

PROGRESS IN LITERACY AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: THE STUDY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, KERALA AND MIZORAM

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Abstract

The present paper compares the progress of elementary education in high literacy states, viz., Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Mizoram and critically examines the current status using DISE data. It highlights the contributing factors and circumstances responsible for the educational growth of these three states. Kerala has achieved almost the goal of univerzalisation of elementary education and the States of Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram have traversed a great path in this direction. In quantitative terms all the states have made a bounding success which is evident from the figures on literacy rates, enrolment ratio, transition rates etc. Active role of Christian missionaries, affirmative actions of the State as well as the community support have been the fuelling force for this significant mileage. In Kerala the contribution of missionaries' activists, reform movements especially among the backward classes, working class and the peasantry mobilization have led to the rise in literacy level and enrolment of children. In Mizoram, too the activities of the Christian missionaries and the state initiative have been instrumental in improving the literacy level, schooling facilities and enrolments. Contrary to this, in Himachal Pradesh the State commitment towards education for all with a focus on disadvantaged groups and backward areas has brought the schooling revolution. Besides, parental awareness, community involvement and greater investment in education have facilitated the more equitable educational growth in the state. The paper argues that the pathways to achieve UEE differ significantly from state to state and no single pathway can be considered to produce results. The pathways and strategies may have to be evolved in tandem with local conditions.

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Introduction

India is a country of great diversity and disparities. Education is one of the areas in which spatial, social and regional disparities are particularly evident. Large variations are observed in the literacy levels, enrolment, retention and dropout rates across the states of India. Few states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal still project a dismal picture with low literacy rates, low participation rates, and high dropout rates. For them the goal of univerzalisation of elementary education appears to be a difficult task to be accomplished in the near future. Whereas few other states like Kerala, Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh have been moving ahead satisfactorily towards this goal of UEE. By adopting diverse methods and approaches, all the three states have been successful in increasing the literacy rates as well as improving the access and participation of children. The demographic, physical and socio economic characteristics of these states are dissimilar, but in terms of the educational growth they can be termed as “progressive states”. The question is as to why few states are able to attain better educational progress in comparison to the other states. What kind of policies and strategies yield better results? In the above context, the paper makes an attempt to identify the factors that have been instrumental in bringing the educational improvement in these states. The paper tries to measure progress in terms of the literacy rates, and other school performance indicators like enrolment ratio, dropout rates, transition rates, examination results etc. The analysis is primarily based on using the data of District Information System for Education (DISE).

The paper argues that the commitment of the state, involvement of the community, parental interest and investment in education are some of the significant factors that lead to educational growth and progress. The paper is organized as follows. Section I gives salient features of selected states with reference to various demographic features, the current level of literacy rates is ascertained. Section II examines the educational progress towards the goal of universal elementary education measured in terms of the proportion of out of school children, current attendance rate, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Net Enrolment Ratio. Efficiency related indicators like transition rate, repetition rate and dropout rate have also been examined. A plausible explanation with regard to the factors contributing to educational progress for each state has been discussed.

Demographic Features

Himachal Pradesh is almost wholly mountainous state located in the Northern region of India. The state has a total population of 6.1 million, of which, only 10 percent live in urban areas. The rural population is spread out in a large number of small, sparsely populated hamlets across the state. The decennial growth rate of population in the state over 1991-2001 has been only 17.53 percent against the national growth rate of 21.34 percent. The population density is 109 persons per sq.km. against the national average of 324 persons. The number of females per 1000 male in the state was 970 as against 933 at the national level. Himachal Pradesh is passing through a demographic transition with low birth rate of 17.4 as against 23.1 at all India level; crude death rate of 7.1 in comparison to 7.4 at all India level; infant mortality rate of 4 per thousand as against 55 at all India Level (SRS, 2007).

The population of Mizoram is 0.89 million, according to 2001 census and is scattered over 9 districts, 26 blocks and 817 villages. The State has a density of 42 persons per sq. km. The population of the State has grown by 29.18% over the period 1991-2001 as against of 21.54 % at the national level. The sex ratio of Mizoram at 935 females to 1000 males is higher than the national average of 933 but has significantly declined since 1901 as that time the number of females was 1113 against 1000 males. One of the significant reasons for high population growth rate is the high crude birth rate of 18.2 and decline in the crude death rate which is around 5.2 (SRS 2007). Total fertility rate is higher with 2.9 (NFHS III) as against the All India level of 2.7.

To the extreme south west of the Indian peninsula lies the state of Kerala with a total population of 31,838,619 (318.4 million) that is nearly 3.44 per cent of the country's population. Population density is 819 persons per sq.km., third in India and clocks at thrice the national average. The coastal belt is thickly populated, and it is the hilly tracts where the density of population is the lowest. Kerala's sex ratio is unique among the Indian states in as much as it is the only one with an excess of females and the only one where this excess has grown consistently during the past century. The sex ratio recorded in 2001 census is 1058 females per 1000 males. Crude birth rate of the state is 1.8 per thousand while the crude death rate is 6.4, total infant mortality rate is as low as 13 against 55 at the national level. (SRS 2007). Total fertility rate in the state is also low with 1.9 per thousand (NFHS III).

The demographic features of these three states indicate a low death rate and infant mortality rate. Except for Mizoram the other two states have low birth rate in comparison

to all India levels. The positive development in the social indicators too has an impact on the educational progress and growth.

The salient demographic features of the three states are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Demographic Features of Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Mizoram

State	Population (in million)*			Decennial Growth Rate in population	Average Growth Rate	Sex Ratio	Area(sq km)	Density	No of Districts#	No of Villages
	T	M	F							
Himachal Pradesh	6.1	3.08	2.9	17.54	1.62	968	55673	109	12	18206
Kerala	31.8	15.5	16.3	9.42	0.9	1058	38863	819	14	2989
Mizoram	?	4.60	4.31	28.82	2.56	935	21081	420	8	900
India	1027	531.3	495.7	21.34	2.1	933	3287590	324	624	573352

Source: *Census of India, 2001

DISE

Literacy Scenario

A person is considered literate if he/she can read and write with understanding in any language. However a person who can merely read but can not write is not recorded as literate in Census. The 2001 Census figures show that the literacy rate for India stands at 65.38 per cent and the male literacy rate is 75.85 percent in comparison to 54.16 per cent for females. Wide disparity in the literacy rates is observed among different states. While the literacy rates are low for the states of Bihar (47%), Uttar Pradesh(56.3%) and Rajasthan (60.4%), these three states (Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Mizoram) have made remarkable improvements in the literacy levels that can be seen from figures presented in the tables below:

Table 2: Literacy Rates of Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram

Year	Kerala			Himachal Pradesh			Mizoram		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1991	93.62	86.17	89.81	75.41	52.26	63.86	85.61	78.60	82.27
2001	94.24	87.72	90.92	85.35	67.42	77.83	90.72	86.75	88.49

Source: Census of India 2001, India

Table 2a: Literacy Rate for Persons of age 0 years and above (per 1000 persons) for Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram

Year	Kerala			Himachal Pradesh			Mizoram		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2004-05	856	814	850	793	653	791	901	897	885

Source: NSSO 61st Round (July 2004 -June 2005)

The state of Kerala has a unique place in the literacy map of India, with a literacy rate of 90.92 percent. The state ranks first in the country with a high literacy rate. The roots of Kerala's literacy culture can be traced back at least to the Hindu rulers of the 19th century. The Queen of Trivandrum issued a royal decree in 1817 that said, "The state should defray the entire cost of the education of its people in order that there might be no backwardness in the spread of enlightenment." Christian missionaries gave a further boost to education by setting up schools for the poor and oppressed, bypassing traditions that had allowed only high-caste Indians to attend school. In addition to this, land-reform measures established after the state of Kerala was formed in 1956 also contributed to the success of its literacy movement. When every family owns a piece of land, no matter how small, they have a sense of belonging and security. Then, they can plan for the future, and education of their children becomes a part of that planning.

Even in 1951, literacy was high as compared to national level. By the late 1980s it was clear that Kerala had not only achieved mass literacy, it had also been able to ensure that the overwhelming majority of its children entered school.

Kerala was the first state to declare total literacy in one district known as Ernakulam in 1989. Subsequently, National Literacy Mission declared total literacy in the whole state of Kerala on April 18, 1991. Due to historical reasons, Kerala has progressed considerably but it became a widespread movement in mid 1980s (Box 1).

The 'each one teach one approach', building on learners experience and using a range of teaching methods such as song, drama tailored to learners individual needs, commitment of the volunteers, had proved very useful in the spread of literacy. Door to door survey for learners especially households of the marginalized groups was made. An average of

150 hours of education per learner was imparted. Sustained and high profile publicity supported by all newspapers was carried out to bring the awareness among people on the advantages of education.

Box 1

Literacy Movement in Kerala

Literacy movement in Kerala is a memorable experience. Remote and otherwise sleepy villages were lit with hundreds of Akshara Deepams (lamps of letters) every evening. More than 1.8 lakh literacy classes, involving over three lakh voluntary instructors, were conducted for a 14-month period during the campaign. Eighteen lakh illiterates learnt the art of reading and writing and the state's literacy rate surged to 95 per cent, even exceeding the literacy rate in the US. The tribal literacy rate went up from 57.22 per cent to 80.71 per cent in 2001. In 1990 the Muslim heartland of Malappuram alone, 3.6 lakh people were made literate. Various missionary societies had set up numerous schools including several for members of lower castes.

However, National Literacy Mission in 2007, reported that Mizoram has superseded Kerala with 91.1 percent literacy rate while Kerala recorded 89.9 percent of literacy rates. NSSO data also reveals better literacy rates for Mizoram in comparison to Kerala (Table 2A). Kerala State Literacy Mission (2002), the nodal agency for the famous literacy campaign, has come out with its own evaluation report, which admits that many of the neo-literates may have lapsed into illiteracy. The significant reason for the poor performance could be contributed to the poor monitoring of the activities and training of volunteers, and lack of post campaign support to the neo-literates. Despite the reversal, Kerala has achieved UNESCO's fourth level of literacy (over 80 to 90%) and is targeting for fifth level of literacy (90 to 95%). The state is focusing on continuing education which includes eradication of illiteracy from the illiterate areas as well as providing continuing learning to neo-literates.

North East should be proud of Mizoram that it ranks second highest in literacy in India as per the data provided in 2001 Census. Mizoram has made remarkable progress over the years. In 1951, the literacy rate of Mizoram was only 19.05 percent which increased to 82.27 per cent in 1991 with women literacy rate of 78.60 percent, highest in the whole Northeast. It further increased to 88.49 per cent in 2001, next to Kerala only. The male-female literacy gap is the smallest for Mizoram (4.56%) followed by Kerala (6.52%). The high literacy rate is attributed to the influence of the church, as Mizos are encouraged to read the Bible from a young age.

Till the late 1980s, Mizoram was making a reasonably good progress in literacy improvement. It is, however, in the post-1990 period that the state witnessed rapid progress as it adopted a method of 'Each One, Teach One'. (Box 2)

Box 2

“Each One Teach One Method” of Mizoram

It was after the state of Mizoram changed over to the "each one, teach one," method in 1989-90 that excellent progress was made. A systematic effort was made to identify illiterates in far-flung villages. Once these villages were spotted, a number of volunteers, labeled as animators were appointed and simultaneously village adult education committees were formed to oversee the entire project. This method ensured the involvement of a broad spectrum of people and organizations such as village councils, church bodies, teachers and social workers. The Mizoram government drew up a detailed plan primed towards achieving total literacy. Each animator was given the task of teaching five persons at a time. As an incentive, animators were given prescribed teaching-learning material free of cost, a hurricane lantern and kerosene oil so as to carry on teaching even after sundown. Evidently, the method has paid off. Today, Mizoram is highly literate state but for the fact that a large percentage of Chakma and Reang population, who form a minority in the state, are not as keen as their Mizo counterparts to attain literacy.

Advances in the field of education comprise one of Himachal Pradesh's greatest stories. Initially, Himachal Pradesh was considered educationally backward state of India with literacy ratio of 4.8 percent in 1950 which was almost the lowest in the country. The literacy rate improved steadily in Himachal Pradesh through the 1970s and 1980s. One of the contributing factor is the greater importance assigned to education by the first chief minister which has been sustained by the succeeding governments.

The big push for education started in 1983 with literacy campaigns and as per 1991 Census, the male literacy rate was 75 per cent and female literacy increased from 2 percent in 1951 to 52.1 percent in 1991. By 1991, state had emerged the fifth most literate state in India. As per the Census data for 2001, the literacy rates were at a creditable 86.02 per cent for males and 68.08 per cent for females. The state has to work for reducing the gap between male and female literacy levels. Four districts of Himachal Pradesh (Chamba, Kullu, Simour and Lahaul-Spiti) participated in DPEP, in which the literacy rates ranged from 45%-57% in 1991. The literacy rates for these districts increased to the range of 64%-73% in 2001. As per the National Literacy Mission, Himachal Pradesh had literacy rates of 81.3 percent in 2005-06. To achieve total literacy in the state, a Literacy Mission has been started in each district with the coordination between primary school education department and the District Saksharta Samiti under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner.

Not only the literacy rates have improved in these three states but the considerable progress in the elementary education has also been witnessed.

PROGRESS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The indicators to measure the growth in education are multiple. The most significant is the increase in the number of educational institutions, students and teachers over the years. It is also equally important to know as to what affirmative actions have been taken to enroll the out of school children and retain them in the school. If we look at these indicators for the three selected states, we find sustained efforts have been made to reduce the proportion of out of school children by expanding the schooling facilities and providing various incentives to further enhance the enrolment and retention.

Out of School Children

In order to bring the out of school children to school, the first step is the identification of these children. For this, household survey is an important strategy envisaged under SSA. Household Surveys are regularly conducted to ascertain the number of out of school children and to explore the kind of educational facilities available to those habitations where these children are living. With the planned interventions like the opening of EGS Center/ Alternative Education School , the number of out of school children has reduced considerably but in certain states their proportion still remains large. At the time of the beginning of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001, the number of out-of-school children in India was estimated to be about 39 million, which reduced to around 10 million in 2005. States of Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Mizoram have reported a significant decline in the number of out of school children. Social and Research Unit conducted a survey in 2005, on out of school children across all the states and union territories of India and found that few states like Bihar(17%), Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal together (16%) still had a large proportion of out of school children. The

figures in Table 3 reveal that these three selected states had very low proportion of out of school children.

Table 3: Number and Percentage of Out of School Children

S.No	State	Out of School Children (6-14 yrs.) as per IMRB Survey			Out of School Children (6-14 yrs.) (as on 31st March 2006)*			Percentage of out of school children as per IMRB Survey
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
1	Himachal Pradesh	3418	1524	4942	2188	2779	4967	0.54
2	Kerala	8347	14895	23242	10361	8037	18398	0.55
3	Mizoram	900	658	1558	2112	2193	4305	0.73
4	India	6772505	6687229	13459734	3525115.2	3530962	7056077	6.94

Source: IMRB Survey, September-October 2005.

*Source: AWP&B 2006-07.

In Kerala, around 0.55 % children of the relevant elementary school going age are out of school and the shortfall in enrollment is mostly among groups of tribals residing in the districts of Wayanand, Kasargod and Malappuram.

Similarly, in Mizoram, too the number of out of school children has reduced from about 18 thousand in 2002-03 to 4305 in 2006. Keeping in view that the total children of 6-14 years of age group in the state is about 2.14 lakhs; the percentage of out of school children is 0.73 percent only. Child Survey, conducted in February 2007, reported the number of out of school children to be 4,913 and majority of them belonged to 11-14 years of age. The higher number of out school children in the age group of 11-14 years is due to absence of Class-VIII in schools of 205 habitations.

Of the three, the tiny hill state of Himachal Pradesh boasted the best numbers. In all, it has just 4,967(0.54%) children not attending schools and most of them belong to the nomadic Van Gujjar tribe. In Himachal Pradesh, the parents and community assign great importance to the education of their children; therefore enrollment has been increasing steadily. Moreover systematic measures have been adopted by state government to enroll the out of school children (Box 3).

Box 3

Reaching to Out of School Children: Experience of Himachal Pradesh

The state government has gone to the extent of “embedding teachers, who travel and live with nomads in the hills in order to teach their children. The state has committed high levels of investment in provisioning elementary education in sparsely inhabited areas such as Lahaul and Spiti where formal schools are functioning for extremely small numbers of children and the average school size is 13 and 23 at the primary and upper primary levels, respectively. The average pupil teacher ratio (PTR) in this district of Lahaul and Spiti is as low as 6:1 at the primary level and 5:1 at the upper primary level. In all, there are 204 primary schools serving 2594 children and 63 upper primary schools covering 1,475 children (JRM, 2006). There are no out of school children in this district. Himachal Pradesh also has high per student public expenditure on elementary education – about Rs 1638 per child per year, compared with the national average of about Rs 678 (State Finances, A study of Budget of 2003-04, April 2004).

Structure of Elementary Education in Selected States

In Himachal Pradesh, the primary education cycle comprises of Grade I-V and upper primary is from Grade VI to VIII. However, in Kerala and Mizoram, the primary stage consists of Grade I- IV and upper primary of V-VII. Efforts need to be made by Kerala and Mizoram to merge the VIII Grade in the elementary level of education.

Providers of Education –Private vs Government Schools

Government is the main provider of elementary education in Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram. In the state of Himachal Pradesh around 90 percent of the schools are managed by government whereas in Mizoram around 82 percent of schools are run by the government.

In Kerala, the percentage of private aided schools is considerably high. The government of Kerala funds two types of schools. The first are the schools owned, established and run solely by the State government. They constitute around 33% of schools in Kerala. The education in these schools is completely free. The second type is aided schools, which are owned and managed by private agencies. The government meets the major component of their annual expenditure namely salaries. Aided schools also receive grant in aid from the state government for building and establishment, teaching and instructional materials and recreational facilities. They constitute around 45% of the total schools. In aided schools, the expenditure towards uniform and text books is incurred by the households. The last category i.e fully private schools cover around 22% of all schools in the state (Selected Educational Statistics, 2005-06). The families bear the whole expenditure including a high capitation fees on first enrolment. However, DISE does not distinguish between aided and private schools, therefore, the data depicts that 59 percent schools are managed by private bodies.

Table 4 Number of Institution and Percentage of Institution (Management-wise)

States	No of Recognized Schools/ Sections imparting Elementary Education	% Government Schools	% Private Schools
Himachal Pradesh	17197	87.04	12.93
Kerala	12426	40.94	58.84
Mizoram	2783	82.57	17.28
All states	1250775	80.18	19.50

Source: DISE 2006-07, Flash Statistics.

Student's Enrolments: Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios at Primary and Upper

Primary Level

It is being increasingly admitted that building new schools, does not necessarily ensure the enrolment and attendance of children in the school. To achieve the goal of UEE participation or enrolment of all children in the school is a prerequisite. With the sustained efforts like enrolment drives and campaigns, distribution of free textbooks, school uniform, mid-day meal etc. the enrolment has increased across the states including in these three states. Enrolments at the primary and upper primary level of selected states are presented in Table 5

Table 5: Enrolment Indicators of Selected States

States	Enrolment		% Girls enrolment		Gender Parity Index*	
	I-V	VI-VIII	I-V	VI-VIII	I-V	VI-VIII
Himachal Pradesh	659422	424618	47.30	47.24	0.90	0.90
Kerala	2130628	1395082	49.62	48.93	0.98	0.96
Mizoram	177710	57408	48.62	49.09	0.95	0.96
All States	134132183	50011110	48.22	46.99	0.93	0.89

Source: DISE Flash Statistics, 2006-07.

Conventionally Gender Parity Index (GPI) is measured as a ratio of Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of girls to NER of boys.

In all the three states, the Gender Parity Index is depicting the increasing participation of girls. What is the total number of children of age group of 6-14 years who are really in the schools? This could be answered by estimating the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER). While GER includes the underage and overage children, NER takes into consideration only the relevant age group of 6 to 14 years of age. Table 6 presents the GER and NER of the selected states, which represents school enrollment as a ratio of the total population in the age group of 6-14 years.

Table 6: Enrolment Ratios of the Selected States (DISE)

States	Primary		Upper Primary	
	GER	NER	GER	NER
Himachal Pradesh	112.98	91.78	115.62	79.36
Kerala*	79.97	67.96	86.46	66.60
Mizoram	186.36	NA	90.21	71.50
All States	113.94	95.92	69.88	52.55

Source: DISE Flash Statistics, 2007-08

* large number of unrecognized schools exist in Kerala for which the enrolment figures are not available.

Tables 5 & 6 reveal that GER at primary level is more than 100 percent in Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram. However, the state of Kerala has almost achieved universalization of elementary education but every fourth child is enrolled in the unrecognized school for which the enrolment figures are not available. The Kerala Education Rules provides for enrolment directly to the 8th standard. This has given rise to large number of unregistered, unrecognized primary and middle level schools in Kerala, the students of which do not figure in the state statistics on enrolment. Therefore, the GER and NER given in the table is the under estimation and does not represent the actual figures.

While in Kerala strong social intermediation by the Christian missionaries has proved useful, in Himachal Pradesh state commitment and community participation seem to have led to similar results. In Mizoram, like Kerala, Christian missionaries have advocated the significance of education and have been instrumental in the enrolment of children of even the disadvantaged groups.

In Himachal Pradesh, the State has been committed to provision of schooling facilities especially considering the adverse topography and scattered settlement patterns. The planned intervention by the state has resulted into the bridging of intra regional disparities. The remote tribal areas like Kinnaur, Lahul and Spiti have also been extended the educational facilities. Another significant reason for the state to make progress in education is the greater participation of women in labour force and decision making which has a rolling effect on the increasing participation of the children especially girls in education. Like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh too has more egalitarian society with the lowest incidence of agricultural labourer in the rural areas. Besides, the state has a rich

culture of cooperative action and local democracy. Village communities participate actively in the supervision and monitoring of school's activities.

Current Attendance Rates

The DISE data are based on school records. It may be appropriate to examine the current participation rates in education with the alternate source. NSSO collects data on the current attendance rate which helps to determine whether a child is attending any educational institution. The data is collected for each child from the respondent household. Table below presents the current attendance rate in educational institutions per 1000 persons for 5 -14 years of age group.

Table 7: Current Attendance Rate (per 1000) in educational institutions (5-14 Years)

Year	Kerala			Himachal Pradesh			Mizoram		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2004-05	968	985	976	962	936	950	952	955	953

Source: NSS 61st round (July 2004-June 2005) Statement 3.14.

The table reveals that current attendance rate is high for all the three states with Kerala having the highest attendance rates especially for the girls.

Teacher's Profile

Teachers are the architects of the future generation. They mould and shape the minds of the young children through the classroom interaction. Students are deeply affected by the teacher's love and affection, his/her character, competence and moral commitment. Professional competence, commitment and attitude of teachers are the most significant factors influencing the quality of education. Teachers are considered to be more effective when they have undergone professional training. Most of the teachers in Himachal

Pradesh and Kerala are found to be trained and have also received in-service training.

The profile of teachers in the selected states is presented in Table 8:

Table 8: Teacher's Profile in Selected States

States	Number of Teachers (I-VIII)	% Teachers in Govt. Schools	% Teachers in aided Schools	% Teachers in unaided Schools	Average no of teachers per school	% Distribution of female teachers	% of trained teachers
Himachal Pradesh	63531	78.39	0.35	21.26	3.7	42.11	91.92
Kerala	162270	37.47	58.21	5.28	13.1	71.65	96.56
Mizoram	16357	74.36	2.93	22.71	5.9	42.55	56.62
All States	5634589	69.28	10.35	20.65	4.5	42.72	77.68

Source: DISE Flash Statistics, 2007-08.

In Mizoram, more than 40 percent of teachers are untrained, who needs to be made professionally competent by providing intensive in-service training.

School Infrastructure

School building has a pervasive and stimulating impact on the learning needs, educational achievements and motivation of students towards learning. A good and safe learning environment is found to improve the performance of both students and teachers. The physical existence of good school building is an attraction for the child to come regularly and spend five to six hours comfortably. The performance indicators related to school infrastructural facilities are presented in Tables 9 & 10:

Table 9: Number of Schools by Type of Building

States	Pucca	Partially Pucca	Kuchha	Tent	Multiple Type	No. Building
Himachal Pradesh	10,255 (64.9)*	1288 (8.2)	798 (5.1)	1	3138 (19.8)	315 (2.0)
Kerala	7914 (71.4)	165 (1.5)	3 (.02)	18 (0.2)	2986 (26.9)	4 (.02)
Mizoram	354 (14.2)	1671(67.2)	421 (16.9)	0	41(1.7)	1

*Figures in the parentheses are percentages

Source: DISE Flash Statistics, 2007-08.

All the three selected states have better facilities with respect to the type of buildings, (pucca, semi pucca and kuccha) in which schools are housed. Kerala's schools possess much better physical and basic facilities compared to other states of India.

It is clear from the above table that negligible percentage of schools in Kerala and Mizoram are without buildings and in the case of Himachal Pradesh around 2.0 percent schools do not have school building. In the mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh around 73 percent schools have pucca and partially pucca buildings.

Physical Facilities in Schools

School building, availability of instructional room, space to sit, teaching-learning materials and ancillary facilities like drinking water, toilet are the essential components of the physical aspect of classroom climate. A child who is to stay in the school for five hours requires facilities to answer to the needs of biological clock therefore drinking water and toilet facility is a basic necessity that a school needs to provide to its children. The selected states have reasonably good facilities with regard to drinking water, separate toilets for girls in schools, yet the facilities need to be expanded to cover all the institutions.

Table 10: Percentage of Schools with Drinking Water and Toilet Facilities

States	% School with common toilets	% School with girls toilet	% School with drinking water facility	% of school having computer in school
Himachal Pradesh	48.01	38.72	93.08	11.14
Kerala	84.11	78.99	97.58	71.20
Mizoram	77.25	23.50	79.23	13.94
All states	62.67	50.55	86.75	14.25

Source: DISE 2007-08, Flash Statistics.

It is clear from the above table that Kerala is ahead of both the states as far as facilities within the schools are concerned. Around 98% of state government schools have drinking water facilities and 84% schools have toilet facilities.

With the utilization of funds under SSA, an effort is being made to improve the ancillary facilities as it is one of the significant factor for retaining the children especially girls. The figures from the above table make it clear that Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram need to construct toilets in the schools especially for girls. The community support may be sought to improve these facilities.

Academic Facilities in the Schools

Till 1980s, the government laid emphasis on the quantitative expansion of the education but by mid 80s it was realized that mere increase in number would not be sufficient. Equal emphasis should be put on the qualitative improvement and more investment needs to be made in this direction. National Policy on Education (NPE,1986) also emphasized to improve the academic facilities and stressed upon the provision of teaching aids in the schools, in service training to the teachers and educational personnel. Consequent to the recommendations of NPE, the scheme of Operation Blackboard was launched in 1988 with the premise that each primary school would have a minimum of two all weather classrooms and two teachers. Mathematics and science kits were provided in the schools for the activity oriented teaching. Findings on the extent of academic facilities available to the schools of these three states are encouraging, which is evident from the data in Table 11.

Table 11: Academic Facilities in the Schools

States	% Single Teacher schools	% Enr. in single teacher schools	% of schools having pupil-teacher ratio>100	% of schools with pupil-teacher ratio>60	Average student – classroom ratio
Himachal Pradesh	7.28	3.04	0.16	0.94	16
Kerala	0.27	0.03	0.06	0.53	25
Mizoram	2.41	1.27	0.32	1.90	19
All States	10.13	4.05	3.86	13.76	35

Source: DISE 2007-08, Flash Statistics.

The figures from the above table reveal that student classroom ratio higher than 60 is found in around 0.4 percent schools in Himachal Pradesh, 190 percent schools in Mizoram and around 0.53 percent schools in Kerala. Around 30 Percent of children are enrolled in single teacher school in Himachal Pradesh whereas negligible numbers of children are enrolled in single teacher school in Kerala. Similarly in Mizoram only 1.27 percent children are enrolled in single teacher school. Availability of sufficient number of teachers in the schools indeed is one of the significant inputs for quality education which also helps in boosting the enrolment and retention of children.

Himachal Pradesh on the one hand is making efforts to improve the accessibility to schooling facilities by relaxing norms and opening the schools in the remote areas and at the same time planning to use the school building as academic resource centre for the benefit of children.

Box 4

Using the School Buildings as Academic Resource Center: Himachal Pradesh

The State Government of Himachal Pradesh has adopted a policy of closing schools that are presently serving lesser than 30 children where there is another school within 1.5 kms. Buildings of schools thus closed have been transferred to the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development. It is suggested that the Department of Education retain these buildings to facilitate community based educational activities in the form of computer center, library, activity center and even use them to replicate the concept of model cluster school.

Teacher Pupil Ratio

Virtually everyone, students, teachers, and the concerned parents, without a doubt, prefer smaller class sizes relative to larger class sizes as it facilitates the teacher to concentrate

on the individual learning needs of each child. All the three states have very positive teacher-pupil ratio.

Table 12: Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Government schools in Selected States

States	Primary Level	Upper Primary Level
Himachal Pradesh	18	17
Kerala	23	22
Mizoram	16	14
All States	34	31

Source: DISE 2007-08, Flash Statistics.

While states like Bihar (68) and Uttar Pradesh (61) have high teacher–pupil ratio, but in these selected states, the teacher pupil ratio is favourable for effective learning to take place in the schools.

As Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram are mountainous states, therefore the population is sparsely inhabited and schools are also scattered therefore, the teacher-pupil ratio is very low.

Efficiency of Education System

Transition, retention, repetition, survival and dropout rates are useful indicators for determining the internal efficiency or quality of the education system.

Survival rates imply the population of enrollees in the beginning grade or year who reach the final grade or year at the end of the required number of years of study.

Retention rate is the proportion of the enrollment in any school year that continues to be in school the following year. As such, it is the complement of attrition or drop out, i.e. of students who leave study without completing.

Transition rates are the percentage of pupils who graduate from one level of education and move on to the next higher level (from primary to middle; or from middle to secondary). These rates help us to determine the percentage of children that remain upto grade V or grade VIII. Table 13 presents information on transition, survival and retention rates in the selected states.

Table 3 : Survival, Repetition, Dropout, Retention and Transition Rates in the Selected States

States	Apparent survival rate upto grade V	Average repetition rate		Average dropout At primary level	Retention rate at primary level	Transition rate from primary to upper primary
		At primary	At upper primary			
Himachal Pradesh	107.44	3.48	8.84	1.85	93.84	94.80
Kerala	115.40	3.11	5.25	1.80	98.66	106.65
Mizoram	64.06	4.25	2.30	5.52	78.13	104.98
All States	72.73	6.60	6.40	8.61	70.26	83.72

Source: DISE 2006-07, Flash Statistics.

The figures in table make it clear that the dropout rates are low especially for Himachal Pradesh and Kerala. Transition rates in Himachal Pradesh are high but in the case of Mizoram and Kerala, it is more than hundred. This could be due to various reasons -the migration from other states; the children from alternative mode of schooling or private schools shift to regular schools at the upper primary level; the children who had dropped out year or two back rejoin the schools; high repetition rate. Apparent survival rate in Himachal Pradesh and Kerala is also around 107 and 115 percent respectively, which could possibly be due to the high number of repeaters.

Outcome Indicator: Examination Results

While examination results are not only the important outcome of schooling but also provide approximate indications with regard to learning achievement of pupils. Examination results make an assessment of cognitive skills acquired by the students. Table 14 provides details on examination results of the states.

Table 4 : Examination Results of the Selected States

States	% Passed At Primary level		% Passed more than 60% at prim. level		% Passed at upper primary level		% Passed more than 60% at upper primary level	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Himachal Pradesh	96.86	97.20	52.18	55.77	78.60	78.66	18.90	21.45
Kerala	93.68	95.43	54.90	58.34	89.06	92.02	34.67	40.07
Mizoram	92.96	93.89	22.19	24.62	90.64	91.99	13.92	15.47
All States	94.80	94.89	44.96	45.12	88.44	88.84	38.83	40.06

Source: DISE 2006-07, Flash Statistics.

The table reveals that examination results at primary and upper primary level is very positive and encouraging for all the three states. But low percentage of children scoring more than 60 percent especially at the upper level signifies the need to take corrective measures. Few corrective measures like improvement in the teaching–learning methodology, remedial classes for educationally weak children may be adopted.

Summing up: Data Findings

The analysis of the data presented above shows that all the three states have literacy level above the national average. Considerable progress has been achieved by all of them especially by Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram which were having low literacy levels in 1950s and 1960s. They have been able to increase their literacy rates in a short duration. The literacy rates of Himachal Pradesh increased from 4.8 percent in 1950s to 78 percent in 2001 while in Mizoram the literacy rates increased from 19.05 percent in 1951 to 88.49 percent in 2001. Over the years proportion of out of school children in these states has reduced significantly. Government is the main provider of elementary education in Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram, whereas in Kerala large number of government-aided institutions and unrecognized schools function along with the government schools. Participation of children is consistently increasing which is reflected in the figures on GER and NER. Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram have high Gross Enrolment Ratio (more than 100 percent) and Kerala has almost achieved the Universalisation of Primary Education. However low GER and NER figures in Kerala are due to large number of unregistered and unrecognized schools and the official statistics do not count the children enrolled in these schools. Indicators on physical and academic facilities like type and

condition of building, teacher-pupil ratio, number of single teacher schools and enrolment in single teacher schools also depict the positive signs in the selected states.. In Himachal Pradesh the average number of teachers is much less than required therefore the deployment of teachers need to be judiciously made. In all the states especially in Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram the proportion of female teachers are around 42 percent only. In Mizoram a huge percentage of teachers, around 40 % are untrained who may be provided professional training through DIET or distance mode. The examination results are not satisfactory for all the three states as percentage of children getting more than 60 percent is low especially for Mizoram. The states have made considerable progress and growth with regard to access and participation but now need to focus upon the quality improvement in education.

Concluding Remarks

An attempt has been made in the paper to map the literacy and educational status of Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Kerala. These states though culturally, linguistically and geographically different, have made considerable educational progress by adopting different ways and means. The literacy rates have increased significantly in all the three states. While Kerala has been ahead of other states historically the other two states have made remarkable progress in short span of time. Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram were considered the educationally backward states till 1960s but since then they have made considerable progress towards universal elementary education.

Christian missionaries have played significant role in spreading the education among masses in Kerala and Mizoram. In Kerala missionaries focused on the education of the backward classes leading to increase in the enrolment. In Mizoram, they helped to

develop the Mizo alphabets based on Mizom phonetic. This was of great value for a society, which did not have a written script till the end of the 19th century.

Contrary to this in Himachal Pradesh the educational growth and development could be attributed to the initiative taken by the State and community with relatively meager contribution from private schools and missionary organizations. The community has established close relation with the school and has been actively involved in the monitoring and supervision of school activities. In Mizoram too the contribution of the community has been unprecedented. The community has been establishing upper primary schools in such habitations where none existed as the community realized the necessity of opening such school for primary school graduates for improving access. The community has also appointed teachers and paying them the remuneration till such times the schools are aided by the Government.

The progress and dynamic situation of these states reflect a strong political commitment, sustained financing, enhanced capacity and continuous community support to meet the goals of UEE. However the journey does not end here and all these states need to strive for the qualitative improvement in education as the learning achievement competencies of the students are still not satisfactory.

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