

“Status of Educational Institutions in Pragpur Block of Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh”

Deeksha Rana¹, Shweta Rana²

^{1,2}Research Scholars, Department of Geography, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla

ABSTRACT

Education is the first and the most important step in building any nation. It is that basic requirement on which all the sectors of economy depend. Hence, a sound education system in any nation determines the growth and development of not only of people, but of the nation and world. The importance of Education can be understood from its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goals as Quality Education (Goal- 4). Education shapes the human, make them rational, skilled, and ultimately, they become the human resource which will be working in different sectors of economy and building the nation. Hence, quality of education matters a lot. The development of educational institutions (primary schools, middle schools, high schools and senior secondary schools) with good quality education is the need of time. Therefore, the present study focuses and tries to analyse the spatial pattern in the development of educational institutions in Pragpur block of Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh. The study is based on secondary sources of data and for this, the data has been collected for the year 1991 and 2011 from District Census Handbook of Kangra District and Directorate of Elementary and Higher Education, Shimla for the year 2020. The data of primary schools, middle schools, high schools, and senior secondary schools for 1991, 2011 has been collected using District Census Handbook of Kangra district. Then, using z-score method, composite score has been calculated and maps has been prepared to analyse the development of these institutions spatially. The study explored how this pattern has changed since 1991 at village level.

Keywords: quality education, z-score, Pragpur, spatial pattern, SDG-4, National Education Policy 2020, educational infrastructure, development.

INTRODUCTION

In the present era, development is what any nation aspires for. Development in all aspects whether its social, economic, materialistic or in any other form is the need of the time. Development is always positive and it brings well-being for all. It is a long-term gradual process whose results are reaped in long terms benefitting all. “Chinese philosopher Kuan Tzu (BC 551-479) very rightly declared that if you plan for a year, plant a seed; if for ten years, plant a tree; if for hundred years, teach the people.” (Chakraborty and Satpati, 2013). As, the development and prosperity of any state directly relies on its education system being one the basic need and requirement, it becomes necessary to have a sound educational system. Education is the key to reach all the desired results and India has taken many initiatives to make its education system all-encompassing. “India has made great strides in improving access to quality education, increasing elementary school enrolment and reducing the number of out-of-school children. These achievements have been bolstered by key laws, policies and programmes such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act (2009), the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy (2013)”. (UNICEF India)

The importance of education can be seen from the recent introduction of National Education Policy 2020 which has made substantial reforms in Indian education system. Under the new policy, it has also been affirmed that 6 percent of GDP will be used in financing education. Earlier, in the National Education Policy of 1986, it has been stated that 4 percent of the GDP will be used in financing education. However, it was never done. In terms of financing the education system, new NEP ties heavy hopes and the results will unveil with time. Investment in educational infrastructure is very important as it directly impacts the quality. Using modern technologies, the quality of education can be refined and transformed. Sustainable Development Goal 4 directly emphasises on the Quality education. Having educational institution and new technology driven infrastructure is the need of the time as it will help the children in improving their skills and will add new perspectives in their mind. Infrastructural resources are the pre requirements for attaining quality education.

In any education two things are very important. Firstly, it is important that educational institutions should be available so that children can learn any subject they want. After availability, the second question which arises is of accessibility.

Whether, the institution is in close vicinity or they are obliged to travel long distance? Sometimes, the question of migrating to different location also arises because of the absence of the subject in the institution. Then, comes other questions like of availability of teaching faculty, needed instruments for teaching to enhance the quality of education. “Dr. Abdul Kalam believes that our education system requires certain reforms, both in terms of spirit and practicality of the knowledge imparted.” (Pareek, 2017) Still, since independence, India has come a long way and progressed as well as developed its education system through various schemes and initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Right to Education, free distribution of books, mid-day meal scheme. Much has been done and more is required as changes do come with time and needs and requirements do change.

The present paper tries to analyse the development of educational institutions in Pragpur block of district Kangra, Himachal Pradesh between 1991 and 2011. The data has also been collected for the year 2020 from Directorate of Higher Education for relating it with the current scenario. Himachal Pradesh is the most rural state of India. Being a mountainous state, development is a tedious task here. Kangra district registers the highest population in the state. It itself has many good educational institutions and is in close proximity to Mandi and Hamirpur district. These districts are famous educational hubs in the state. Pragpur block of Kangra district is a rural block with mostly agrarian economy. To examine and explore the development of educational institutions in this developing area since 1991 will help in understanding the change that the programmes and policies has introduced at the grass root level. India lives in villages as said by Mahatma Gandhi, village level analysis will help in gaining insights about the actual transformation that villages had witnessed and are witnessing in education system.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Henry T. (2000) highlights the importance of improving financial infrastructure so that children can get skilled in latest technologies like GIS and get exposure to the changing technology. Kagan et.al (2002) stresses on linking early care and education compensation to elementary school teacher salaries and building system infrastructure ensuring quality without incurring astronomical costs. Rana and Das (2004) in their study in Jharkhand has highlighted some key factors which needs to be addressed to make primary education more viable there. It includes teaching in mother language, less teacher absence, more reach of government schemes for children from poor financial background and increasing literacy rate of the people living there so that parents can also help children in attaining education.

Mehra, Bali and Arora (2012) have drawn the attention towards some key things during their study. They have highlighted to address the misuse of financial allocation made by the government in education sector under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. They urge the authorities to pay more attention towards transparency and accountability factors In government rural schools. They also suggest to give importance to factors other than increasing enrolment rate or reducing drop outs as only these two will not add on reforming education system, there are other factors as well. Chakraborty and Satpati (2013) emphasis on the importance of universal elementary education and draws the attention towards infrastructure and other institutional arrangement for effecting enrolment and retention of students. They also emphasise on achieving universal elementary education because it is very basic foundation on which superstructure of an integrated development depends.

Hannan (2013) tries to explain education development by literacy and occupational structure. In his study, he finds that low literacy led to low level of income, low urbanisation, low level of education and health facilities. Biswas (2015) discusses about the effect of hierarchical social structure on female literacy as continuously decreases from upper social segment to lower social segment. Hence, development. Mindset change are required to achieve high literacy among females. Regional Development do help in achieving high literacy rate. Saikia and Gogoi (2015) try to analyse the status of well-being through education and health in Jorhat district of Assam. They tried to bring forth inter block and intra district disparities spatially through maps. Inequality in education and health services in the district bring forth the blocks which needed urgent attention. Wellbeing in all areas could be achieved by moving forward and attaining development in a balanced way.

It has been observed that there are many factors which affects the development and working of educational institutions. Be it social structure, social and economical reasons, reforming technology, all these aspects need to be addressed to make the working and development of education institutions efficient. It has been seen infrastructure plays a very vital role in skill development, quality management and in enhancing learning process. Hence, efficient and updated educational infrastructure is of an urgent need in present times.

Objectives

- To examine the spatial pattern of development in educational institutions in Pragpur block of Kangra district (1991-2011).

Study Area

Himachal Pradesh is the northernmost state of India. It has pleasant climate and hilly topography which makes development tedious here. Kangra district is one of the twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh. It is a beautiful district

with various religious temples, forts, Sobha Singh art gallery and various recreational sites. Pragpur block is one of the fifteen blocks of Kangra district. The region is known for India's first heritage village that is Pragpur- Garli. Pragpur block is shown in figure 1.1.

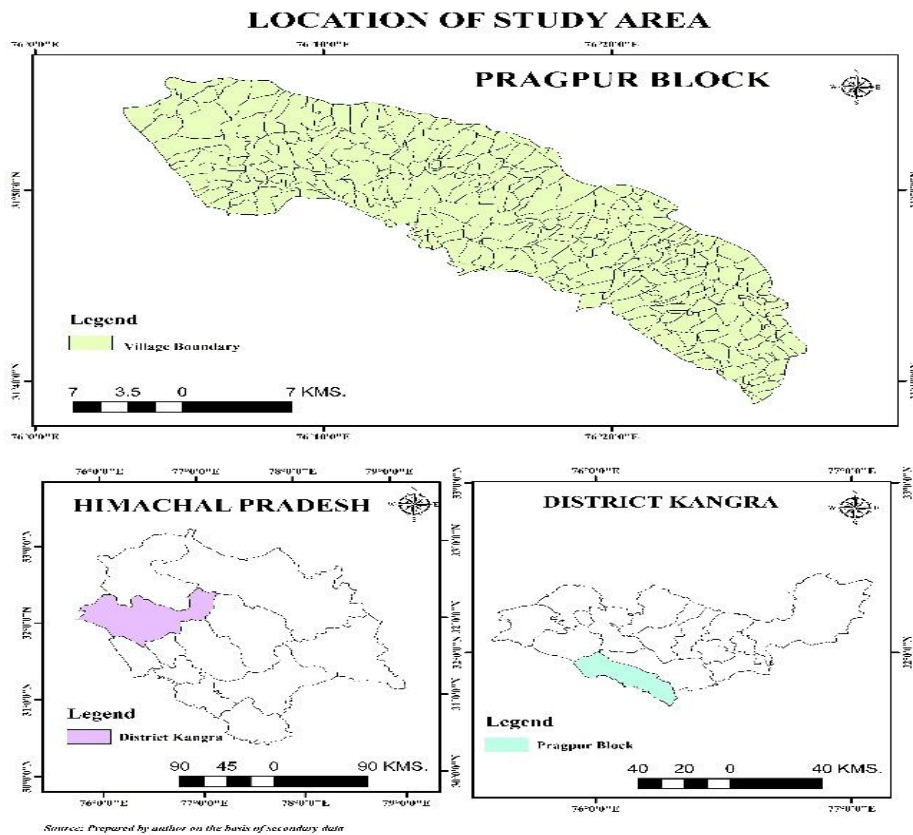


Figure 1.1

Database and Methodology

The study is entirely based on secondary sources of data. The data has been collected through the district census handbook of Kangra district retrieved from census of India website for the year 1991 and 2011. Village-wise data of primary, middle, high and senior secondary schools has been collected. For examining the overall development of educational institutions in the block, schools have been given weightage of 1 for primary, 2 for middle, 3 for high and 5 for senior secondary. Then, using composite score an overall development in the availability of institutions has been analysed geographically by preparing maps for the year 1991 and 2011. The score has been tabulated using SPSS. The method of calculation of composite score is expressed below:

$$z = (x - \mu) / \sigma$$

Where: z is the z score

x = the value in the data set

μ = mean

σ = standard deviation

Along with this, Directorate of Higher education has also been visited for collecting the recent data of educational institutions present in Pragpur block of Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh. The data has been interpreted using suitable bar charts and maps. The maps are prepared using Arc GIS 10.3.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

“Education is the basic building block of every society. It is the single best investment countries can make to build prosperous, healthy, and equitable societies.” (United Nations) The importance of education in building the nation cannot be neglected. The economy of any nation is directly impacted by their educational system. A strong education system with needed skill development leads to the development of not only of individual but of the country as a whole. Pragpur block is one of the 15 blocks of Kangra district. It is not a very developed block. Its essence lies in that it consists of India's first heritage village that is Pragpur-Garli. The present study tries to explore the development of educational institutions in Pragpur block of Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh.

Availability of Primary and Middle Schools

Primary schools are the base level in any education system. It is that level in which children learn the basic skills of reading and writing. Hence, availability and accessibility of schools to children is very important. It has been noticed that in 1991, there were 136 schools in Pragpur block which increased to 220 in 2011. Since, there are 304 villages in Pragpur block, so there is a significant increase of 84 schools in the last two decades as evident in figure 1.2. The question of easy accessibility becomes very important for young children and increase in the number of schools in villages of the block assures that education facilities are easily accessible to children. Even, Sustainable Development Goal 4 which deals with Quality Education also lay emphasis on the importance of educational infrastructure on the one hand and eminence of education on the other. So, availability of schools is one of the important factors which helps in attaining good literacy and inculcating basic skills in the children. Though, the increase in number of schools do assures the awareness and investment in the education sector but now quality of education has also become one of the major concerns in the present decade. To assure that, children do get easy and accessible education, national and state government has started certain initiatives like Right to Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, distribution of free books, free passes for government school children so that they can travel freely in government buses to schools, free uniforms, Mid-day meal scheme, financial incentives for poor and meritorious students.

It is evident from figure 1.2 that there were 47 middle schools in Pragpur in 1991. However, in 2011 the number of schools increased to 102. It clearly states that there was addition of 55 new schools between 1991 and 2011. The increase has been registered in a huge amount. India is a developing country and its human population is one the biggest resource for its development and growth. It becomes very important to impart good education to its young population to attain economic growth and overall development. The key to growth is education. Hence, to decrease the drop out rate and to have good literacy rate as well as skill development it was very significant that youth of the India are literate and well educated. Hence, many steps were taken by the government to maintain the quality of education as well. Different levels of schools were merged like middle and high so that children need not to shift to other distant places for attaining education. This led to the reduction in the number of schools which is clear from the data obtained from Directorate of Higher Education for primary and middle schools for the year 2020. The primary schools havereduced to 142 and middle schools to 36. Most of the middle schools has been upgraded to high schools. Many primary and middle schools have been closed due to the shortage of students. Shifting of some schools to other education block can also be one of the reasons for reduction in absolute numbers. In the present scenario, the increase in the private educational institutions has also contributed in limiting the number of schools as parents prefer private education for their children. They find private institutions more capable of imparting education in comparison to government institutions. It is because of these factors that there is reduction in number of schools in the block.

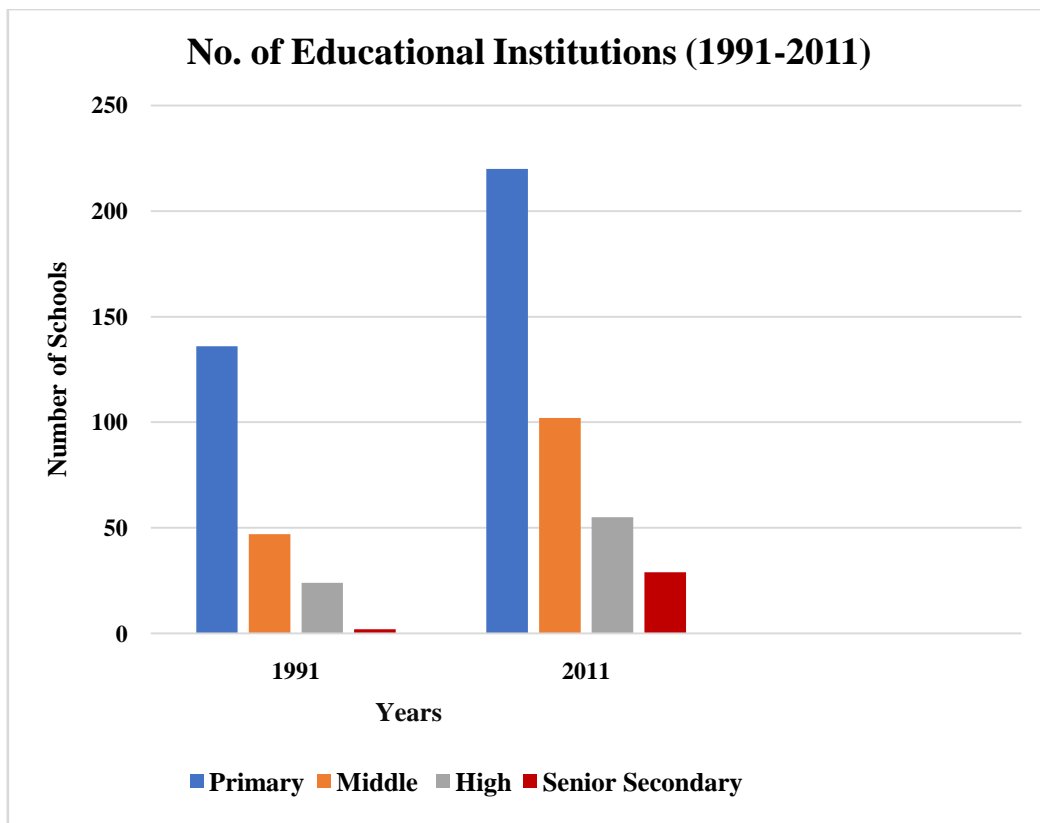


Figure 1.2

Availability of High and Senior Secondary Schools

In 1991, there were 24 high schools in the Pragpur block which increased to 55 in two decades. The increase is more than two times the schools that were present in 1991. This proliferation in the number of schools represents the awareness among the

society about the importance of education and the encouraging results of various schemes taken by the government at the state and national level. Also, as evident from figure 1.2, there were only 2 senior secondary schools in Pragpur block in 1991. The number increased to 29 in 2011. However, in 2020, these number has reduced to 21 for high and 26 for senior secondary schools. Here, also, one reason for the reduction can be attributed to the fact that some high schools might have upgraded to senior secondary schools. Also, it can also be noted that, people are out-migrating to big cities or near by educational hubs like Kangra, Hamirpur, Mandi for getting more better education services. There is huge competition among students for getting selected in best institutes for attaining further education and securing good jobs. Privatization in the education system, coaching culture has primarily impacted the education system. The culture of speaking English and demeaning native languages or underestimating some subjects has resulted in more concentration of students in some subjects and very low registration in others. Our New Education Policy 2020 offers some key valuables by which our rich heritage in terms of language can be preserved and rat race or becoming better than other can be minimised through multidisciplinary approach. Many children do not go for attaining higher education as they are not comfortable in English language. To mitigate the superiority of one language over other, new education policy has brought some reforms which will help in maintaining efficient education system in the country.

Overall Development of Educational Institutions in Pragpur Block (1991-2011)

From the above discussion, it has been clear that in terms of absolute numbers, there is tremendous increase in the number of schools that has been added in the Pragpur block from 1991 to 2011. However, the spatial pattern of the distribution of this development of schools is also important to examine so that it can be understood that geographically how this pattern appears. It also gives a general understanding about the how the development of these educational institutions has taken place with time and space in the block village wise. Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4 presents the overall development of educational institutions in 1991 and 2011 respectively.

It is evident from figure 1.3 that in 1991, there were 171 villages with no educational facility which reduced to 124 in 2011. Though the decrease is not very astonishing but still it clearly states the positive mindset and progressive attitude towards educational attainment. One of the key factors for decrease of absence of schools was various government schemes which promoted and made child education compulsory and free till he reaches 14 years of age. The number of villages having low development of educational institutions has increased from 106 to 152. This is not because schools have demoted from medium and high categories to low category. This is because of the addition of villages which were having no schools earlier. This is an optimistic sign that the number of institutions has increased and more villages has registered opening of educational institutions.

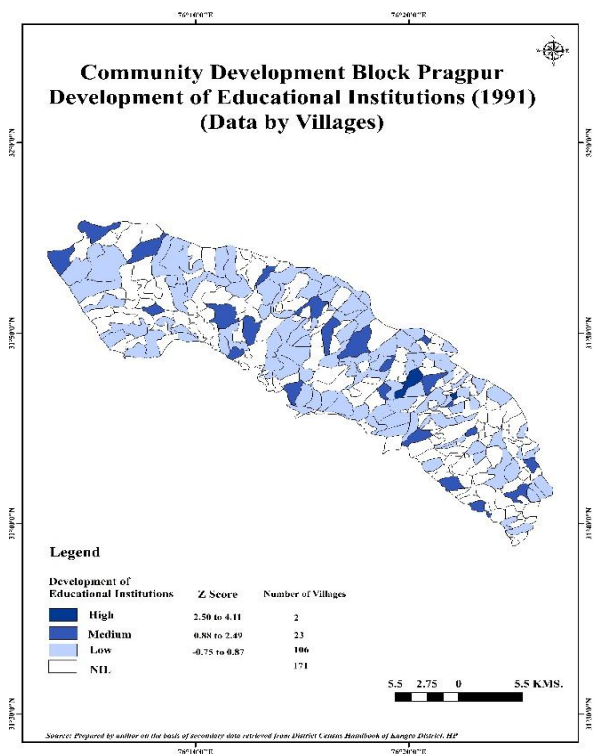


Figure 1.3

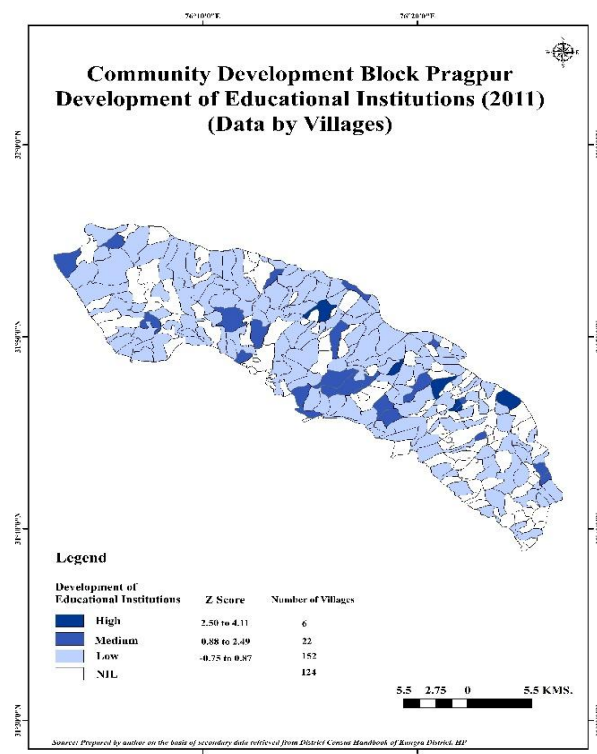


Figure 1.4

In medium category, the number of educational institutions has decreased from 23 in 1991 to 22 in 2011. It is because of shift from medium to high category educational institutions. Also, in the high development of educational institutions, there is an increase from 2 to 6 institutions from 1991 to 2011.

Spatially, the increase in the concentration of educational institutions is clearly visible from figures 1.3 and 1.4. This increase in the concentration of schools also denotes easy availability and accessibility to children in the block. Development of private institutions has also contributed in making educational infrastructure reachable to children. They have contributed in many ways in reforming the education system of the country. However, the present concern is that many private institutions has become mere money printing centres and this needs to be changed. New reforms are needed and SDG4 and NEP 2020 are some of the key initiative s which can help in reforming and integrating the education system by introducing interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary outlook into it.

CONCLUSION

- There is increase in number of primary, middle, high and senior schools in Pragpur block from 1991 to 2011. It clearly indicates good availability of educational institutions in the Pragpur block.
- Spatially, the concentration of educational institutions has increased in the block from 1991 to 2011 which shows good accessibility of institutions in the vicinity of villages.

The new National Education Policy affirms that 6 percent of GDP will be used in education system. The stated amount should be used so that new infrastructure, changing technologies can be incorporated and children can learn effectively and be skilled. As present education system is more career oriented, the basic ethics of Indian culture should not be forgotten. Ethics, morals should also be part of education system which are to imbibed in children from young age. If every village will have accessibility to quality education, India will be able to attain development and growth in every sphere.

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