Geographic disparities in the levels of educational development: A factor analysis of the Kashmir Valley

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Abstract

Educational attainments of the population in a region determine its standard of living and overall socio-economic development. In this context, regional disparities in the levels of educational development must be addressed. India with considerable inequalities in education sector is committed to reduce these inequalities under various programmes. In Kashmir Valley glaring inequalities exist among tehsils (areas) with respect to literacy level, opportunities for primary, secondary and higher education, facilities for professional courses and training in specialized technical skills. The indicators used in this study were assigned statistical weights derived through factor analysis method. Standardized on the basis of factor matrix, an index of overall development was generated. All tehsils were ranked according to their index values and classified into highly developed, developed, backward and highly backward tehsils according to their quartile values. The changes in the index values were examined to trace the direction of development. Results of the analysis demonstrate the importance of improving the basic school infrastructure proportionately to the population of school going children to enhance the position of those tehsils that are backward in primary education. For those tehsils with good primary schooling facilities, steps still need to be taken to improve the accessibility of high schools and colleges to those keen on pursuing higher education. In addition, the people have to be motivated to see that their children get basic education. This will enhance the enrolment level and thereby the universalisation of education which is indispensable to the socio-economic well being in the long run.

Keywords: educational attainment, factor analysis, regional disparities, school infrastructures, socio-economic development, universalisation of education