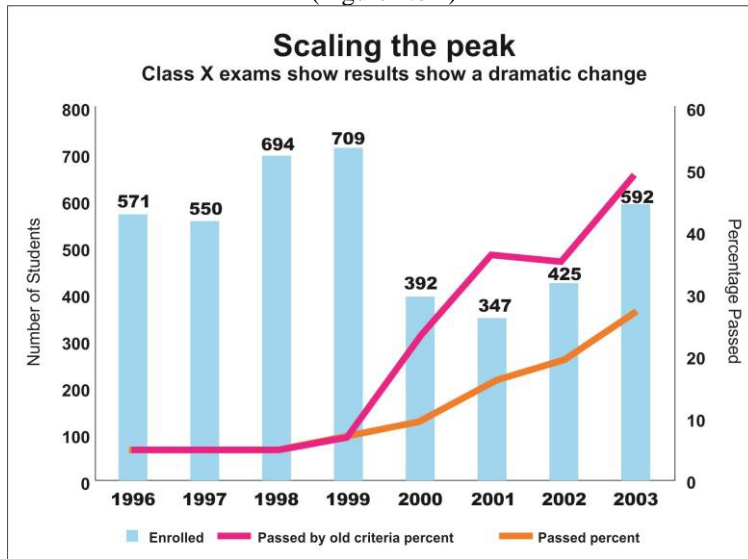
This created an issue for Ladakhi students who have “a different dialect and language altogether [and]... face difficulty in associating the things written in their books with the things in their environment,” (Norberg-Hodge, Helena, 1991). Teachers being from other parts of J&K were always on the look out to move out and absenteeism was norm especially in far flung in accessible areas. To overcome this, teacher from Ladakh even with lesser qualifications were entrusted to teach students affecting the quality of education. The wealthy Ladakhi Society were compelled to send their children out of Ladakh for education. The school system was failing Ladakhi students ideologically and culturally. In 1988, 95% of Ladakhi students were failing the tenth-grade matriculation exams, indicative of a systemic inadequacy. (ISP Field Research 2014) (Figure No 1)

With all of this dissatisfaction regarding government schools, five young Ladkhi college students decided to create a Non-Government Organization that can run, alternative school named. Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) launched ‘Operation New Hope’ (ONH) in 1994, with this the education in Ladakh gained a whole new facet. Operation New Hope’ was a campaign to cater ‘culturally appropriate and locally relevant education’ and make government schools more functional and effective in their mission to educate the children of Ladakh. By the summer of 1995, ONH principles were being implemented in no fewer than 35 government schools with effective Village Education

Committees (VECs). (Stahl Emma, 2014). The message from above results was loud and clear that Ladakhis should take education into their own hands. Following this message, one of the first private institutions was created in Ladakh, the Lamdon Society in 1970s. The Society developed several modal schools. The aims and objectives of the society were

- To fill the gaps of paucity of schools especially in remote areas.
- To educate Ladakhi students in Bodhi, and
- To instill their own tradition and culture in their youth.

(Figure No 1)



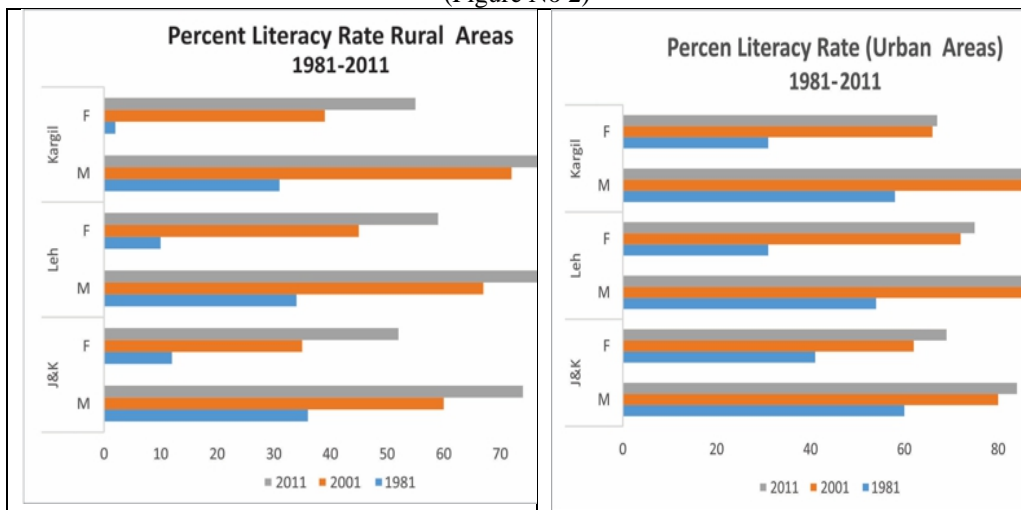
These schools adopted National Board of Examination (NCERT) at Class X, XI and XII Standard and were also providing education in their local language with local oriented concepts for better comprehension. Bakula Rinpoche during his last years also gave stress on the government of J and K for the need of university in Ladakh. He was instrumental in getting Sub Campus of Kashmir University opened in Leh.

The spread of education in the region helped people to understand the happenings in rest of India and other parts of the world. This led to a real awakening among the Ladakhi people regarding the need to obtain modern education. Ven. Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, the architect of modern Ladakh, and late Master Eliezer Joldan, whose name adorns Leh Degree College, both played significant role in developing and spreading modern education throughout the region. Their efforts are now bearing fruits and nowadays one can find a matriculate student in every Ladakhi family. Both Leh and Kargil districts have recorded higher levels of both male and female literacy rates in 2011 as compared to previous decades.

Literacy Levels in Ladakh Division

Literacy rate in Leh and Kargil districts has been increased substantially from 1981 among both rural and urban areas for both gender groups. (Refer Figure No 2) As per the 2001 census, the overall literacy rate in Leh District was 62%. Literacy rate was 72% for males and 50% for females in Leh district. In case of Kargil district the literacy rate was 58%, while it was 74% for males and 41% females. Last decade 2001-2011 has significantly improved the literacy rates in Ladakh Division for both for both gender groups among rural and urban areas (Refer Figure No 2). Significant progress has been made to enroll students in the formal schools. Literacy rate for both gender groups was higher for the districts of Leh and Kargil as compared to the state average in 2011 for both rural and urban areas.

(Figure No 2)



Source: Census of India, General Population Tables (1981, 2001, 2011)

Levels of Education

Levels of education also depicts some significant improvements for Leh and Kargil districts. A significant number of boys and girl students had completed education up to matriculation level indicating decrease in the dropout rates and improvement in the transition rates. These two districts were lagging far behind in higher levels of education prior to 2001 but in 2011 they recorded similar proportion of levels of education as recorded for Jammu & Kashmir state. (Refer Table No 1 and Figure No 3). Enrolments beyond matriculation levels still needs strong impetus especially in rural areas, which are inaccessible for higher education. Urban areas have comparatively larger proportion of students studying higher levels of education.

(Figure No 3)

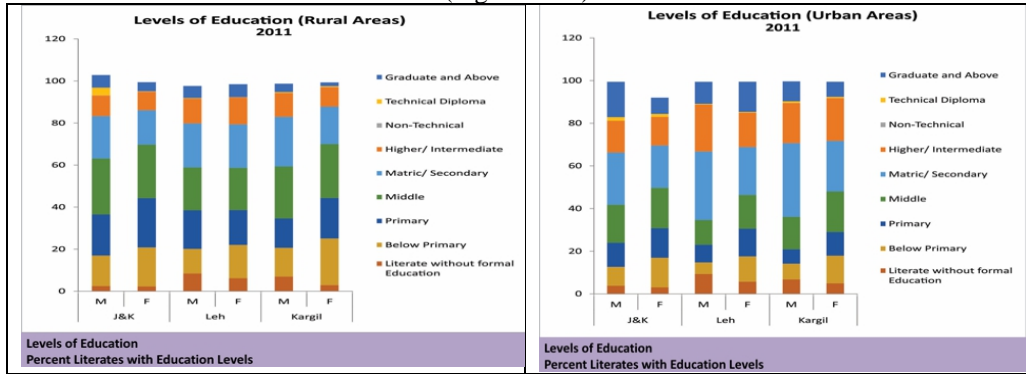


Table No 1 Percent Population Education Levels
Rural Areas - 2011

| | J&K | | Leh | | Kargil | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Percent Literate Population to Population Aged 7 and + | 73.76 | 51.63 | 82.47 | 59.10 | 81.61 | 54.99 |
| Education Levels % to Literates Literate without formal Education | 2.47 | 2.30 | 8.45 | 6.19 | 6.99 | 2.93 |
| Below Primary | 14.50 | 18.54 | 11.70 | 15.84 | 13.66 | 22.16 |
| Primary | 19.52 | 23.43 | 18.34 | 16.56 | 13.95 | 19.25 |
| Middle | 26.64 | 25.45 | 20.40 | 20.09 | 24.75 | 25.64 |
| Matric/ Secondary | 20.16 | 16.38 | 20.94 | 20.69 | 23.62 | 17.83 |
| Higher/ Intermediate | 9.76 | 8.77 | 11.78 | 12.79 | 11.31 | 9.24 |
| Non-Technical | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.06 |
| Technical Diploma | 3.70 | 0.21 | 0.25 | 0.14 | 0.44 | 0.45 |
| Graduate and Above | 6.01 | 4.33 | 5.72 | 6.14 | 3.98 | 1.76 |

Urban Areas - 2011

| | J&K | | Leh | | Kargil | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Percent Literate Population to Population Aged 7 and + | 83.92 | 69.46 | 92.09 | 75.02 | 92.82 | 67.91 |
| Education Levels % to Literates Literate without formal Education | 3.82 | 3.07 | 9.35 | 5.73 | 6.80 | 4.98 |
| Below Primary | 8.87 | 13.88 | 5.42 | 11.87 | 7.38 | 12.95 |
| Primary | 11.28 | 13.88 | 8.28 | 12.96 | 6.72 | 11.04 |
| Middle | 17.81 | 18.88 | 11.57 | 15.82 | 15.23 | 19.04 |
| Matric/ Secondary | 24.50 | 19.87 | 32.14 | 22.47 | 34.57 | 23.72 |
| Higher/ Intermediate | 14.89 | 13.38 | 21.98 | 16.09 | 18.76 | 20.03 |
| Non-Technical | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.02 |
| Technical Diploma | 1.68 | 1.37 | 0.34 | 0.38 | 0.81 | 0.61 |
| Graduate and Above | 16.56 | 7.61 | 10.32 | 14.14 | 9.34 | 7.05 |

Source: Census of India 2011, C Series, Socio-Economic Tables

Net Enrolment rates

Net enrolment rates at middle, high and higher education levels are still, less as compared to Jammu & Kashmir overall average. This indicates efforts are required to create conducive conditions for increasing net enrolments rates at middle, high and higher education levels especially for girls which is still lagging behind. This requires opening of higher levels of education institutes in currently inaccessible areas as well as creating awareness among society to enroll students for higher levels of education. (Figure No 4 and Table No 2)

Net Enrolment rates in rural areas at different levels were much lower for girls as compared to boys. The gender gap in net enrolment rates exist for both rural and urban areas.

(Figure No 4)

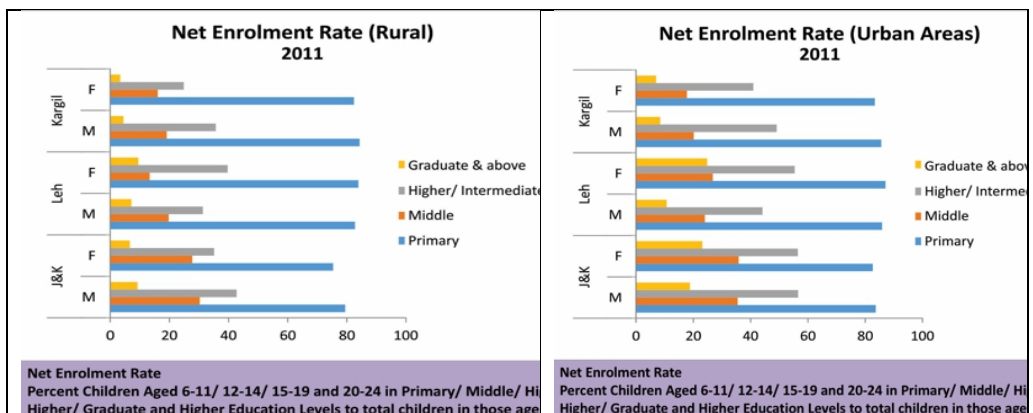
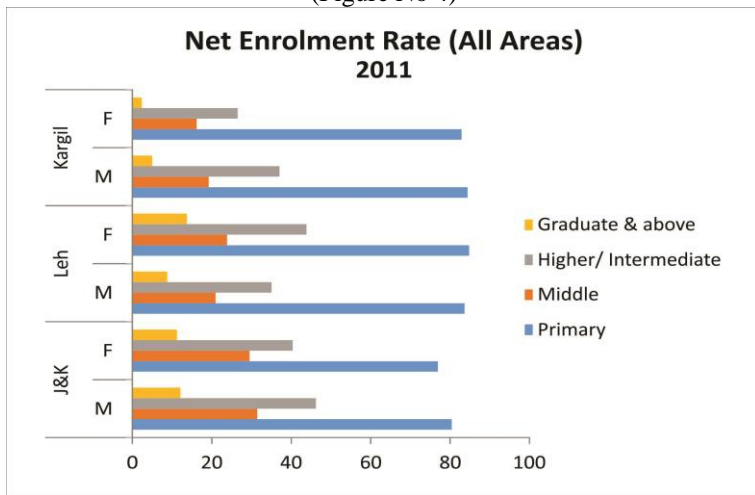


Table No 2 Net Enrolment Rate
All Areas

| | Age Group | J&K | | Leh | | Kargil | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Primary | 7-11 | 80.41 | 76.95 | 83.64 | 84.79 | 84.42 | 82.89 |
| Middle | 12-14 | 31.46 | 29.51 | 20.95 | 23.86 | 19.20 | 16.18 |
| Higher/ Intermediate | 15-19 | 46.24 | 40.38 | 35.06 | 43.86 | 37.04 | 26.51 |
| Graduate & above | 20-24 | 12.10 | 11.21 | 8.78 | 13.74 | 5.00 | 2.40 |

Rural Areas

| | Age Group | J&K | | Leh | | Kargil | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Primary | 7-11 | 79.47 | 75.38 | 82.79 | 83.90 | 84.31 | 82.42 |
| Middle | 12-14 | 30.26 | 27.70 | 19.77 | 13.31 | 19.09 | 16.04 |
| Higher/ Intermediate | 15-19 | 42.71 | 35.07 | 31.30 | 39.70 | 35.68 | 24.85 |
| Graduate & above | 20-24 | 9.24 | 6.63 | 7.15 | 9.50 | 4.42 | 3.38 |

Urban Areas

| | Age Group | J&K | | Leh | | Kargil | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Primary | 7-11 | 83.69 | 82.64 | 85.89 | 87.09 | 85.60 | 83.36 |
| Middle | 12-14 | 35.46 | 35.81 | 24.03 | 26.82 | 20.13 | 17.77 |
| Higher/ Intermediate | 15-19 | 56.57 | 56.47 | 44.15 | 55.36 | 49.08 | 40.94 |
| Graduate & above | 20-24 | 18.81 | 23.14 | 10.72 | 24.84 | 8.47 | 7.00 |

Source: Census of India 2011, C Series, Socio-Economic Tables

Education Challenges in Ladakh.

The growth of educational institutions in the region and the increase in the number of educated unemployed youth posed challenges to the region. The state has done very little till now to raise sufficient infrastructure so, that the educated youth can be engaged. Hence the number of educated youth has reached an alarming stage. There is no or say less potential for opening or growth of industries in Ladakh therefore, focus should be on skill development for educated youths. Education curriculum should be designed in such a way that the students become enterprising and employable.

Due to the fact that until recently jobs remained the only hope after the completion of education for the students. In absence of suitable job in the region they look for job outside the state... this again creates difficulties to the youth due to their laying detached from family as the road to the region remains cutoff with the rest of the country for about six months due to blockage of Srinagar Leh highway or unmanageable airfare rates.

The situation is so complicated and annoying that even for obtaining divisional level post one must rush to Srinagar or Jammu. Hence, the

educated youth of Ladakh have to remain contented after obtaining all the educational qualification with the limited number of district posts. Youths of Ladakh are facing lot of problems in getting decent education. The educational institutions opened by the government are lacking basic facilities such as washrooms and drinking water facilities etc. the room temperature most of the times remain below freezing point. No doubt Ladakh is a cold desert place and hence, one cannot provide desired facilities immediately, but certainly one can provide certain facilities under which students can pursue their education and could reach to the level of their counterparts in Jammu or Srinagar.

NHPC, a Government of India enterprise, succeeded in developing two major hydro-electric projects one each in Leh and Kargil to meet the electric requirements of the region, this to a large extent has improved energy requirements in the educational institutions of Ladakh division. Enrolment of the students can be increased by discouraging youth to go to the plains of the country just for obtaining simple degree certificates.

Education facilities need to be made more comprehensive and sustainable and there is a great need to increase net enrolment rates at higher education levels with appropriate skill upgradation and developing entrepreneurship in Ladakh. For this education, should be market oriented, through course up-gradation with ethical, morality and values education.

Conclusion

Ladakh society for a long period experienced education given by monasteries, which at best provided basic education to the students. However, even this education was highly concentrated in Leh city and in a few monasteries. The conservative village people of Ladakh were somehow reluctant to send their children for formal education until 1981. The study results depict strong need of improving higher and tertiary education in Ladakh with public-private partnership in order to have competitive edge for maintaining higher economic growth rates and improving Knowledge Development index in the region.

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