



Government versus Private: Strategies for Primary Education in Kashmir Valley (Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir)

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ABSTRACT:

Education leads to empower an individual in a society. India has taken various measures to make elementary education accessible to all. The Union Territory of J&K also adopted the rules of the Central government for primary education in the UT. The paper will give the brief history of education in Kashmir division of J&K followed by the schemes implemented by the government from time to time. The main focus of the paper will be the analysis of the strategies adopted by the Private schools by which the choice for primary education in Kashmir got shifted from government to private schools. By the end of the paper there will be some suggestions so that the concept of government and private could be nullified.

Keywords: *Primary Education, Kashmir Valley, Government schools, Government schemes, Private Institutions*

Introduction:

Education is considered as a fundamental to development and growth of a nation. An Arabic proverb explains education as “from darkness to light”. Every society recognizes the value of education as it is the only investment by which expectations can be developed from an individual. India is believed to have the system of education from Vedic ages when the students from almost all over the world used to come India for the sake of receiving education. After the independence, many steps were taken by the government to enhance the system of primary education. Jammu & Kashmir which became the part of India just after the independence, had also from time to time implemented the schemes of the central government to the state. By the globalization of 1991, private sectors entered almost in every sphere, so was in the field of education. It is not that Kashmir had not any private institutions before 1990s but

during the time of British rule, many private schools were established in the valley. The J&K School Education Act of 1984 also provided for the establishment of private schools. After 1990s the pace of establishing private schools geared up. Government is also developing an infrastructure in the state. There is hardly any remote area in Kashmir that does not have a school but for the lack of supervision, quality of education and infrastructure, role in these schools has considerably declined. According to a survey, most of the schools (government) lack proper classroom accommodation, play grounds toilet facilities. Moreover, library and computer lab are a dream.^[1]In today's world of competition, parents prefer to send their wards to private schools irrespective of the huge fees they charge.

History of Education in Kashmir:

Kashmir has its roots in the era of pre-British rule. Kashmir was inhabited by Hindus as well as Muslims along with some other communities. Muslim children were given the education through Madrassas where Arabic was taught so that the religious books of Muslims be understood well. In the same way, Sanskrit was taught to the Hindu students related to their religious literature. Apart from these languages, Persian was also taught. By the beginning of the 19th century, a voice of social reforms for the development of education was built in the state when the state of Jammu & Kashmir was under Dogra rule.^[2]In 1857, during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, Vidha Vilas Press, the first press of J&K was established to translate modern books to Sanskrit. The modern school in Kashmir was founded by J. Hilton Knowles in 1880 on the premises of Missionary Hospital in Srinagar. It is known by the name C Tyndale Biscoe. The name was given after Cecil Canon Biscoe, a British Missionary who became the principal of the school in 1893. This was one of the steps taken by the British government to modernize the people of India by sending missionaries to the country. After the joining of Tyndale Biscoe, the school got good progress as he was keen to impart modern education to Kashmiri students.^[3]To promote education among illiterate Kashmiri Muslims, an organization namely *Anjuman-E-Nusrut-ul-Islam* was founded by Mirwaiz Ghulam Rasool Shah (a Kashmiri religious scholar) in 1899. The organization started two girls' primary schools in the 1930s to encourage female education. Such a move for female education by Anjuman was praiseworthy. Later in 1936, some Roman Catholic nuns started Presentation Convent School in Srinagar.^[4]

At the time of independence, there were few educational institutions in Kashmir that were largely concentrated in towns and cities. With the efforts of the government, the education sector of Kashmir along with other parts of the state was improved substantially. The first step towards the universalization of primary education was taken up in the 1930s in which the introduction of compulsory education within the municipal and notified areas of Srinagar and Sopore was initiated. The Scheme resulted in the

enrollment of 813 students in Srinagar alone.^[5] Article 45 of the Indian constitution provides for free and compulsory education within the age group of 6-14. The erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir was an autonomous state having its own constitution before scraping of Article 370 and 35A. The constitution of J&K, under article 20 also provides for free education up to the university level to every permanent resident. This was followed by the J&K School Education Act 1984 which in addition to providing free and compulsory education, also provided for the establishment and maintenance of schools. The act also permits any educational agency to establish and maintain private schools. The paradigm shift of India from a closed economy to an open economy through the economic reforms of 1991 (Globalization, Privatization, and Liberalization) influenced many sections of the Indian economy, and the state of Jammu & Kashmir was not the different case. All the sectors of the state in general and education in particular also witnessed the change by the passage of time. The development in the number of private schools from 1990 to 2010 can be seen by the fact that in 1990 there were 773 private schools in the Kashmir division which raised to 2199 in 2010.^[6] By the end of year and year, the number of private schools and their fee structure increases rapidly. The contribution of both the government and private sector however led to increase in enrollment of students. In Jammu & Kashmir, the total enrollment in primary education in the year 1950-55 was 0.64 lacs which increased to 9.68 lacs in the year 2001-02. ^[7]

Developmental strategies of government-run schools:

Education in Jammu & Kashmir is divided into Primary, Middle, Higher Secondary and University levels. Up to 10+2 level, the education is managed by the J&K State Board of School Education. The governing body of primary education having the acronym JKBOSE has its own pattern of the curriculum. In addition to this, there are various Kendriya Vidyalas and Army schools that follow the CBSE pattern also contribute to the secondary level education in the state.

Universalization of elementary education was initiated by the government of India through various schemes. For better enrollment in schools, a scheme launched was the “Mid-day meal program” launched on 15 August 1995. The scheme besides attendance and retention of learning levels, ought to improve the nutritional status of students of primary level and to provide nutritional support to the primary students of affected areas even during summer vacation. The scheme provided a cooked mid-day meal with a minimum of 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein content to all children studying in class 1-5 in Government Local Bodies, Government-Aided Schools and EGS & AIE Centers (Education Guarantee Scheme & Alternative and Innovative Education respectively).

The biggest step towards primary education is SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) launched in 2000-01 by the government of India all over the country mandated by the 86th amendment act of the Indian constitution making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years of age, a fundamental right. This centrally sponsored scheme was introduced in J&K in the year 2003 to enhance enrollment and also to take the modern path for primary education. The school teachers were given Rs 500 for preparing teaching aids called Teaching-Learning Method (TLM) for effective and joyful teaching. According to the Department of School Education Government of J&K, "Its overall goal includes universal access and retention, bridging gender and social gaps in education and enhancement of learning levels of children. It provides a variety of intervention inter-alia opening of new schools, alternate schooling facility, construction of schools, drinking water facility, textbooks etc."^[8]

SamagraShiksha, another integrated scheme of school education which is a colligate of three schemes of SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA), RashtriyaMadhyamikAbhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE). The scheme was implemented in 2008 in the state envisaging quality education from pre-school to the senior secondary stage.

An overview of Private schools in Kashmir:

A private school is an institution that is not dependent on the government in terms of finance and governance. They receive money from the parents in return for the education they provide to their wards. According to the Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE), 43% of the students from grades 1-12 attend private schools. India has nearly 4 lakh unaided private schools with more than 7.9 crore students enrolled (data taken from Central Square Foundation)^[9]. Some private schools receive aid from the government, so the schools are categorized as Aided or Unaided private schools. The reports collected by DISE which is meant to be an annual census of all the schools in the country. The questionnaire put by the agency in which the two types of schools (aided and unaided) are mostly lumped together and categorized as private schools.^[10] The valley of Kashmir has the highest population among the divisions of the erstwhile state Jammu & Kashmir. According to a report in Greater Kashmir (a state newspaper), details shared by the union finance ministry show that J&K's per capita income recalled at the current price in the financial year 2019-20 was Rs 102789. The trend told the private schooling in Kashmir for primary education is increasing day by day. There is a huge number of private schools in every district of Kashmir valley in which some schools like Delhi Public School (having many schools in Kashmir), BurnHall, Biscoe, Mallinson are functioning for decades.

Strategical differences among government and private schools:

Education is the first and long-term investment that parents spend on their children. Education brings achievements only when it is supplemented with efficient and appropriate study techniques and proper strategy. The policy of the J&K government to impart primary education through various schemes discussed earlier have somewhat increased the enrollment in government institutions, still, government-run school is lagging in terms of enrollment and pass percentage as compared to the private schools in Kashmir. The fact that even government teachers hesitate to admit their wards in government school is surprising.^[11] It is undeniable fact that the government education system had almost come to a standstill. The private institutions even being self-financed are a source of providing quality education and attracting a heavy number of students. These private schools like Burn Hall, DPS, New Era, Minto Circle, Mallinson, Iqbal Memorial, Candid, etc. are among those schools which consistently have excellent results in Kashmir.^[12] Here it is necessary to bring into notice that these schools charge a huge amount of fees from the parents. The J&K board results for the 10th class (Kashmir Division) for the year 2021 which was recently declared show that five topper students who secured the highest marks in the examination were all from private schools. The status of 12th class results in Kashmir division for the same year are somewhat different, where the topper student hails from a government school. Among the five toppers in commerce stream, one is from private school and four others from the government school. But by seeing the 10th class result, one may presume that these 12th class students may also have completed their 10th class from private schools. The private schools in the valley have different strategies to attract the students which include a proper website, transport facilities, feedback mechanism etc. It is the matter of the fact that the private schools charge a huge fees from the students but the facilities provided by them are better than government-run schools. A proper school uniform for different tasks is maintained in which students have to put one uniform for regular days and for the purpose of sports, picnic and trekking like curricular activities, different uniforms are prescribed by the school authorities. On the one hand, the privately managed schools had a name which in other terms be called as a brand. The names of these schools have been brought from different personalities that include western and Islamic scholars or simply some Nouns and Adjectives. It is the same pattern which is adopted by the companies to attract customers. When on the other hand we talk about government schools, they are just Govt. Primary Schools, Govt. Middle Schools and so on.

Conclusion:

Education is the base for the development of a society. The universalization of elementary education in India proved effective in the enrollment of the students irrespective of their caste, sex and income. For the poor students of the country who cannot afford basic education, the government schools have always

remained open. The privatization of education had also contributed to the primary education in Kashmir but the system of competition between government and private schools is worrisome. The schemes like Mid-day meal on which government spending huge amounts is a good step but along with this government should take the steps to make those facilities available that could bring the private and government schools on a similar line. One cannot deny the fact that a student feels proud takes the name of a private school and say that he/she is reading in that school. The government schools instead of having the word "Government" should have a name which gives recognition.

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