

Growth of Secondary Education in India: Focus on Privatization with Special Reference to Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the growth of secondary education in India with special reference to Himachal Pradesh, by using data from secondary sources. While discussing the tremendous progress made in the country in enhancing secondary schools after independence, this paper focuses on privatization and the mushroom growth of private secondary schools since the last two decades. It is observed that enrolment in private secondary schools is rising whereas it is declining in government secondary schools. There is a growing demand for these fee charging private schools leading to commercialization of education. In this context, a perception is gaining ground that quality of education in private schools is superior as compared to that in government schools. This paper suggests that there is a need to assess the effectiveness of privatization of secondary education by conducting a comparative research on the effectiveness of government and private schools at secondary level as most of the research in this context have addressed primary or elementary education only.

Secondary education is realized as a crucial means of development world over. This is because it caters to the needs of adolescents and youth, the source of future human and social capital of a nation. India has realized it much later and introduced a centrally sponsored scheme known as Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) in 2009, focusing on the Universalisation of secondary education. As a consequence of new economic policies of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization of late 1990s there has been a mushroom growth of private un-aided secondary schools. The matter of concern is that, over the years, there is an increase in the private costs of secondary education while the public subsidy at this level of school education has remained more or less stagnant (Biswal, 2011).

Historical Perspective

Education system of our country is deeply rooted in its glorious past. We get the first glimpse about Indian education in the Vedas. During Vedic period students received education in Gurukuls and they were required to remain with their guru for 12 years. “The traditional Hindu residential schools of learning were typically owned by the teacher. The teacher imparted knowledge of Vedic mantras, phonetics, grammar, religion, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, astrology and history” (Pajankar and Pajankar, 2010). This system was followed by Buddhist period. During this period so many centres higher education like

Taxila, Nalanda, Ballabbhi and Vikramshila sprang up. Education was dominated by religion and was made available to every class of society. This was followed by Muslim period during which the education was imparted in Maktabas (primary schools) and Madarasas (schools for higher education). This system too had its roots in religion. During this period only the rich received education and education of women was completely neglected. The traces of history show that the system could not appeal to the public mind and witnessed a downward trend.

Thereafter, the education system of our country came under the influence of Christian missionaries and Britishers. In British India, the Wood's Despatch of 1854 gave the first official education policy document of colonial government that promoted growth of secondary education in the country (Biswal,2011). It was for the first time that a system of education was introduced with a definite aim of feeding the interest of the ruling class and expanding British market in India. Indian Education Commission (1882) had encouraged the private enterprise in secondary education and recommended withdrawal of direct support to secondary education by introducing grants-in-aid system. The private schools that received grant from British government were called aided and the schools which received no grant were called unaided. Despite favourable expansion policies of the colonial government, the number of high and higher secondary schools in India was around 4000 with an enrolment of about 1.8 million (Kabir,1955).

Post Independence Scenario

One of the greatest challenges of the independent India was to reorient the education system for economic independence, increasing general prosperity, attaining effective democracy and overriding the distinction of caste, creed and the rich and the poor (Rao, 2011). The first initiative in this direction was carried out by University Education Commission (1948), formed in November 1948 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a distinguished scholar and the second President of India. Its specific aim was to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements to suit present and future requirements of the country. It recommended a large scale opening up of educational and occupational institutions in the country. It also remarked that the secondary education was the weakest link in the educational set up and needed urgent reforms. With a view to reform the Secondary Education in the country, under the first Five Year Plan (1951–56), Secondary Education Commission was set up on 23 September, 1952 under the Chairmanship of Dr. A.L. Mudaliar, the Vice Chancellor of the Madras University. In the words of Humayun Kabir, the then Secretary to Ministry of Education and Government of India: *“Modern democracy demands that the people at large must have knowledge not only about their own country but also of the world in general. It is largely the function of secondary education to meet this demand of democracy”*, (Biswal, 2011). The development of school education was further reviewed by Education Commission (1964–66) set up in July, 1964 under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, chairman of University Grants Commission, New Delhi. Unlike previous commissions, it reviewed the entire educational system comprehensively. This commission recommended a new educational

structure commonly known as 10+2+3 pattern which was implemented in the country in 1986 under the National Policy of Education. The new educational structure (10+2+3) recommended: 10 years of general education at secondary school level, two years of specialized education at senior secondary school level and three years of higher education at university level.

Expansion of Schools after Independence

The system of school education in India consists of primary, upper primary (middle) and secondary levels of education. The primary level (class I to V) and upper primary level (classes VI to VIII) of school education is known as elementary education. The lower secondary level (classes IX and X) and higher secondary level (classes XI and XII) is known as secondary education. Secondary education prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of work. It is the lintel of educational edifice (Mukhopadhyay, 2007). Besides, its contributions to the economic growth and poverty reduction, positive externalities of secondary education on health and living conditions are even stronger than those of primary education.

At the time of independence, India inherited a poor educational infrastructure. The agenda of development of education along with constitutional mandate of providing education to all citizens was to be achieved. Several steps to set up educational provisions in general and school education in particular were taken. Consequently, the schools at primary (I-V), upper primary (VI-VIII) and secondary (IX-XII) levels of education showed a phenomenal growth.

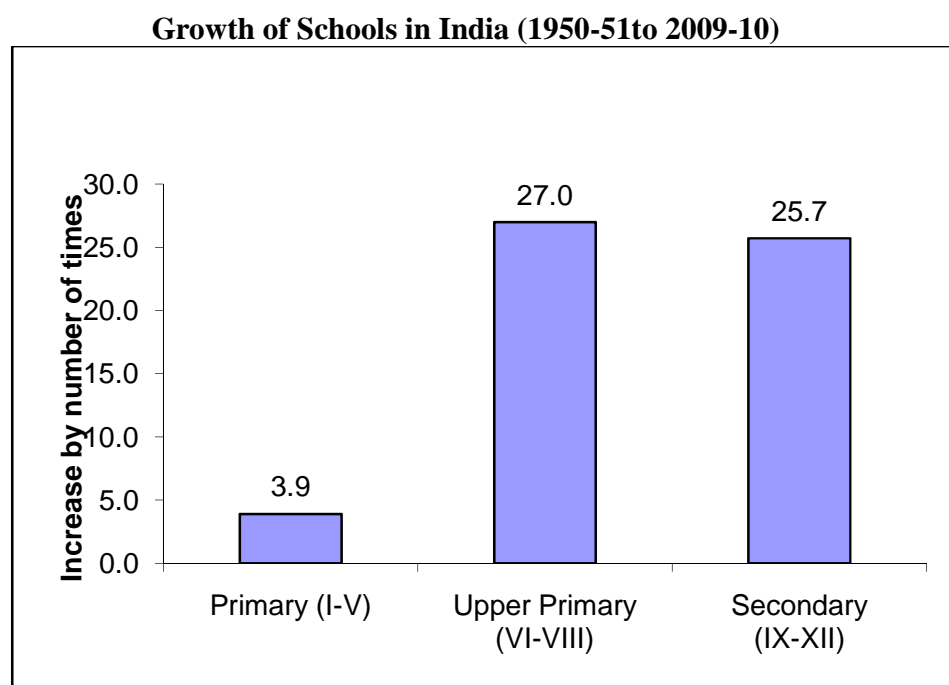


Figure 2.1.

Source: Selected educational statistics 2004-05 ; 2005-06; 2006-07; 2007-08, 2009-10

Department of Secondary & Higher Education, MHRD, New Delhi.

Figure 2.1 shows that during the period 1950-51 to 2009-10, the growth in the number of primary schools was 3.9 times and that in the number of upper primary and secondary schools was more than 25 times. This growth of school facilities at all levels reflects the importance attributed to education and the improvement in access conditions in a broader perspective. With the increase in the number of institutions at various level of school education, the enrolment also increased during 1950-51 to 2007-08.

Growth of Enrolment in School Education in India, (1950-51 to 2007-08)

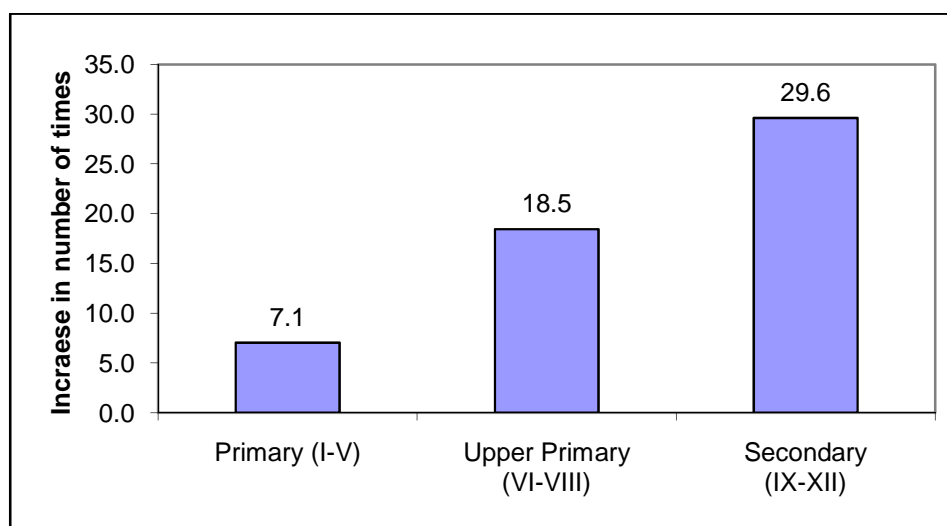


Figure 2.2

Source: Selected educational statistics 2004-05; 2005-06; 2006-07; 2007-08,

The country witnessed an exponential increase in the enrolment at all levels of school education as shown in Figure 2.2. The total enrolment at the Primary stage increased 7 times i.e. from 19.2 million in 1950-51 to 135.4 million in 2007-08 . It is also evident from Figure 2.2 that in case of upper primary stage, it increased 18.5 times [from 3.1 million in 1950-51 to 57.2 million in 2007-08]. The increase in enrolment in secondary schools increased almost 30 times [from 1.5 million in 1950-51 to 44.4 million in 2007-08]. The enrolment at the secondary level grew at a highest rate of 6.26% per annum as compared to that at primary level (2.72%) and upper primary level (4.08%)¹.

¹Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05; 2005-06; 2006-07; 2007-08,

The increased number of students at secondary level of education has been a result of growth of both enrolment and expansion of institutions at primary and upper primary levels over the years (Rani and Sujatha, 2011). Elementary

education has always been as a top priority in the planning and development agendas of all developing countries, including India. Although, secondary education grew in its demand and supply, yet it did not receive adequate budgetary weight age in all the plans in comparison to that given to elementary education. The secondary education though considered as a crucial stage in educational hierarchy has been the most neglected segment of school education.

Table 2.1
Expenditure on Education in the Plans (Rs. in Lakhs)

Five-Year-Plans	Elementary (Primary and Upper primary)	Secondary
First	85 (56)	20 (13)
Second	95 (35)	51 (19)
Third	201 (34)	103 (18)
Fourth	239 (30)	140 (18)
Fifth	317 (35)	156 (17)
Sixth	803 (30)	736 (25)
Seventh	2849 (34)	1829 (22)
Eighth	4006.6 (47)	1538 (18)
Ninth	16364.8 (65.7)	3603.5 (10.55)
Tenth	28750.0 (65.6)	4325.0 (9.9)

Note: The figures in parentheses indicate % to the total allocation
Source: Five-Year-Plans, Annual Plans and Ministry of Human Resource Development Reports

As shown in Table 2.1, expenditure on secondary education showed a declining trend in terms of percentage spending on education from the Sixth Plan onwards. After the Sixth Five-Year-Plan (1981-85), the government began cutting down expenditure to expand other welfare schemes (Narula, 2012). In the First Plan, total allocation of funds to secondary education was 13 per cent, which increased to 25 per cent in Sixth Plan. In the subsequent plans the total allocation to secondary education started declining and in the tenth plan it came down to 9.9 per cent while elementary education takes away more than half of the education budget. The decrease in expenditure on secondary education affected the provision of educational services in government run secondary schools and quality of education in these schools started deteriorating. With this, the demand for private un-aided schools started growing. Consequently, the people who could afford to pay for education started sending their children to private un-aided English medium schools (Narula, 2012)..

Growth of Private Secondary Schools in India

In India, the schools have been classified in four categories: Government (G) schools, local government body (LB) schools, privately aided schools (PA) and private unaided schools (PUA). Government and local body schools are run, managed and funded by the central/state government and local bodies like Municipal Corporation respectively. Private aided schools are managed privately and funded by government. Private unaided schools are independent schools that are not officially regulated and funded by state or central governments although they are recognized by the government and affiliated to the state or central boards of school education.

History of the development of education shows that following grants-in-aid system introduced by the British Government the secondary education was largely managed by the private agencies but was funded by the government (Rani and Sujatha, 2011). As discussed earlier, the expansion of secondary education remained in the hands of private bodies and the grant to private aided school was sanctioned on the basis of performance of school (Narula, 2012). The management of private aided school had full control on teachers as it could hire / fire them, based on their performance. This made teachers of private aided schools more accountable to fee paying parents (Kingdon, 2008). This system continued up to 1970s.

Table 2.2
Year-wise Distribution of Secondary (IX-XII) Schools under Different Managements (%): 1986-87 to 2007-08

Year	Government	Private Aided	Private Unaided
1973-74	37.4	57.0	5.6
1986-87	45.2	44.79	9.99
1993-94	47.0	37.78	15.17
1996-97	45.7	36.2	18.1
1997-98	45.7	34.85	19.4
1998-99	45.2	34.12	20.68
2001-02*	42.5	33.99	23.56
2002-03*	42.8	29.3	27.95
2003-04*	39.3	28.67	32
2004-05*	41.1	29.35	29.6
2005-06*	38.9	28.8	32.3
2006-07*	36.3	28.6	35.06
2007-08*	37.3	28.19	34.51

* Provisional

Note: 'Government' includes local body schools which are fully managed and funded by the state governments.

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05; 2005-06; 2006-07; 2007-08, Govt. of India

Since early 1970s following central government ruling, the teachers in private aided schools received their salary directly from the state and were recruited by a government appointed commission but their routine operations were governed by the private management (Narula, 2012; Kingdon, 2008). Gradually the quality of private aided schools had been deteriorating. It may be because teachers in these schools became less accountable for students' performance as teachers' salaries were no more based on student performance. The private managements also lost control on teacher's functioning and this ultimately lead to decline in growth of private aided schools. Table 2.2 shows that at the country level, during 1973-74 the private aided secondary schools were in majority exceeding the proportion of government schools. It is evident that the percentage share of private aided schools declined sharply from 57 per cent in 1973 to 28 per cent in 2007. The proportion of government schools showed a marginal but inconsistent improvement during this period. However, there has been a consistency in the substantial rise in the proportion of private un-aided schools up to 2003. After 2004, the percentage of aided private schools decreased and that of private un-aided schools increased. The percentage of private un-aided schools notably registered a leap of almost six times. This suggests inadequate investment by government on secondary education on the one hand and the increasing participation of private sector on the other. The high proportion of private secondary schools reflects greater demand for these schools at the secondary level because of limited support by government whose priority was investment in primary education (Tooley, 2000).

The National Policy of Education (NPE), 1986 emphasized promotion of private providers in education. However, the major push to private un-aided schools in the country was provided by new economic policies – Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization initiated in the early 1990s. These new policies brought with them improved access and choice for consumers. A regular survey of government and private schools in Himachal Pradesh shows that enrolment in private schools registered a quantum jump from 7% in 2005 to 24% in 2008 and 28.9% in 2012 (ASER, 2012). The credit for this growth of private schools may also be given to the *Liberalization* policy of 1990s. The demand for such schools is on the rise. The government and international agencies are curious to know about this phenomenon. The Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE, 1999) in five north Indian states painted a bleak picture of government schools in terms of poor physical facilities and low level of teaching. It strongly highlights that the private schools in India are much better at serving clients than government schools, even for the poor.

The issue of mushroom growth of private schools has deeply interested the social science researchers too. They have tried to investigate the reasons for growth of private schools in comparison to that of the government schools. In India and other developing countries like, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Uganda and Bangladesh, the ever growing demand for fee-charging private schools, *a priori*

is based on the endemic problem of teacher absenteeism, teachers shirking work and lack of commitment in government schools (Kingdon and Muzammil, 2001; Kremer et al. 2004; Wadhwa, 2009). Though the government schools are equipped with well trained well experienced and well paid teachers, the lower quality of teaching in these schools is leading to thriving private unaided education (Retnakumar and Arokiasamy, 2006). A general perception that is gaining ground is that quality of education in private schools is better as compared to that in government schools (Alderman et al. 2001; Agarwal, 2000; Aslam, 2007). Private schools are an alternative to the parents who are dissatisfied with government or public schools (National Centre for Education Statistics, 1997). Today parents are more aware and interested in their child's education. When choosing a secondary school for their children based on their paying capacity, parents look for strict discipline, the quality of facilities (sports, library, laboratories etc.), reputation of school for academic achievement, and the likely implications for their ward's career opportunities (Masters, 2004). Parents believe that private schools provide better education in terms of higher academic achievement and future opportunities for their children than the government schools (Baird, 2009). These have been cited as some of the important reasons for the choice of parents to enrol their children in private schools. There is high parental awareness regarding selection of the schools for their wards because of high adult literacy. Thus, the greater preference of parents for private education is because of a number of factors such as demand for quality education, dissatisfaction with the performance of government schools and ability of people to afford private education due to an increase in the average household income (Agarwal, 2000; Desai et al., 2008). Consequently, a large number of parents are withdrawing their wards from the government schools, resulting in a huge rush for admission in private schools. The increased aspiration of parents towards education is the key to emergence of self-financing private school model of education (Retnakumar and Arokiasamy, 2006).

The consumer choice and enhanced income level coupled with state policies on 'no grant-in-aid' and reduced investment on secondary education led to the growth of private un-aided sector of education' (Rani and Sujatha, 2011). However as per the findings of Tooley(2000), in all the states of India, the single factor for growth of private schools was bad condition of govt. schools. In a study on government and private primary schools in twenty states in rural India, Murlidharan and Kremer (2006) reported that private unaided fee-charging schools are wide-spread in rural areas, where government schools are dysfunctional. Most of the micro and macro studies trying to assess school quality differentials in India have found government funded schools to be dysfunctional in terms of overall teaching quality and infrastructure. The increased share of private unaided schools indicates that parents had been willing to pay for school education that is perceived to be of good quality in terms of accountability of teacher and academic achievement of students. Thus, it can be interpreted that high demand for private un-aided secondary schools arose primarily because of the deteriorating condition of government schools. Currently, out of 1.69 crore secondary schools, more than 60% are under private management (World Bank, 2011).

There has been a non-uniform growth of private unaided secondary and senior secondary schools in different states of India since the early 1990s. The private secondary and senior secondary schools grew very fast in some states like Haryana, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan etc. In Himachal Pradesh, which has always been considered as one of the best performing states in schools-education, the growth of private un-aided schools at secondary and senior secondary levels increased at a faster rate after 1990s².

²Source: Selected Educational Statistics, 1993-94 & 2007-08, MHRD Govt. of India New Delhi

Growth of Private Secondary Schools in Himachal Pradesh (H.P)

The state of Himachal Pradesh is located in the North-West of India. The state experienced a phenomenal growth in school education sector after attainment of statehood in January, 1971. A large number of schools were opened and upgraded.

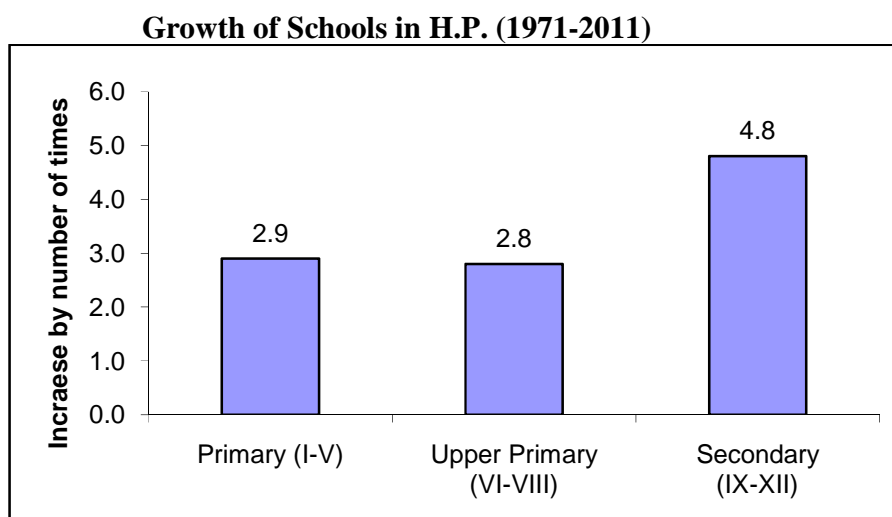


Figure 2.3

Figure 2.3 indicates that while the growth in the number of primary and upper primary schools in Himachal Pradesh was almost 3 per cent, the secondary and senior secondary schools grew by nearly 5 per cent. A noteworthy feature of the educational development in the state has been the spectacular growth of private un-aided schools. If we look at the management-wise growth of schools at lower secondary and senior secondary level separately, we will find that there was a huge growth in the number of private unaided schools at these levels after 1990.

Table 2.3
Year-wise Distribution of Lower Secondary (IX-X) Schools in Himachal Pradesh under Different Managements (%)

Year	Government	Private Aided	Private Un-aided

1986	87.7	7.7	4.5
1993	85.5	4.8	9.5
2001-02	78.8	2.5	18.7
2004-05	74.0	1.8	24.3
2006-07	62.1	0	37.9
2007-08	63.5	1.9	34.6
Percentage Growth Rate	-1.25	-3.42	30.4

Note: 'Government' includes local body schools which are fully managed and funded by the state governments.

Source: (i) 5th, 6th & 7th All India School Educational Surveys MHRD, New Delhi.
(ii) Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD, New Delhi.

As shown in Table 2.3 above, the percentage of government lower secondary schools including local body schools in Himachal Pradesh decreased from 88 per cent in 1986 to 64 per cent in 2008. The percentage of private aided schools also decreased in this period. In Himachal Pradesh, the private aided schools are becoming increasingly rare as some are converted to government schools, while others simply phase out with reduced government funding (Baird, 2009). However, the percentage of private unaided lower secondary schools showed a steep increase from 5 per cent in 1986 to 35 per cent in 2008. Thus, whereas the percentage growth rate of government and private aided schools showed a decline of 1.25 % and 3.42 % respectively, private schools grew at a rate of about 30 %. With the deterioration of the quality of education in government schools, the well educated and economically forward people started sending their children to fee charging private schools. This increased the demand for private un-aided schools in the state.

Table 2.4
Year-wise Distribution of Senior Secondary (XI-XII) Schools in Himachal Pradesh under Different Managements (%)

Year	Government	Private Aided	Private Un-aided
1986	93.3	4.2	2.5
1993	71.4	8.3	20.3
2001-02	77.4	2.7	19.9
2004-05	75.9	2.4	21.7
2006-07	76.8	0	23.2
2007-08	74.3	0.8	24.8
2008-09	73.0	0.8	26.2
Percentage Growth Rate	-0.94	-3.51	41.4

Note: 'Government' includes local body schools which are fully managed and funded by the state governments.

Source: 5th, 6th & 7th All India School Educational Surveys; Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD, New Delhi; Directorate of Education, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.

Similarly, the percentage of private unaided senior secondary schools in the state increased from almost 3 per cent in 1986 to 26 per cent in 2009 as shown in Table 2.4. With the rise in the number of private schools, the growth in enrolment in these schools has also been increasing.

Table 2.5
Management-wise Enrolment in Senior Secondary Schools in HP: 1999 to 2009
(Lakhs)

	Government	Private
1999-00	2.85	0.47
2000-01	2.97	0.42
2001-02	3.05	0.53
2002-03	3.41	0.54
2003-04	3.16	0.79
2004-05	3.49	0.79
2005-06	3.55	1.03
2006-07	3.71	1.27
2007-08	2.54	1.30
2008-09	2.72	1.33
Compound Growth Rate per Annum	-2%	16%

Source: Directorate of Education, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, Annual Report.

If we look at Table 2.5, we will find that there is a slight decrease in the enrolment in the government schools during 1999-2009. It is also evident that in the span of ten years since 1999, the enrolment in government schools decreased whereas, the enrolment in private senior secondary schools increased almost three times. The number of students in government schools decreased at the rate of 2% per annum and that in private schools increased at the rate of 16% per annum, as indicated by compound growth rate values.

The growth in the number of private schools in Himachal Pradesh is a reflection of the falling standards in government funded and managed schools (Sanan, 2008). Another cause for this increase in the enrolment in private schools is increased preference of the parents to admit their wards to private unaided schools. More and more parents now-a-days are becoming aware of the benefits of education for future employment and earnings. As a consequence, the demand for good education is rising. After completing school education many students pursue higher education admission to which has become competitive. Therefore, students look for school which provides

quality education. Private un-aided schools generally fulfill the demand of students for quality education, as not only they stress on academics, but also in all-round development of the personality (Narula, 2012). Because of these reasons, the enrolment at the secondary and senior secondary levels has started increasing.

Conclusion

Parental choice for quality education coupled with state policies on no grant in aid and declined investment on secondary education led to the growth of private unaided sector of education in India as well as in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The dissatisfaction with functioning of government schools is significantly instrumental for the advocacy of private schools. However, if the better motivated families keep on shifting to private school system, it may further affect the quality of government schools adversely to a level which may be difficult to reverse. Before treating private education as the panacea for the ills of government education and arriving at necessary policy implications, research in this field must evaluate the evidence. Most of the research in this direction has been conducted only for primary and elementary schools. Secondary education being an important stage of school education requires a serious attention of policy makers as well as the researchers. This calls for a need to explore the issue of privatization of secondary education from quality perspectives in different states of India. Government must also develop an effective regulatory and monitoring mechanism for focusing on the quality provided by both government and private schools so that a competition between both types of schools takes place to benefit the children.

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