

Growth of School Education in Border and Backward Districts of Punjab

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Abstract

The present research study attempted to describe and analyse the development of education in the border and backward areas of Punjab. Educationally backward and border districts of Punjab were surveyed for the study. Sri Muktsar Sahib, Ferozepur, Mansa and Amritsar districts were selected for collection of data. The analysis of data shows that in the time span of ten years i.e. from 2003 to 2014, there is an increase of 2.61 and 1.73 times in total number of schools in border and backward districts of Punjab. If we compare the increase in enrolment among border and backward districts, it was found that although total enrolment increased in both the districts but increase in enrolment of backward districts was 127.1% less compared to border districts. The average teacher per school was increased by almost 105.1% and 95.7% in border and backward districts of Punjab. Although there was considerable increase in the literacy level of the both border and backward districts from 2001 to 2011, the total as well as Male/Female literacy level of backward districts remains below than that of border districts. Although there is growth in school education from 2003 to 2014 in both the border and backward districts but the rate of growth was less in backward districts compared to border districts. Therefore it can be concluded that the status of school education is dismal in both the border and backward districts, however, it is less rosy in backward districts compared to border districts.

Education is the foundation for a vibrant democracy in which informed citizens exercise their franchise to support the internal growth of the nation and its constructive role in the world community. It supports growth in productivity, incomes and employment opportunities as well as the development, application and adaptation of science and technology to enhance the quality of life. Improvement in education is not only expected to enhance efficiency but also augment the overall quality of life. Education is the key to national prosperity and welfare. It furnishes the individual with basic knowledge and technical skills essential for work, productivity and economic survival.

A characteristic feature of educational development in India is its uneven spread, both spatially and social strata wise. This unevenness may be due to backwardness and inaccessibility of a particular area or communities within it, difficulty of access to educational institutions, lack of educational infrastructure including poor staffing pattern, and social and cultural disability of individuals and groups in taking advantage of available educational facilities. Within India all the states are not having same level of human development and there occurs a wide range of disparities in human development of India based on gender, region and other factors (Government of India, 2014). Theoretically and empirically it has been found that males are more literate than females; forward regions are having higher literacy than backward regions and high income states having higher literacy rate than other states (Rampal, 2000; Kaul, 2001;).

Punjab has been in the spotlight of history over ages and has witnessed trials and tribulations much more than any other part of India. . The state of Punjab is divided into three regions, i.e. Majha, Doaba and Malwa. The people belonging to these three regions have their own distinct cultures and educational background. The 1971 census figures revealed that 36.67% of state population was literate and with this percentage the state occupied the fifth place among the states of India in ranking order of literacy (Kerala, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat were above Punjab). According to 2011 census, the percentage of literate population has increased to 76.70% i.e. an increase of 40.03%. Although there is a significant rise in the literacy rate during the last 40 years (1971-2011), but it is very disgusting to note that the state position among other states of the country has come down to fourteenth from fifth place.

In Punjab 13 districts have Gross Enrollment Ratio (<12.4) lower than the National average GER thus falls in the category of Educationally Backward Districts (UGC, 2008). The latest education survey reports show that prevalence of the phenomenon of dropouts is more intense in the rural areas of Punjab. Sixty percent of all the children from rural areas in the age group of 6-14 years do not enroll themselves in schools at the elementary level (DISE 2009). The Annual Status of Education Report (2011) highlighted that close to 50,000 children are out of school in Punjab. The dropout ratio shows that more boys than girls are dropping out of school at last levels of both primary and upper primary. Dropout rate at primary level is 2.13 % for boys and 1.88 % for girls. Total dropout rate for upper primary is 1.51 % for boys and 1.20 % for girls.

Since ancient times, Punjab has faced the brunt of war and subsequent chaos and restlessness. The large border that it shares with Pakistan makes it even now, a sensitive and strategically important state. The Punjab State border stretch, which is 553 kilometres long, marks the western boundary of six districts of Gurdaspur and Pathankot (in the north), Amritsar and Tarntaran (in the middle) and Ferozepur and Fazilka (in the south). In case of Border States, the peripheral status brings more difficulties as compared to core non-border states. India has a long land and maritime border and with it there are border disputes with number of her neighbours. The most prominent being the land and maritime border dispute with Pakistan. Because of the difficult neighbour syndrome, life in the border belt of India-Pakistan is likely to be different than the other parts (Kaur, 2010). The border belt presents an incredibly pathetic picture on accounts, be it education, health, infrastructure, road connectivity etc. in comparison to the rest of Punjab including the newly added area in the border belt.

Sekhon (2013) reported that literacy level in the border villages was found to be dismally low. The overall rate of literacy in Punjab was 69.95 percent as per 2001 Census. In Ferozepur district it was between 49-57 percent in the border blocks, while in Bhikwind and Valtoha blocks of Tarn Taran district, it was 54.19 percent and 41.96 percent respectively. It was just 54.86 percent in Ajnala block of Amritsar district. The educational infrastructure was woefully adequate at Ajnala block. In the border areas, the institutions have broken down, literacy is low and there are very few jobs. Punjab is at number 21 in the country in terms of literacy. If the state shows a low literacy rate, the border areas will be even lower. The parameters of the Human Development Index are also low. The most crippling part of this is that they have no

means of vocalising their concerns. In our research we have found that the education level in the border areas in Punjab is far lower than even Jharkhand (Kapoor, 2016).

The people living in border areas have been facing socio-economic and psychological problems. Due to it, the border areas need special treatment for accelerated and integrated sustainable development. Majority border areas of Punjab do not form part of some backward regions of the state but are rather well developed, yet they are suffering from acute discontent, both economic and social. The social sectors, especially education has been suffering from serious deficiencies in terms of adequate infrastructure and service delivery. The paucity of teachers and absenteeism among the teachers is still a common characteristic of the education system of border areas. The dropout rate among school children is high. The status of education among women of border areas is quite low as compared to non-border areas.

Keeping in view the problem of illiteracy and non-educability in border and backward areas of Punjab, the present research study attempted to describe and analyse the development of education in the border and backward areas of Punjab.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive method of research was be used for conducting investigation.

Documentary analysis

The documentary analysis was done based on primary and secondary sources of data pertaining to previous decade (2001-2011) with the help of Five year plan documents, economic surveys, census reports, National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS), All India School Education Survey (AISE), Dynamic Intelligent Survey Engine (DISE) etc.. The reports of various commissions and committees were also analyzed to access the status if school education in border and backward areas of Punjab. Educationally backward and border districts of Punjab were surveyed for the study. Sri Muktsar Sahib, Ferozepur, Mansa and Amritsar districts were selected for collection of data.

Analysis of data:

Content and percentage analysis of data was done for studying growth of educational facilities in backward and border districts of Punjab from 2001-2014.

Result and Discussion

The growth of school education in Punjab was studied by comparing the data of existing government and non-government database of status of school education of Punjab with special reference to backward and border districts of Punjab. It was analysed by comparing the data of different variable from the District Information System for Education (DISE) reports (2003-04 & 2013-14) as well as Census data (2001 & 2011). The data is presented and discussed under following heads:

- i. Number of schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)
- ii. Enrolment in schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)
- iii. Teachers in schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)

iv. Basic infrastructure in schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)

(i) **Number of schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)**

The data regarding number of schools in border and backward districts of Punjab in 2003-04 and 2013-14 is presented in Table No. 1. The perusal of data shows that there is significant increase in number of schools from 2003-04 to 2013-14 in both border and backward districts of Punjab.

Table 1. Growth in Number of Schools in Border and Backward Districts of Punjab (2003-2014)

Parameter	Border Districts	Backward Districts	Border Districts	Backward Districts
	2003-04		2013-14	
Total School	1292	838	3376	1453
Government Schools	1291	837	2714	1070
Private Schools	1	1	616	383
Government Schools (Rural)	1185	810	2160	986
Government Schools (Urban)	107	27	554	84
Private Schools (Rural)	1	1	275	249
Private Schools (Urban)	-	-	341	134

Source: Census (2001&2011) and DISE (2003-04 & 2013-14b)

In the time span of ten years i.e. from 2003 to 2014, there is an increase of 2.61 and 1.73 times in total number of schools in border and backward districts of Punjab. Similarly, the increase in number of government schools is 2.10 times and 1.27 times in border and backward districts, respectively. However, it is interesting to note that there is a significant increase in the number of schools with private management in both border and backward districts. The data clearly reflects that there was only one private school in border as well as backward district in 2003-04, but this number jumped to 383 and 616, respectively, in backward and border districts during 2013-14. Further, it was found that there was 110.2 % and 27.8% increase in number of government schools of border and backward districts, respectively.

However, it was noted that although there is increase in number of schools in both the border and backward districts, the percent increase in backward districts is far less compared to border districts. The percent of growth in number of schools of border districts was 161.3% from year 2003 to 2014; however this increase was 73.4% for the backward districts. Therefore, we can say that rate of growth in backward districts is still less compared to border districts of Punjab. Further, it was observed that about 91.7% and 96.8% of the government schools were in rural areas in border and backward districts during 2003-04. The number of government schools

in urban areas also increased in 2013-14 in both border and backward districts but the increase is less compared to rural areas. However, the border districts have more government schools in urban areas (20.4%) compared to backward districts (7.9%). It may be added that the privatization of school education has significantly taken place between 2003-2014 in backward and border districts. But it is sharper in border districts. The onslaught of privatization in border districts may be understood in terms of function of government schools, where the government schools lack adequate infrastructure and teacher absenteeism is rampant. It was found that about 55.4% of the private schools in the border districts were located in the urban areas; however, only 34.9% of the private schools were in urban areas of backward districts during 2013-14.

It can be concluded that the increase in number of schools in border districts was more as compared to the backward districts. Further, the increase in number of government as well as private schools in urban areas was higher compared to rural areas in both border and backward districts, thus indicating that the growth in number of schools was more in urban areas compared to rural areas.

(ii) Enrolment in schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)

The data regarding the increase in enrolment from 2003 to 2014 is presented in Table No. 2.

Table 2. Enrolment in Schools of Border and Backward Districts of Punjab (2003-04 to 2013-14)

Parameter	Border Districts	Backward Districts	Border Districts	Backward Districts
	2003-04		2013-14	
Total Enrolment	167413	135351	513353	242921
Enrolments in Government Schools	167270	134960	327329	149228
Enrolment in Private Schools	143	391	179602	93693
Enrolment in Government Schools (Rural)	150200	128334	213471	129910
Enrolment in Government Schools (Urban)	17070	6626	113858	19318
Enrolment in Private Schools (Rural)	143	391	68334	53117
Enrolment in Private Schools (Urban)	0	0	111268	40576

Source: Census (2001&2011) and DISE (2003-04 & 2013-14b)

The analysis of data shows that there was 206.6% increase in the total enrolment in schools of border districts from 2003 to 2014. However, this increase was only 79.5 % for the backward districts of Punjab. The considerable increase

among enrolment of private schools was registered from 2003 to 2014 in both border and backward districts. This may be attributed to the increase in number of private schools during 2003-2014 as discussed earlier. The data shows that there was increase in enrolment of government and private schools of rural areas of the border and backward districts. However, there was remarkable increase in the enrolment among private schools of both backward and border districts. The decrease in enrolment among the government schools may be attributed to lack of learning outcome, lack of teachers, teacher absenteeism, poor infrastructure and basic amenities in the government schools. If we compare the increase in enrolment among border and backward districts, it was found that although total enrolment increased in both the districts but increase in enrolment of backward districts was 127.1% less compared to border districts. While comparing the enrolment among the government schools in rural areas, it was found that there was 42.1% increase in enrolment of these schools in border districts. However, in backward districts, the percent increase in the enrolment of government schools in rural areas is only 12.2 %. Similarly, the increase in enrolment among the private schools in rural areas of border districts was found to be 567.1%. However, in backward districts, the percent increase in the enrolment of private schools in rural areas is 191.5 %.

The decrease in enrolment of the government schools may be attributed to the poor academic record, teacher absenteeism, engagement of teachers in non-teaching work and lack of infrastructure in the government schools compared to private schools.

(iii) Teachers in schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)

The data pertaining to increase in number of teachers from 2003 to 2014 is presented in Table No. 3.

Table 3. Status of Teachers in Schools of Border and Backward Districts of Punjab

Parameter	Border Districts	Backward Districts	Border Districts	Backward Districts
	2003-04		2013-14	
Total Teachers	5054	4003	27533	12969
Teachers in Government schools	5063	3983	18188	7677
Teachers in Private Schools	1	20	10131	5664
Pupil Teacher Ratio	27.5	42.8	18	18.5
Average Teacher per School	3.9	4.7	8	9.2

Source: Census (2001&2011) and DISE (2003-04 & 2013-14b)

The perusal of data shows that there is 444.7% increase in number of teachers in border districts from 2003 to 2014. Similarly, this increase was 223.9% for backward districts of Punjab. Similarly about 259.2% increase in number of teachers

in government schools of border districts was observed from 2003-2014. However in backward districts about 92.7% increase in number of teachers is reported in this period. Similarly there was a sharp increase in number of teachers in private schools in these districts which is attributed to increase in number of private schools from 2003 to 2014 as discussed earlier. The increase in number of teachers resulted in declining pupil-teacher ratio and increase in average number of teacher per school in both border and backward districts of Punjab. The average teacher per school was increased by almost 105.1% and 95.7% in border and backward districts of Punjab, respectively, during 2014. However, the pupil-teacher ratio declined from 1:27.5 to 1:18 in border and 1:42.8 to 1:18.5 in backward districts from 2003 to 2014, respectively.

It can be concluded from the above discussion that, the increase in number of teachers was more in border districts compared to backward areas. It may be due to increase in number of schools in border areas. However, the number of schools were comparatively lesser in backward districts, thus the number of teachers were lesser in backward districts compared to border districts. Moreover, lack of transport facilities, poor road connectivity and remoteness in backward areas, the number of teachers are less compared to border districts.

(iv) Basic infrastructure in schools of border and backward districts of Punjab (2003-2014)

The comparison of basic infrastructure in schools of border and backward districts during 2003 and 2014 was carried out and the data is presented in Table No.4.

Table 4. Basic Infrastructure in Schools of Border and Backward Districts of Punjab

Parameter (percent)	Border Districts	Backward Districts	Border Districts	Backward Districts
	2003-04		2013-14	
Single- classroom school	2.4	1.5	2.85	1.4
Single -Teacher school	11.7	8.0	9.05	3.0
School with separate toilet for girls	64.9	71.5	96.95	96.35
Schools with drinking Water	86.0	82.6	100	100
Student-classroom ratio	32.3	31.5	24.0	24.5

Source: Census (2001&2011) and DISE (2003-04 & 2013-14b)

The analysis of data shows that basic infrastructure improved in the schools of both border and backward districts during 2003-2014. In border districts, single-classroom schools are increasing, meaning thereby that the number of schools is on the rise (as described under Table 4.1) but the schools are not equipped with adequate infrastructure and are running only in single room. This kind of intervention on the part of government offers space for the opening up of private schools. As the private

management in order to earn more money provide catch attractions to the parents in terms of attractive buildings, required number of teachers, infrastructure, transport etc. There is decrease in single-teacher schools in 2014 by 2.5% and 5.0% in border and backward districts respectively as compared to 2003. Similarly, if we see the percentage of schools having separate toilet for girls, there is significant improvement compared to 2003. In the year 2003 there was about 65% and 72% schools in border and backward districts having separate toilets for girl students, but the number increased to 97% and 96% respectively during 2014. The facility of drinking water was available in 86 and 82 % schools respectively in border and backward districts during 2003. However, the provision of this basic facility improved in number in 2014. It may be gathered from the Table that in 2014 drinking water was available in almost 100% schools in both border and backward districts, respectively. The student-classroom ratio decreased by 8% and 7% respectively, in border and backward districts from 2003 to 2014. This might be due to increase in number of schools and teachers over a decade from 2003 to 2014 in both border and backward districts of Punjab.

(v) **Literacy level in border and backward districts of Punjab (2001-2011)**

The data regarding the literacy level of border and backward districts is presented in Table No. 5

Table 5. Literacy Level in Border and Backward Districts of Punjab (2001-2011)

Literacy level	Border districts	Backward districts	Punjab	Border districts	Backward districts	Punjab
	2001			2011		
Total	65.6	55.4	69.9	72.6	63.8	75.8
Male	71.9	62.3	75.6	77.3	69.6	80.4
Female	58.5	47.7	63.5	67.4	57.4	70.7

Source: Census (2001 and 2011)

The perusal of data shows that the total literacy level in border and backward districts was 65.6% and 55.4% in 2001 which increased to 72.6% and 63.8% in 2011. Similarly, the literacy level of male population in border and backward districts increased from 71.9% and 62.3% in 2001 to 77.3% and 69.6 % in 2011. However, the major change was seen in the female literacy level which increased from 58.5% in border districts and 47.7% in backward districts in 2001 to 67.4% and 57.4% in 2011. Although there was considerable increase in the literacy level of the both border and backward districts from 2001 to 2011, the total as well as Male/Female literacy level of backward districts remains below than that of border districts.

Further, when we compare the literacy levels of border and backward districts with the literacy level of Punjab state; it was found that during 2003, the total literacy level in border districts was 4.3% lower than that of State literacy level. Similarly, the literacy level of male and female population was 3.7 and 5.0% lower than the State literacy level respectively. However the literacy level of backward district was much lower compare to State literacy level. The literacy level of total population, male and female population was 14.5%, 13.3% and 15.8%v lower than the State literacy level in backward districts during 2003. The perusal of data also shows that even after a

decade from 2003-2014, the literacy level of total, male and female population was 12%, 10.8% and 13.3% lower than the State literacy level, respectively in backward districts. Thus, we can say that although there is improvement in literacy level during a decade (2003-2014), the literacy level of backward districts was still much lower as compared to state literacy level.

Therefore from the above discussion, it can be concluded that there is considerable growth in school education of both border and backward districts from 2003 to 2014. The number of teachers and total enrolment has increased significantly over a decade. Similarly, the basic infrastructure improved considerably in both border and backward districts. There was increase in the number of schools having drinking water facility and separate toilet for girls. The student-classroom ratio and pupil-teacher ratio decreased and average teacher per school increased indicating higher number of classrooms per students as well as availability of close to adequate number of teachers for students.

However, if we compare the border and backward districts, the improvement in number of schools, teachers and basic infrastructure was less in backward districts. The increase in number of schools and teachers is less in backward districts compared to border districts. Similarly, the increase in enrolment of students was lower in backward districts compared to border districts. Further if we compare the literacy level, it was higher in border districts compared to backward districts and the literacy level in backward districts was lower than the state literacy level even after a decade from 2003-2014. Although there is growth in school education from 2003 to 2014 in both the border and backward districts but the rate of growth was less in backward districts compared to border districts. Therefore it can be concluded that the status of school education is dismal in both the border and backward districts, however, it is less rosy in backward districts compared to border districts.

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