

Mediocre output from Higher education system a problem emerging from school education system: A of education system in Government schools in Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

Majority of the human resource for the effective working of the engine of growth of a country emanates from the higher education system of a country. But the falling quality of output from the Higher education system in India is presenting a major challenge and concern in front of the policy makers. Falling quality among the Higher education system can be judged by observing various major indicators some of which are, the inefficiency of Higher education system in generating employment opportunities and development of output which is not only poor in hard skills but also lacks soft skills which are essential for the growth and development of the human resource. To deal with this issue it is important to look at the root cause of the problem. The present study focuses on the root cause of such problems which apparently is hidden in the school education system in the country.

Keywords: Education, hard and soft skills, absenteeism, learning

In context of the present and upcoming era, education has always been recognized as a major pillar of an economy and society. Majority of the human resource for the effective working of the engine of growth of a country emanates from the higher education system of a country. But the falling quality of output from the Higher education system in India is

presenting a major challenge and concern in front of the policy makers. Falling quality among the Higher education system can be judged by observing various major indicators some of which are, the inefficiency of Higher education system in generating employment opportunities; further poor quality of research revealed by the lack of contribution in generating patents, new inventions, framing of new techniques, development of employment generating skills etc. A lot of debate has gone challenging the poor policy adopted in delivering the higher education which further includes poor infrastructure, poor course work, lack of teachers, poor student–teacher ratio, lack of effective teaching methods, etc. But the other side of the picture reflects a completely different picture, over emphasis

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on equitable and affordable access to quality education for all social classes and groups produced an explosion in the number of average students thus degrading the standard of Higher education system. Further as the University qualifications in our country are considered as an entryway to social mobility in an increasingly meritocratic-technocratic society rather than entry way for quality education accessibility, the incompetent and eligible mass of students is rapidly increasing. In the present time India has scored rapidly in the number of Universities but the problem is of the lack of employment generating education, further in the case of technical based and employment generating education the standards has gone so low that the education delivering sector has been tagged as a major source of earning or business even at the huge cost of quality education. The overall discussion reflects a tendency of poor intake among the Higher education system which has somehow degraded the ultimate aim that is of disseminating quality education leading to skill development, technical efficiency, personality development, character development, construction of positive attitude which could be summed up as a development of a overall personality which is socially acceptable and which can bear, survive and progress among the present competition which is more so ever enhanced by globalization and rapid global development.

Literature Review

The precise meaning of education quality and the path to improvement of quality are often left unexplained. Examined within context, education quality apparently may refer to inputs (numbers of teachers, amount of teacher training, number of textbooks), processes (amount of direct instructional time, extent of active learning), outputs (test scores, graduation rates), and outcomes (performance in subsequent employment). Additionally, quality education may imply simply the attaining of specified targets and objectives. More comprehensive views are also found, and interpretation of quality may be based on an institution's or program's reputation, the extent to which schooling has influenced change in student knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior, or a complete theory or ideology of acquisition and application of learning (Adams 1998).

According to current estimates, 80% of all schools are government schools (<http://www.dise.in/ar2005.html>) making the government the major provider of education. However, because of poor quality of public education, 27% of Indian

children are privately educated. This is because of the problems related to the quality of education in government schools in India which is more prominent in government schools located in rural areas. Problems related to government schools Kremer (2005) survey of teacher absence in rural India in 2003 made three unannounced visits to each one of 3700 schools in 20 major states of India. The study deducted that, on average, 25 percent of teachers in government primary schools were absent from school on a given day. Further in the study it was deducted that even among teachers who were present, only about half were found engaged in teaching (Kremer, 2005). PROBE Team (1999) states that the extreme cases of teacher negligence were less devastating than the quiet inertia of the majority of teachers. In half of the sample schools, there was no teaching activity at the time of the investigators' visit. Inactive teachers were found engaged in a variety of pastimes such as sipping tea, reading comics, or eating peanuts, when they were not just sitting idle. Generally speaking, teaching activity has been reduced to a minimum in terms of both time and effort. And this pattern is not confined to a minority of irresponsible teachers - it has become a way of life in the profession. (PROBE Team, 1999, p 63). The ASER 2005 report also found a teacher absence rate of 25%, as in Kremer et al. (2005).

A research conducted by UNICEF in India on the primary schools in India states that even though the rate of school attendance is better than ever before with more and more children between the ages of 6 and 14 enrolling at schools, the education system is inadequately developed - wracked by a shortage of resources, schools, classrooms and teachers. Often, due to the resulting, poor quality of teaching, many children drop out before completing five years of primary school and many of those who stay on, learn little. (UNICEF)

With 35 per cent of the population under the age of 15, India's school education system faces numerous challenges. Some of the other problems with government-run schools are that of infrastructure, Poor conditions of buildings, classrooms, ill-equipped libraries and laboratories, lack of sanitation facilities and drinking water. Availability of qualified teachers and the student-teacher ratio are the other problems faced by the school education system. The curriculum and teaching methodologies stand obsolete and outdated, with the emphasis being on merely developing reading and writing skills instead of holistic education. Lack of vocational training

and non-availability of such courses renders students with barely any employable skills at the end of their schooling. These factors, along with other social circumstances have lead to alarmingly high dropout rates in the country from the government schools. Most of the government schools in rural areas in India are located in far flung areas and are largely inaccessible to the students.

Mainly the government schools are present in the rural areas and study shows that there are significant disparities in enrolment ratio between rural and urban area. In 2003/4 the GER for rural and urban area was 7.76% and 27.20% respectively-GER in urban area being four times higher compared with rural area. (UGC, 2006) This further reflects the problems in the government schooling system in India which is more prominent in the rural areas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The present study was conducted in 18 villages (rural areas) and two small towns (semi-urban areas) of Pauri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand state. Majority of the population in the district resides in the rural area which is slowly declining with the increasing rate of migration from these areas to the urban areas. According to the census 2011 records, Pauri Garhwal, one of the 13 districts, had a population of 686,527. According to the 2011 census there was a change of -1.51 percent in the population, compared to population as per 2001. Average literacy rate of Pauri Garhwal in 2011 was 82.59 compared to 77.49 of 2001. If things are looked out at gender wise, male and female literacy were 93.18 and 73.26 respectively. For 2001 census, same figures stood at 90.91 and 65.70 in Pauri Garhwal District.

For collecting the sample for the present study, stratified sampling was conducted so that all the categories of schools (primary, high schools, inter colleges) could be included in the study. Thereafter the samples were randomly selected for the study. A total of 23 schools from rural areas and 6 schools from semi-urban areas were selected for study. Our target groups comprises of teachers, students, parents and local residents. To collect the primary data interview schedule method and questionnaire methods were used.

Objectives of the Study

Following were the objectives of the present study:

- To deduct and compare the problems of schools in rural areas and semi-urban areas
- To deduct the problems of teachers and students in these areas
- To analyze the quality of teaching methodology and teachers in the schools
- To analyze the progress of students and teachers in these schools

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Problems of Teachers (Government schools) in rural areas

Teachers are the main foundation stone of any student educational, social and economical existence. Their satisfaction is utmost imperative for their performance which directly affects the future of students. Keeping in perspective the significance of satisfaction of the teachers the present study examined the problems revealed by the teachers engaged in these schools which directly or indirectly have a negative impact on their performance in the schools. For the conducting the study a sample of 85 teachers working in the rural areas was randomly selected. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 1. Problems of teachers in rural areas (Government schools)

S. No	Problems of the teachers	No. of Male teachers (%)	No. of Female teachers (%)	Total (%)
1	Poor living conditions	13 (24%)	26 (84%)	39 (46%)
2	Poor transfer policy	51 (94%)	21 (68%)	72 (85%)
3	Lack of staff	31 (57%)	24 (77%)	55 (65%)
4	Poor condition of schools	26 (48%)	14 (45%)	40 (47%)
5	Other problems*	19 (35%)	9 (29%)	28 (33%)
6	None	3 (5%)	5 (16%)	8 (9%)
	Total	54	31	85

Source: Primary Survey (2010-11)

Note: teachers were asked to choose any one or more of the problems they face

Other problems*:

- Poor salary structure
- Poor educational background of students

The above table reveals that teachers engaged in the rural areas are engrossed in lots of problems which clearly suggest the high level of dissatisfaction among them. 84 percent of the teachers working in these areas are dissatisfied with the transfer policy adopted by the government among which majority is of the male teachers. They perceive that lots of corruption gets involved in getting the transfer to the urban areas which hinders their right of getting transfer to their desired areas. This clearly advocates the fact that they are not satisfied with their present job placement in rural area. Majority of the female teachers are not satisfied with the living conditions in these rural areas. They are dissatisfied with the poor conditions of the houses which are available for them to reside in these areas as tenants. Lack of staff is the other major factor which enhances their problems. The study revealed that these teachers have to share extra burden even sometime the administrative work due to the lack of working staff in schools located in these areas. Remarkably 33 percent of the teachers in the rural areas (teachers dealing with higher classes) have revealed that they find difficult to deal with the students as they even lack the basic knowledge to the extent that student who have passed 8th standard finds hard to even read and write properly. This problem was mainly related to the teachers dealing with the higher classes in these schools. This further reflects the poor primary education of the student which magnifies the problem for the students itself for their entire future.

To analyze the problem further, the teachers were asked to approximately reveal the percentage of students enrolled in 9th standard or in higher classes which are poor in the various areas. The results of the study are as follows:

- Teachers reveal that about 40 percent of the students in 9th standard lacks ability to right and read correctly and about 25 percent of the students in 10th standard lacks this ability
- 60 percent of the students in these classes lacks ability of reasoning and questioning
- 80 percent of the students in these classes are very poor in English language

The study further examined the issues of high rate of disappointment among the teachers for the transfer policy. The study examined the permanent native residences of the teachers working in these rural areas of the district. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 2. Native residences of teachers

Home district/State	Male teachers	Females teachers	Total
Pauri Garhwal	16	10	26 (31%)
Other district in Uttarakhand	23	16	39 (46%)
Uttarpradesh	8	5	13 (15%)
Bihar	5	-	5 (6%)
Jharkhand	2	-	2 (2%)
Total	54	31	85

Source: Primary Survey (2010-11)

The study reveals that majority of the teachers working in the schools of the rural areas of the district belongs to the other districts or are from the other states of the country. This clearly reflects the fact that these teachers have an inclination to move to their native places or to the urban areas which adversely affects their satisfaction levels.

The study further examined the absenteeism rate among the teachers in these areas as this inclination to move to urban areas or to native places leads to dissatisfaction and hence to high rate of absenteeism from the work places, often. The results of the study are shown in the table given below:

Table 3. Attendance of teachers in session 2009-2010

Percentage of Attendance	Male teachers	Female teachers	Total
90-100	3	1	4 (5%)
80-90	7	2	9 (11%)
70-80	11	7	18 (21%)
60-70	17	9	26 (30%)
50-60	12	7	19 (22%)
Less than 50 percent	4	5	9 (11%)
Total	54	31	85

Source: Primary Survey (2010-11)

The above data shows that 63 percent of the teachers working in the rural areas have a high rate of absenteeism in a session which is about 37 percent a year. Noticeably the rate of absenteeism is higher among the female teachers in comparison to the male teachers. The other important aspect that came out from the study was that the school administration does not appoint any part time teachers in place of absent teachers which eventually lead to less number of classes of students.

Problems of Teachers (Government schools) in semi-urban areas

To study the problems of the teachers working in the schools located in the semi-urban areas we randomly selected a sample of 49 teachers. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 4. Problems of teachers in rural areas (Government schools)

S. No	Problems of the teachers	No. of Male teachers (%)	No. of Female teachers (%)	Total (%)
1	Poor living conditions	2 (7%)	5 (24%)	7 (14%)
2	Poor transfer policy	25 (89%)	17 (81%)	42 (86%)
3	Lack of staff	2 (7%)	3 (14%)	5 (10%)
4	Poor condition of schools	3 (11%)	1 (5%)	4 (8%)
5	Other problems*	6 (21%)	3 (14%)	9 (18%)
6	None	1 (4%)	2 (10%)	3 (6%)
	Total	28	21	49

Source: Primary Survey (2010-11)

Other problems*:

- Poor salary structure
- Poor educational background of students

The study clearly reveals that majority of the teachers are not satisfied with the transfer policy adopted by the government. The majority of these teachers further stated that they are working in these areas from a long period of time and they do not get any opportunity to work in the urban areas. This tendency among the teachers clearly reflects the dissatisfaction among the teachers while working in these backward areas.

To further investigate the problem the study examined the permanent native residence of the teachers. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 5. Native residences of teachers

Home district/State	Male teachers	Females teachers	Total
Pauri Garhwal	4	7	11 (23%)
Other district in Uttarakhand	15	12	27 (55%)
Uttarpradesh	5	2	7 (14%)
Bihar	2	-	2 (4%)
Rajasthan	1	-	1 (2%)
Madhya Pradesh	1	-	1 (2%)
Total	28	21	49

Source: Primary Survey (2010-11)

The study shows that 55 Percent of the teachers working in these areas are from the other districts of the state while 22 percent of the teachers belong to the other states. Among these teachers there is a strong inclination to work in their native areas or nearby to them or in urban areas which results in their dissatisfaction and low efficiency.

The study further analyzed the absenteeism among the teachers working in such areas as this is a key problem the burden of which has to ultimately been bear by the students. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 6. Attendance of teachers in session 2009-2010

Percentage of Attendance	Male teachers	Female teachers	Total
90-100	4	2	6 (12%)
80-90	6	5	11 (23%)
70-80	5	4	9 (18%)
60-70	8	5	13 (27%)
50-60	3	1	4 (8%)
Less than 50 percent	2	4	6 (12%)
Total	28	21	49

Source: Primary Survey (2010-11)

The above table depicts the high rate of absenteeism among the teachers working in schools in the semi-urban areas. The study shows that 47 percent of the teachers have their

attendance below 70 percent in the session. The absenteeism rate is noted high among the female teachers in these areas.

Problems of the students (Government schools)

To study the problems of the students both students and their parents were interviewed. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 7. Problems of students in government schools

S. No	Problems of the students	No. of	No. of Respondents in semi-urban areas (%)
1	Poor number of classes	27 (50%)	5 (14%)
2	Poor support of teachers	12 (22%)	14 (38%)
3	Lack of teaching staff	23 (43%)	7 (19%)
4	Problems in Mid-Day meal scheme	6 (11%)	3 (8%)
5	Others	2 (4%)	4 (11%)
5	None	-	9 (24%)
	Total	54	37

Source: Primary Survey (2010-11)

Note: Private schools are not present in the rural areas (under entire study area)

The above table shows that problems of the students are more prominent in the schools in the rural areas. In the rural areas the major problem is of poor number of classes and lack of teaching staff in the schools which have a poor impact on the performance of the students.

Language as a medium of learning

Proficiency in English is widely perceived as an important avenue for employment and upward mobility, which also greatly facilitates the pursuit of higher education. The National Knowledge Commission has emphasized the importance of an inclusive society as the foundation for a knowledge society. NKC has also recognized the significance of language, not only as a medium of instruction or a means of communication but also as a determinant of access. An understanding of and command over the English language is a most important determinant of access to higher education, employment possibilities and social opportunities. School-leavers who are not adequately trained in English as a language are always at

a handicap in the world of higher education. More often than not, teaching is in English. Even if it is not, in most subjects, books and journals are available only in English. And those who do not know English well enough find it exceedingly difficult to compete for a place in our premier educational institutions. This disadvantage is accentuated further in the world of work, not only in professional occupations but also in white-collar occupations overall. (National Knowledge commission, GOI, 2007)

The study shows that in all the government schools both in rural and semi-urban areas the language which is entirely used as a medium of learning is Hindi. The study further revealed that there is no focus on even developing the English writing and reading abilities. The focus on English language if any in these schools is on the English as a subject which is selected by the students. This justifies the scenario that how poorly these students are prepared to face the tough competition in the future in the real world in which knowledge and command of English language is rapidly becoming a big necessity.

Support of the Parents

Apart from teacher's guidance and support which is important for the overall development of a student, the role of parents is also equally important. Keeping this fact in perspective the study analyzed the role of parents in the rural and semi-urban areas. The study revealed that about 60 percent of the students are guided by their mothers as the male members have migrated for work to the other regions. This strongly reflects the problem of poor guidance of the students in the rural areas as the female members are often engaged in household and agricultural activities in rural areas which give them very less time to observe the educational activities of the students and to give them proper guidance. The problem is more severe in the case of the girl child as they are forced to participate in the domestic household activities and also to bear the burden of the outdoor activities like water fetching, agriculture etc which reduces their time and interest towards education. Comparatively these problems are very less in the semi-urban areas.

Poor selection and placement of teachers (In government schools)

The study revealed that majority of the teachers who are working in the Pauri Garhwal district belongs to the other

districts. This reflects the poor placement strategy of the government in placing these teachers which results in their high rate of absenteeism. The selection of the teachers (LT) in Uttarakhand has always been on the basis of merit drafted on the basis of their academic performance, although first time in year 2011 a written exam was conducted, the performance of which jointly with the academic performance was considered for selecting the teachers (LT). Interview is not considered for the LT selection in Uttarakhand.

Major issue that creeps from this scenario is that without interacting with the applicants verbally it is probably tough to select a teacher with a right and positive attitude and psychology, which is very essential while dealing with children's, and to know and handle appropriately the child's psychology. Further, interview could facilitate in understanding the basic needs and requirements of a potential candidate which could be resolved in the further process of selection and placement. But interview has never been considered in the LT selection in the state, although it is used in the selection of the teachers for the Inter colleges.

Poor government policy

Majority of the government schools in the rural areas are facing the problem of dearth of teachers, even after that the teachers from these schools are send for long trainings which hampers the education of the students. Further the pressures of the mid day meals in such schools where teachers are less have pushed well below, the primary aim of these schools, which is education. All these factors directly have a negative impact on the student's growth.

Analyses of the private schools

After exploring the problems and lacunas of the government schools in both rural and semi-urban areas, the study further analyzed the problems of private schools and their education system located in these areas. The study initially revealed that private schools are not located in the rural areas. The lack of income generation potential in the rural areas from investing in schools in rural areas could be a major reason for it. However the study has concentrated in studying the private schools located in the semi-urban areas where they are available in large numbers. For our study 6 schools from the semi-urban

areas of the district were randomly selected. The results of the study are as follows:

Problems of the teachers

Some of the major problems of the teachers in private schools revealed from the study are as follows:

- 65 percent of the teachers are not satisfied with the salary structure provided to them
- 28 percent teachers revealed that they face problems from the administration in getting leaves
- 34 percent of the teachers revealed that they have to face heavy work pressures in the name of accountability
- 19 percent of the teachers revealed that the students coming from the government schools requires large attentions as they often have a poor basic educational background

Native residences of the teachers:

- 91 percent of the teachers belong to the Pauri district.

Absenteeism of the teachers

- 88 percent of the teachers have shown a presence between 90 to 100 percent in the academic session 2009-2010.

The above results of the study reveal that comparatively the private school teachers face few problems in their work places. The reason further could be that they are working in their home district which is not in the case of the government school teachers. This is further reflected in their very marginal rate of absenteeism. The other important aspect that lead to good results for the students is the accountability pre-defined for the teachers separately which is very poorly defined in case of government schools. All these aspects positively work in the benefits of the students.

The study further noted that in case of government schools due to the pressures of the accountability (to keep overall final result of the students 100%) and of the local residents even the poorer students are pushed in the higher classes which in the long run negatively influences their future academic growth.

Problems of the students/parents (in case of private schools)

The study of problems of the students and parents revealed that mainly the parents face the problem of high fees charged by these students along with the extra charges which are abruptly imposed by the school on the students time to time. It is noticeable that no grievance related to teaching or staff was revealed by the parents or the students. On the other hand the parents were very much satisfied with the academic activities of these private schools. The parents further discussed that many of the teachers visited their homes to encourage the students and to keep strict vigilance on them even outside the schools mainly during the main examination times. The other positive that was noticed was that these private schools conducted extra classes and more examinations to develop the skills of the students. Almost all of these private schools have held greater number of interaction sessions with the parents of the students, for involving them also in the academic progress of the child. In majority of the private schools proper attention was given to the English language, merely not as a curriculum subject but also as a part of overall personality development.

CONCLUSION

All these aspects revealed clearly suggest that private schools are delivering better educational goods and services to the students in comparison to the government schools. The major reason for it is the huge number of problems faced by the teachers and the wrong government policy adopted for the school education. Further as a large percentage of students are enrolled in the government schools mainly in the rural areas it could be assumed that this education system will not develop and construct a future of a student along with it its overall personality but will rather develop an army which is unarmed and not capable of restraining the ever increasing competition more so enhanced by the rapid globalization and privatization.

To improve the status and performance of the government schools in such backward areas here are some of the suggestions that have evolved from the study:

- ❑ Teacher's placement in any area should be such that he/she should be given placement in the school in his/her home district or block. Even his/her transfer if occurs should be limited to that particular district/block.

- ❑ Accountability should be placed strictly for the teachers provided there is fair student-teacher ratio. Accountability in case of lower classes (up to 8th standard) should not only be examined by the internal examination but by the overall development of the student which should have a cross check. A district level or block level combined examination with strict vigilance could be conducted.
- ❑ Interview should be introduced as one of a medium of selection for the post of LT, mainly judging the teachers communication skills, psychology, expectations from the job and interest towards such job.
- ❑ English (Reading, writing and speaking ability) should be given more emphasis through teachers
- ❑ Parents should be largely involved in the school activities
- ❑ Students feedback should be duly communicated to the parents/relatives
- ❑ Teachers dearth should be reduced mainly in the schools located in such areas
- ❑ Government should now focus largely on the enhancement of level of primary education as this is a very important phase of child overall development. Salary structure of the teachers could be enhanced, hostel facility for the teachers could be provided etc
- ❑ In case of poor teacher-student ratio, appointment of part time teachers should be allowed for the school administration with proper remuneration to the appointed personnel.

Presently government is hugely investing in the upgrading of higher education as its dissemination is very much attained. But in the case of school education system the government is still only focusing on the wide scale dissemination of the education. In this course now it is high time to realize that along with increasing the access to school education the focus should also be given to the quality of education. This demands new policy restructuring which ranges from right selection of teachers, attracting them through good financial entitlements in the form of salaries, developing good infrastructure etc. It is important for the government to realize that although higher education is very important for the growth of an economy in the near

future but by neglecting the school education we are somehow endangering our far and long term future ahead.

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