SHIFTING PARADIGM AND REVERSAL TREND IN STRUCTURAL COMPOSITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Reena Bala *

Abstract

Higher education is the most essential for the socio-economic development of any nation. It is an instrument which can provide the insight to educated masses to make use of the new developments particularly in science and technology. Colleges and Universities provide higher level of general, professional and technical education. The general and technological transformation of a region is very much dependent on availability and quality of higher learning institutes. In the following, an attempt will be made to examine the composition of higher education in Himachal Pradesh. The union Ministry of Human Resource Development (henceforth, MHRD) is the central level ministry to govern the higher education in India. The MHRD is responsible for education at all levels. Its wing known as the Department of School and Literacy is responsible for the development of school education whereas another wing, the Department of higher education takes care of higher education. In the available literature structure of higher education can be examined in a number of ways such as on the basis of its nature, management and regulatory framework.

Keywords: *General education, College, Professional education, Technical education*

Introduction

Higher education can be categorised into (a) general, (b) professional, and (c) technical education. From the angle of management, it can be (i) public (ii)

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private, (iii) joint (public and private) and (iv) non-governmental run by NGOs. From the regulatory angle, in the case of India, University Grants Commission (UGC) is the main governing body that provides grants, coordinates activities and maintains standard of higher education in the entire country. However, several autonomous regulatory and statutory bodies have come up to play an important role to regulate institutions of higher education. Such bodies Include (i) All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) (ii) Medical Council of India (MCI) (iii) Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) (iv) National Council of Teachers Education (NCTE) (v) Dental Council of India (DCI) (vi) Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) (vii) Indian Nursing Council (INC) (viii) Bar Council of India (BCI) (ix) Veterinary Council of India (VCI) (x) Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) (xi) Distance Education Council (DEC), (xii) Council of Architecture (COA), (xiii) Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and (xiv) State Councils of Higher Education (SCHE). All such councils are responsible for the recognition of the courses, promotion of professional institutions, regulation of syllabus, provision of grants and maintaining of standards. The present paper examines the nature of higher education at college level in the state.

In terms of nature, higher education can be classified into general, professional, and technical education. However, in practice, a single institution of higher education may impart two or more types of education, posing a serious difficulty in classifying the higher education institutions, especially the colleges. It has been observed that there are colleges in the state where disciplines/subjects relating to arts, humanities, sciences, engineering/technology or even management are taught on the same campus in the same precincts. In fact, they act as mini-universities. The Annual Status Report of Higher Education, 2013 classifies higher education into (i) Graduate, (ii) Masters (Post-Graduate), (iii) Pre-doctoral/Doctoral degrees in general, technical and professional categories (Government of India, 2013:7) (Table 1). Another report divides higher education into four broad categories: formal, technical and professional, skill development and vocational training (Deloitte 2012:6). By the nature, higher education can also be classified as general, vocational, professional or technical (Government of India 2012:1).

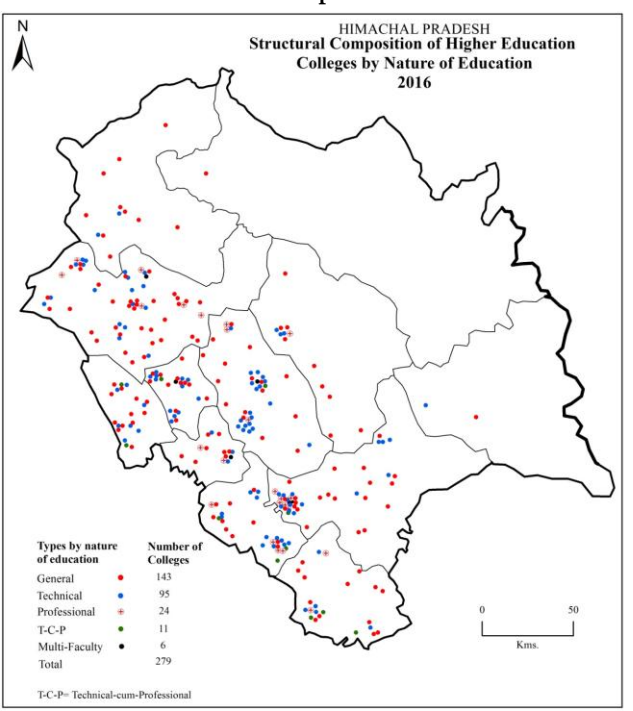
Table 1

<table>
<tr><th colspan="8">Higher Education: Hierarchical Structure of Various Programmes</th></tr>
<tr><th>Completed Years of Age/Age-groups</th><th colspan="6"></th><th>Years of Education</th></tr>
<tr><td>27</td><td colspan="6" rowspan="3">Ph.D. (5)</td><td>23</td></tr>
<tr><td>26</td><td>22</td></tr>
<tr><td>25</td><td>21</td></tr>
<tr><td>24</td><td rowspan="2">MS/MD (2)</td><td rowspan="2">MDS (2)</td><td rowspan="2">LL.M. (2)</td><td>Pre-Ph.D (6months)</td><td rowspan="2">M.Ed (2)</td><td rowspan="2">ME. M. Phar MBA (2), MSc. Nurs. (2) MCA (3)</td><td rowspan="2">M.Sc. (Agri., Forest, Hort.)</td><td>20</td></tr>
<tr><td>23</td><td>19</td></tr>
<tr><td>22</td><td rowspan="5">MBBS/BAMS (5)</td><td rowspan="5">BDS (5)</td><td rowspan="3">LLB (3)</td><td>MPhil. (2)</td><td>18</td></tr>
<tr><td>21</td><td>M.Sc. M.A. M.Com. (2)</td><td>B.Ed* (2)</td><td rowspan="3">BE, B.Tech. B.Phar., Nurs. (4)</td><td rowspan="3">B.Sc. Agr. For. Hort. (4)</td><td>17</td></tr>
<tr><td>20</td><td rowspan="3">B.A., B.Sc., B. Com, BBA, BCA (3)</td><td>16</td></tr>
<tr><td>19</td><td>15</td></tr>
<tr><td>18</td><td>14</td></tr>
<tr><td>17</td><td>13</td></tr>
<tr><td>3-16</td><td colspan="6">School Education</td><td>1-12</td></tr>
</table>

Source: Modified from the Manju Lohumi (Development of Tertiary Education in Himachal Pradesh, 1996, p.3)
Note: Agr.,=Agriculture, For.,= Forestry, Hort.=Horticulture, B. Phar./M Phar=Bachelor & Masters of Pharmacy, B.E, M.E= Bachelor & Masters of Engineering, MBBS= Bachelor of Medicine & Surgery, Nurs.=Nursing, LLB=Bachelor & Masters of Law, BAMS=Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery, BDS/MDS=Bachelor & Masters of Dental Surgery, MS/MD= Masters of Surgery/Doctor of Medicine.
(ii)*One year course of B.Ed upgraded into two years from 2015-17.
(iii) The figures given in parenthesis shows the duration of the course in years.

In light of all this, the present study adopts its own classification, dividing all the 279 colleges in the state into five categories: General, Technical, Professional, Technical-cum-Professional and Multi-disciplinary (Map 1). Colleges award degrees through the universities of their affiliation. Generally, the colleges are affiliated either to the central or the state universities. Private colleges are usually affiliated to the state universities. In Himachal Pradesh, all colleges running undergraduate courses except the technical ones are affiliated to Himachal Pradesh University (H.P.U), Shimla. The colleges/institutes imparting technical education are affiliated to Himachal Pradesh Technical University (HPTU) located at Hamirpur town. In nutshell, the colleges offering degree level courses are required to be affiliated with the universities.

Map 1



Sources: i) Statistics of Higher &Technical Education available from the Directorate of Higher education, Lalpani Shimla, Government of Himachal Pradesh. (ii) Annual reports of various years from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

In 2016, general education colleges made more than one-half or 51.3 percent of the total 279 colleges of the state. Another more than one-third or 34.1 percent belonged to technical education, distantly followed by professional education colleges with 8.6 percent, technical-cum-professional with 4.0 percent and multi-faculty colleges with only 2.2 percent (Table 2).

Evidently, general education dominates the higher education scenario in the state. However, there are significant departures at the district level. Against the state average of 51.3 percent, the share of general education colleges in total colleges of respective districts ranged from a high of cent percent in Lahul and Spiti district to a low of 34.5 percent in Solan district. In other words, higher education is least diversified in case of Lahul and Spiti, against the most diversified one in Solan district. On the whole, higher education is minimally diversified in four districts of Lahul and Spiti, Chamba, Kullu and Kinnaur. Against this, it is highly diversified in four districts of Solan, Shimla, Mandi and Sirmaur. The same is statistically supported in Gibbs-Martin index of diversification, calculated to know the degree of diversification in higher education at the district level in Himachal Pradesh

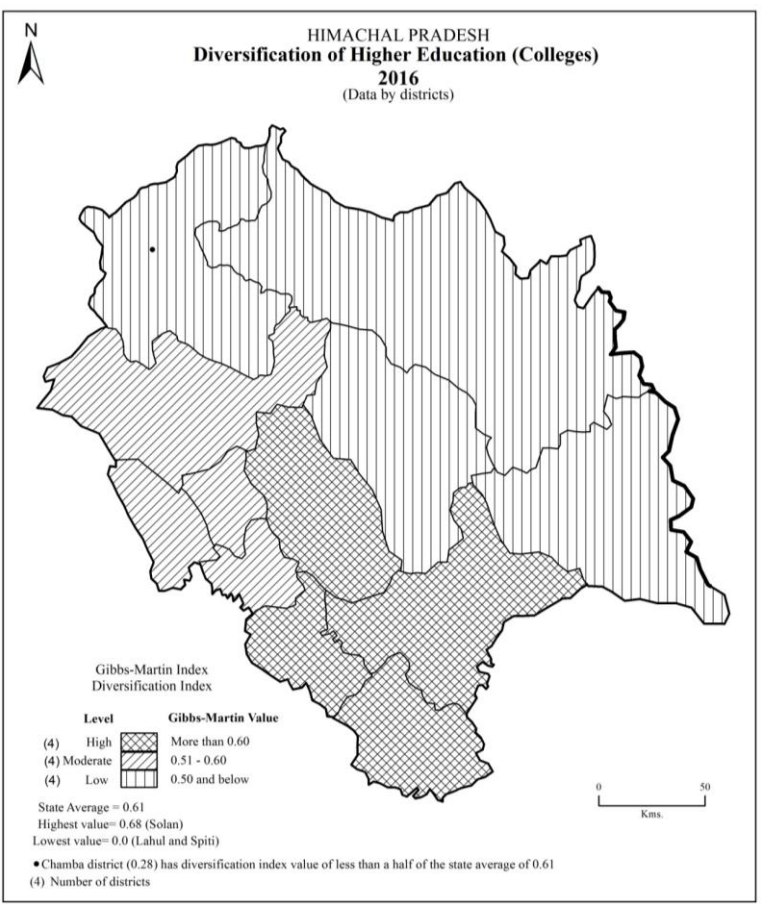
Table 2 Himachal Pradesh: District-wise percentage share of higher education colleges by nature, 2016

S. No	District Name	General	Technical	Professional	Technical cum professional	Multi-faculty	Gibbs-Martin Index
1		2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Bilaspur	57.1	21.4	14.3	0.0	7.1	0.60
2	Chamba	83.3	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.28
3	Hamirpur	44.0	48.0	0.0	4.0	4.0	0.57
4	Kangra	56.1	31.6	10.5	0.0	1.8	0.57
5	Kinnaur	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.50
6	Kullu	69.2	23.1	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.46
7	Lahul and Spiti	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
8	Mandi	40.0	47.5	7.5	2.5	2.5	0.61
9	Shimla	47.6	31.0	14.3	2.4	4.8	0.65
10	Sirmaur	56.5	21.7	8.7	13.0	0.0	0.61
11	Solan	34.5	41.4	13.8	10.3	0.0	0.68
12	Una	57.1	33.3	0.0	9.5	0.0	0.55
Himachal Pradesh		**51.3**	**34.1**	**8.6**	**3.9**	**2.2**	**0.61**

Sources: i) Statistics of Higher & Technical Education available from the Directorate of Higher education, Lalpani Shimla, Government of Himachal Pradesh. (ii) Annual reports of various years from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

Map 2 reveals that four districts of Lahul and Spiti, Chamba, Kullu and Kinnaur, with index value of 0.50, are categorized as low diversification districts. Against this, four districts, namely Solan, Shimla, Mandi and Sirmaur, where index value is higher than 0.60, fall in category of high diversification districts. Remaining four districts of Una, Kangra, Hamirpur and Bilaspur where index value ranged from 0.51 to 0.60 falls in moderate category of diversification.

Map 2



Sources: i) Statistics of Higher &Technical Education available from the Directorate of Higher education, Lalpani Shimla, Government of Himachal Pradesh. (ii) Annual reports of various years from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla

In highly diversified category, Solan and Sirmaur districts have the advantage of relatively plain topography and their proximity to plains in Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and even the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Their proximity to plains and better transport links help in attracting students as well as good teaching faculty from the neighboring states in the plains. In a way, these two districts have locational advantage. On the other hand, Shimla district has benefitted from the initial advantage, functioning as a hill town and then the summer capital of British India for its good climate and scenic beauty. Since independence, it has been the state capital of Himachal Pradesh. On the others hand, Mandi district has benefitted from its political clout in recent decades. The district has the privilege of being parliamentary and assembly constituencies of important political personalities in the state including Shri V.B. Singh, the present Chief Minister and his wife, Shri Sukh Ram, former central cabinet minister in Shri Narsimahrao government during 1991-1996 and Shri Kaul Singh, important cabinet minister in the present state government headed by Shri V. B. Singh as the Chief Minister. Moreover Mandi, among the erstwhile native states of Himachal Pradesh, has a long tradition of education.

In contrast, four districts having lower diversification of higher education suffers from their peripheral locations, rugged topography and harsh climate, leading to sparse distribution of settlements and low population density. Among these districts, Lahul and Spiti have only one college and that fulfills the requirement of general education. There is a substantial share of tribal population in these four districts. The Government of India provides various concessions to tribals for their socio-economic upliftment. Reservation of seats in educational institutions and provision of scholarships to students belonging to tribal population are a few of such welfare measures. For this and some other reasons, tribals residing in these districts send their children for higher education to cities like Chandigarh, Delhi and Amritsar. In addition, the well to do households of these districts also sends their wards to cities in plain areas of the adjoining states namely Punjab, Haryana, National Capital Territory, Delhi and Chandigarh (U.T.). Moreover, these areas are well linked with plains of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi and have close socio-economic links, which were developed earlier during British rule in India when these areas were part of colonial Punjab.

The remaining four districts having index value between 0.51 and 0.60 and falling in moderate diversification category of districts include Una, Bilaspur, Hamirpur and Kangra. Hamirpur district has the highest share (48.0 percent) of technical education colleges in its total higher education colleges in the entire state. Yet the district of Hamirpur has no such college that imparts professional education. Similarly, Kangra district where technical colleges make about 32.0 percent of total colleges, general education colleges still dominate with 56.1 percent share. In Una, where the share of technical colleges is one-third of the total colleges of the district, surprisingly there is no college imparting a professional education. Again, general education colleges dominate the scenario. Locationally, all these districts have close proximity to Punjab, and with exception of Bilaspur district all were a part of the Punjab before its linguistic reorganization in 1966. Hence, a large number of households carry on the tradition of sending their wards to the colleges and universities located in Punjab especially for technical and professional courses.

1. General education colleges

General education colleges, by dividing further in three different sub-categories: those offering (i) general courses only, (ii) general-cum-technical courses and (iii) undergraduate and postgraduate courses with technical education. In 2016, 143, or 51.3 percent of the total 279 colleges in the state were offering courses related to general education. However, the scenario of higher education has changed considerably over the period of time. In pre-statehood period before 1971, the higher education in the state was greatly dominated by general education. Then, 21 or 75.0 percent of the total 28 colleges in the state imparted higher education in general courses. Amongst these 21 colleges, nearly one-half or ten were offering purely arts courses. Another ten were running a few technical courses along with general courses at graduate and post-graduate level. The remaining one college was providing general-cum-technical courses (Table 3). Colleges imparting technical & professional education were highly limited in number.

Table 3: Himachal Pradesh: Distribution of Colleges by Nature, 1971-2016

Years	GE*	%	TE*	%	Prof*	%	TCP*	%	MF*	%	Total
1971	21	75.0	2	7.1	1	3.6	0	0.0	4	14.3	28
1981	33	80.5	2	4.9	2	4.9	0	0.0	4	9.8	41
1991	46	83.6	2	3.6	2	3.6	0	0.0	5	9.1	55
2001	73	77.7	8	8.5	6	6.4	1	1.1	6	6.4	94
2011	104	46.0	88	38.9	17	7.5	11	4.9	6	2.7	226
2016	143	51.3	95	34.1	24	8.6	11	3.9	6	2.2	279

Source: Sources: i) Statistics of Higher &Technical Education available from the Directorate of Higher education, Lalpani Shimla, Government of Himachal Pradesh. (ii) Annual reports of various years from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

*Note: *GE: General education; TE: Technical education; Prof.: Professional education; TCP: Technical-cum-professional education; MF: Multi-Faculty*

In 1981, where the number of the colleges in the state went to 41, 33 or more than 80.0 percent of them were imparting general education. There had been no change in number of technical/professional/technical-cum-professional education colleges during 1971-1981. The general education courses continued to dominate the higher education scenario in the state.

In the year 1991, when total number of colleges went up to 55, 46 or about 84.0 percent imparted general education courses. This indicates the growing dominance of general education courses in the field of higher education in the state. It is interestingly to note that the number of general education colleges increased by 13, from 33 in 1981 to 46 in 1991. Against this all the other category of colleges registered increase of one college only. The national scenario was also not very different from that of Himachal Pradesh. After 1991, when there came a notable change in the situation following the change in economic policies at the national level, the demand for technical and professional education increased to make Indian education globally competitive and job oriented. As a result, focus shifted to technical and

professional courses. Some scholars have termed it as a paradigm shift in higher education in India. By 2001, where there were 94 colleges in the state to impart higher education, 73 or only 77.7 percent were imparting general education courses. Evidently, the share of colleges imparting general education courses declined by 6.0 percent during 1991-2001. Against this, the share of technical education colleges more than doubled from 3.6 percent in 1991 to 8.5 percent in 2001. Similarly, the share of professional colleges rose from 3.6 percent to 6.4 percent during this period.

Then after a gap often years in 2011, the share of colleges imparting general education courses sharply declined to 46.0 percent or less than a half of the total number of colleges. Against this, share of technical colleges jumped from 8.5 percent in 2001 to 38.9 percent in 2011. Evidently, technical and professional education courses were accorded higher priority over general courses during this period. This was a period when private investment in the sector of higher education got a big push in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Majority of the colleges and universities coming during this period were established in the private sector.

However, the government of Himachal Pradesh became active again to promote the higher education in the state. Several new colleges were opened by the state government in the backward and peripheral areas so that a college is available within a radius of 25 kms in all the parts of the state (Government of Himachal Pradesh (GOI), 2014). In most of such colleges general education courses were introduced. As a result, by 2016 the share of general education colleges rose to 51.2 percent from 46.0 percent in 2011. Evidently, government policy, whether it is about focus on privatization or on public investment in higher education, matters a lot in changing the structural composition of higher education in a state in general and a country as a whole (in particular).

2. Technical education

In 2016, 95 or 34.1 percent of total 279 colleges in Himachal Pradesh were imparting technical education courses, placing technical education next to general education in the state. However, strengthening of technical education in the state is a recent phenomenon. Before statehood in 1971,

technical education had only two or just 7.1 percent of the total number of 28 colleges in the state. These two colleges were associated with the teachers' training courses in the state (Table 3).

There has been no change in the number of technical education colleges between 1971 and 1991. After that, this number went up with the coming of six more technical education institutions in the state between 1991 and 2001. In other words, on an average, less than one such college/institution per annum was added during the decade of 1991-2000. In this way, by 2001 when total number of colleges imparting higher education in the state had gone up to 94, the share of such colleges made only 8.5 percent of the total number of colleges. Evidently, there has been a slow progress in the area of technical education in the state till 2001. The new six such colleges added during 1991-2001 had the following composition of courses. Three of them were of teachers' training, two of pharmacy and remaining one management college.

The next decade of 2001-2011 recorded a spurt in technical education in the state. As many as 80 new colleges of technical education were added to make the total number of such colleges 88 or 39.0 percent of total number of higher education colleges in the state. The credit, in fact, goes to privatization wave, in the state, since most of colleges running a variety of technical courses were opened in private sector. Of the total 80 technical colleges established during the decade of 2001-2011 decade in the state, 78 were in the private sector.

After attaining its peak growth during the decade 2001-2011, technical higher education recorded a sluggish growth in the state. Between the year 2011 and 2016, when the total number of higher education colleges in the state went up to 279 from 226 in the year 2011, the number of technical higher education increased by only seven from 88 to 95. In the year 2016, these made 34.1 percent of the total number of colleges, against 39.0 percent in 2011. Evidently, slow growth of technical higher education colleges during 2011-2016 resulted in decline of their share by about 4.0 percent during this period. Of the new technical colleges, three were running teachers' training courses and the remaining four were providing

pharmacy/engineering and management courses.

A majority of technical colleges in the state were providing Bachelors and Master's Degree courses in the field of teachers' training. This is mainly because of a high demand for trained teachers to teach at the school level as well as to train the teachers further. A further inquiry reveal that overwhelming majority of such colleges, to begin, with started B.Ed classes and later on diversified to other technical courses including computer science applications, business administration, engineering and pharmaceutical sciences. 55 such colleges or 58.0 percent of total technical higher education colleges in the state run B.Ed and M.Ed courses. Earlier, the aspirants for such courses used to go to colleges located in the neighbouring states of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.

3. Professional education

Professional education is in its infancy in Himachal Pradesh. Only 24 or less than one-tenth of the total number of colleges in the state-run professional courses. They are running medical and paramedical courses, needing huge financial investment to build infrastructure. The courses are in Ayurvedic, Dental, Allopathic and Homeopathic system of medical sciences, while the focus of paramedical course is on the training of paramedical staff such as nurses. Medical courses take more than four years, against these paramedical courses which are of four to six years duration. Paramedical staff training courses are more recent in origin out of these two streams. As in the case of technical higher education colleges, the year 2001 acts as water divide in case of professional colleges as well. The number of such colleges was only six in the year 2001. It rose to 17 in the year 2011 and then to 24 in 2016. Earlier in 1971, when Himachal Pradesh got statehood, there was only one college of this kind. Growing at a snail's pace between 1971 and 1981, it recorded high growth between 1991 and 2001, when number grew by 300 percent from two to six. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of professional colleges jumped to almost three times its original number to increase to about 40.0 percent between 2011 and 2016. Against this, technical education colleges recorded an astounding increase of eleven times during the decade of 2001-2010 (Table 3).

In 2016, 24 professional colleges made only about 9.0 percent of the total 279 colleges in the state. Against this, technical higher education colleges made 34.0 percent of the total number of colleges. Evidently, professional higher education in the state is not only progressing at a slower pace but also is far behind the technical education. The internal composition of 24 professional colleges in the state was as follows. Eight or one-third of the total number of colleges were running courses such as M.B.B.S, M.S. and M.D. In their distribution, they were located in the four districts of Kangra, Mandi, Shimla and Solan. Another, sixteen or two-third such colleges were running paramedical courses such as B.Sc (Nursing), and M.Sc (Nursing). One-half of paramedical colleges were located in the two districts of Kangra and Shimla. Remaining, one-half were widely spread in the five districts of Solan, Bilaspur, Kullu, Mandi and Sirmaur. On the whole, professional higher education colleges in the state were mainly confined to the four districts of Kangra, Shimla, Mandi and Solan, having, in combine, about four-fifth of total such colleges in the state.

Unfortunately, professional higher education colleges are still non-existent in five of twelve districts or 40.0 percent districts of the state. These include Chamba, Hamirpur, Kinnaur, Lahul and Spiti and Una districts. Evidently, in Himachal Pradesh higher education in the field of professional courses is not only in the stage of infancy but also highly confined in locational terms.

4. Technical-cum-Professional education

Only a small share of 4.0 percent of the total number of colleges of state offered professional courses along with technical courses. Professional courses, such as pharmacy, dentistry and law are offered along with engineering, computer science, teachers' training, management and bio-technology courses.

Each one of these colleges' deals in a variety of courses. These colleges were mainly concentrated in three districts of Sirmaur, Solan and Una where eight of the eleven such colleges were located. Remaining three was located in the three different districts of Hamirpur, Mandi, and Shimla. All of them have a recent origin and are privately managed (Table 3). The majority of these colleges were established after 2002. Further, the dominant majority was

located in relatively plain areas, well linked with neighbouring states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttarakhand.

5. Multi-disciplinary courses

Remaining six or only 2.2 percent of the total colleges were running multi-faculty courses both at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Such colleges were not only few in number but also scattered in different parts of the state. This may be termed as random distribution. Of the six such colleges, the two were located in Shimla and the remaining in the four districts of Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Kangra and Mandi. Interestingly, all such colleges were located in the urban areas. Multi-disciplinary colleges offered courses in Arts, Science, Commerce, Computer Applications, Business Administration, Biotechnology, Microbiology, and Tourism.

Results and Findings

- In the light of the above analysis it is noted that with privatization of higher education in 2001, termed as a paradigm shift in higher education in India, technical education recorded unprecedented increase in number of colleges teaching technical education courses.

- However, 2001-2011 decade proved a peak period in the growth of technical higher education in the state, as there has been a sluggish growth of technical colleges between 2011 and 2016. This indicates to melting down of privatization pot within a decade in the hill state of Himachal Pradesh. 2011 marked the reversal of trend again towards the public investment in higher education in the state. Against the sluggish growth of technical education colleges, there has been spurt in growth of general education colleges in the state.

- Of the 53 new colleges opened in the state during 2011-2016, 41 were general education colleges with investment made by the Government of Himachal Pradesh. Political populism driven by the desire to win the next state assembly elections, due in December 2017, brought smile on the face of people living in those tehsils or sub-tehsils which were without any government college of higher education till date. This resulted in giving an upper hand again to general education colleges in

overall structural composition of higher education in the state. The essence of the story is government policy is the guiding force behind making or remaking of structural composition of higher education in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

- Professional education is still in the infancy stage in Himachal Pradesh. The share of colleges teaching such courses in the total number of colleges was less than one-tenth in 2016. There were only four districts of Bilaspur, Kangra, Shimla and Solan where the share of professional colleges in the total number of colleges of these districts was more than 10.0 percent.

- Professional higher education in the state is highly oriented to nursing course (Bachelors or Master's degree courses). In 2016, 24 professional colleges made only about 9.0 percent in total 279 colleges in the state. Against this, technical higher education colleges made 34.0 percent in total. Evidently, professional higher education in the state is not only progressing at a slow pace but also far behind of technical education.

- On the whole, professional higher education colleges in the state were mainly confined to four districts of Kangra, Shimla, Mandi and Solan, having, in combine, about four-fifths of totals such colleges in the state.

Conclusions

Structure of higher education in Himachal Pradesh has been changing over the period. It was over dominated by the general education colleges but registered a shift towards technical education colleges after 1991, coinciding with change in economic policy reform i.e. liberalization at the national level. Surge in demand for technical education courses, following change in economic policies, technical education recorded spurt in opening of new colleges teaching such kind of courses. Broadly speaking, higher education is structurally least diversified in four northern districts of Chamba, Lahul and Spiti, Kinnaur and Kullu, while reverse is true of Solan, Shimla, Mandi and Sirmaur districts: Factors like locational advantage, physiographic setting and initial advantage have played a crucial role in diversification of structural composition of higher education at the district level in the state.

Different districts have benefitted in different ways to diversify the structure of higher education therein. For example, Solan and Sirmaur districts benefitted from locational advantage, Shimla due to initial advantage combined with its status as the state capital headquarters, Hamirpur from getting the regional engineering college established under the central government scheme as early as in 1986 and Mandi district from its growing political clout in the recent decade.

Suggestions

It is important to improve not only the quality but also the quantity of human and physical infrastructure of higher education in different parts of the state particularly the new colleges opened by the Government of Himachal Pradesh after the linguistic organization of Punjab in 1966. Further, the new colleges opened by the Government of Himachal Pradesh 2014 onward in backward and peripheral areas of different districts in the state were also highly deficient in infrastructural facilities. Also, they required infrastructure up gradation including the buildings to house the colleges properly.

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