



## Changing scenario in education of rural youths in India: Possible pathways

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### Abstract

As we all know that youth are the future of any nation and education is key for youth to shape their future especially a developing country like India. So, government of India has continuously making its policies and programmes to improve the educational level of youth particularly in rural areas. Focus has made on to increase attending educational institute, Literacy rate & level of education and technical education among rural youths. So, the objectives of this paper are to understand the change in education of rural youths in India and to find out the possible determinants for change in education of rural youths. Research Questions are; how much change is found in education of youths in rural India in terms of literacy rate, attending educational institute and in technical education? and what are the factors responsible for change in education among rural youths in India? This research paper is based on secondary data. To explore the change in education, data of 38th round (1983) and 68th round (2011-12) from National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) of India are used. Percent change is computed to find out the over-time change in education of rural youths and multiple regression model is used to find out the possible determinants of change in education. By analysing the data, it is found that education of rural youths has definitely improved over the time period and the household economic status and education of household head are found to have greater impact on changing scenario of education of rural youth.

**Keywords:** Rural, youth, education, over-time change

### Introduction

Youth being the backbone of any nation, efforts have always been to strengthen the quality of youth in terms of aspects like education, skill development, and employment opportunities, providing required health care and other social development. This is more apt for India in the context of emerging opportunities to harness demographic dividend given the age structure transition which took place in the last few decades. In this aspect, all round development of a youth is important to supply quality workforce as an important input to reap fruits of demographic dividend.

The concern for youth is reflected through the formation of a separate Department of Youth Affairs & Sports in the year 1985. And the department came up with a comprehensive National Youth Policy in 1988 (GoI, 1988). The main focus of the policy has been creating opportunities so as to grow youth to their full capacity. Besides programmes and events through the Department of Youth Affairs & Sports, efforts have been from all ministries towards enhancing youth capabilities. In particular, main responsibility has been upon the ministry of education and it has been the top most priority since the time of independence. Another aspect to mention is employment opportunities. While availability of jobs is an urgent need for smooth transition from youth-hood to adulthood, early entry into the job market is considered to be a sign of inefficient use of youth power/resources. Early entry into the job market indicates the possibility of compromising a youth with getting proper education, skills, and underutilization of resources.

### Review of Literature

A study conducted by IIPS and Population Council (2010) on youth taking samples from six states of India such as AP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and TN found that there is large socio-economic variation in educational attainment among youth (15-24 years). A large number of youths never attended school. The trend was higher in rural areas and among females. Other variations are found by household economic status, social groups and marital status.

While poor socio-economic status influence educational attainment of youth negatively, gender discrimination is yet another vicious aspect against the attainment of education for female youths. Education is an important entitlement for getting jobs and communication skills which is needed for career progression. But the quality of education varies across youths depending on the access to equal quality education. A study by UNESCO (2012) <sup>[9]</sup>, describes how youth perceive their education. Underprivileged youths described their education as poor quality as compared to privileged counterparts. The poor educational quality discourages them to pursue further education, with a view that poor educational quality will end up with unemployment. It has been assessed that there has been significant improvement in India in primary education but no such equivalent transition was found in secondary, vocational and non-formal education. It is more apt for girls. Gender gap in education continue to remain a persistent problem to obstruct youth development. The gender disparity in education has been channelized through lack of gender-sensitive educational facility, materials and training. Poor quality of education among deprived classes in terms of poor adaptation of culture, language and lack of vocational education and training resulted in lack of youth employment opportunities vis-à-vis poor quality of life and youth poverty (GoI, 2017). According to the study conducted by Al-Braizat (2016) <sup>[1]</sup> in Jordan, youths agreed that education is a prerequisite for their positive change and development. They emphasised that cultural change comes from effective and good quality of educational attainments. They also mentioned that creativity and innovation can be possible through education. It was mentioned that young people should acquire basic, vocational and technical education irrespective of culture, religion and race. The study suggested that a comprehensive and integrated education can promote the culture of affirmative transformation and reinforce motivation and confidence among youths. Kumar (2021) <sup>[5]</sup> conducted a case study in Jharkhand to examine the implication of higher education

on employment. In this study, data were collected online from 360 sample youths by self-administered questionnaire of Nilamber-Pitamber University. According to the study, the education system of Jharkhand characterises the issues of quality of education, lack of skills and training. The lack of job oriented educational delivery resulted in out-migration of youths for better education to get employment. The study suggested that universities should focus more to impart practical training and research instead of giving degrees. He also mentioned that proper planning and investment in education must be needed to switch youths into a qualitative human capital. Prajapati et al. (2016)<sup>[7]</sup> found that life skill education among youths has positive association with self-motivation, self-management skills and positive attitude. It is found that effective intervention strategies can promote positive social and mental status and strengthen the ability of coping mechanisms through enhancing self-confidence, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities. A study conducted by Vellymalay (2011)<sup>[10]</sup> established a relationship between parents' educational level and their involvement in their children's education. A positive association was observed between the educational level of parents' and the strategies implemented for their children's educational achievement. Parental education was found to be enhancing the level of educational aspiration of their children. Parents with higher educational qualifications tend to apply different strategies to involve their children at home and school to boost academic brilliance. A study was undertaken by Maitra and Sharma (2009)<sup>[6]</sup> in the year 2009 on 'Parents and Children: Education across generations in India'. Using national level data set from India and adopting sequential probit analysis concluded that parental education is an important determinant of education of their children indicating intergenerational educational mobility. The result shows that the effect of parental education on school progression varies at different stages. While education of children at primary stage is determined by their mother's education, father's educational attainment is crucial in the decision to continue to post-secondary level. The decision of sending a child for post-secondary education is also determined by household income and resources. Yet another study was conducted by Tilak (2002)<sup>[8]</sup> on 'Determinants of Household Expenditure on Education in Rural India'. It was found that household income, expenditure, education of household head and size of household are the important determinants of children's education. It was also observed that government expenditure and household expenditure complement each other in achieving children's education.

**Objective:** The objectives of this study are (1) to understand the change in education of rural youths in India and (2) to find out the possible determinants for change in education of rural youths.

### Research Question

1. How much change is found in education of youths in rural India in terms of literacy rate, attending educational institute and in technical education?
2. What are the factors responsible for change in education among rural youths in India?

### Methods

This research article is based on secondary data. To explore the change in education, data of 38th round (1983) and 68th round (2011-12) from National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) of India are used.

### Statistical Methods

#### 1. To understand the change in education, percent change is computed.

$$\text{Percent Change} = (T^1 - T^0) / T^0 * 100$$

Where  $T^0$  = Value at Time '0' (base year)

$T^1$  = Value at Time '1' (present year)

100 = Constant (Multiplier)

Value of percent change may be  $\pm X$

Where  $+X$  = Positive growth over the given time (between 1983 to 2011-12)

$-X$  = Negative growth over the given time (between 1983 to 2011-12)

#### 2. Multiple regression model is used to find out the possible determinants

The Logistic Regression Model is used for the dichotomous nature (i.e., binary, 0 or 1) dependent variables. The predictor variables may be quantitative, categorical, or a mixture of the two (Retherford and Choe, 1993). In logistic regression model regression line takes a sigmoid curve to the observed points and the line resembles an elongated S. The functional form of the sigmoid curve is:

$$P = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-Z}}$$

Where  $Z$  represents the predictor variables and  $e$  is the base of the natural logarithm and  $P$  is an estimated probability.  $Z$  is a linear function of a set of predictor variables and expressed as  $Z = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k$

### Discussion

#### Over-Time Change in Attending Educational Institute

Education is considered as the most important basic need for human beings. At the time of independence, the level of education was very low. But after independence education was prioritised and policies were made and implemented to educate our population especially the youths. As a result, the level of education of the population has increased. In the early 90's education policies especially focused on educating youths and making them self-sufficient. The resultant of various policies and programmes has been changed in the level of education in the last few decades in particular. And this section presents a glimpse of changes in educational attainment of youth for the last three decades. Three indicators of educational attainment are selected: (1) percentage of youths attending educational institutes, (2) literacy rate and (3) level of education.

Age pattern of youth attendance to educational institutes and its overtime change is presented again for detailed understanding in Table-1. Common findings are that the percentage of attending educational institutes decreases with the increase of age and there is overtime marked change (increased).

In general, there have been signs of improvement of educational attainment and increase of educational lifespan of a youth. It is important that the percentage of youth at older age has increased significantly in 68th round with comparison to 38th round. Which means at present more youths want to attend higher level of education which is a very good sign for the country like India. In future it will be able to supply more professionals to the labour market globally.

**Table 1:** Percentage of rural youths attending education by age in 38<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> round and percentage change over the years

Age of youths	% youths attending education (1983)	% youths attending education (2011-12)	Percentage change
15	35.1	84.7	141.3
16	28.1	77.5	175.8
17	25.8	72.5	181.0
18	15.5	54.3	250.3
19	13.4	47.6	255.2
20	6.4	33.1	417.2
21	6.4	27.1	323.4
22	7.1	16.1	126.8
23	3.3	12.8	287.9
24	2.6	7.2	176.9
25	2.4	3.8	58.3
26	0.9	2.9	222.2
27	0.4	2.1	425.0
28	0.4	1.2	200.0
29	0.3	0.8	166.7

Source: NSSO 38<sup>th</sup> (1983) and 68<sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)

The overtime change in the percentage of youths attending educational institutions was not expectedly uniform across socio-economic status of youth. The variations can be observed from Table-2. The general observation is that there has been an increase in the percentage of youths presently attending educational institutions for all selected groups capturing socio-economic status. But the magnitude of improvement has been greater amongst youths of socio-economically poorer groups. For example, it has been highest among youths belonging to the household activity category of casual labour. The change accounted for as high as 337 percent between the years 1983 and 2011-12 (from the percent of 5.4 percent to 39.9 percent). The change was found to be marginally higher among youths belonging to landless/low landholding category. The rate of change (295 percent) was also higher among Muslim

youths as compared to that of Hindus (202 percent). The most important observation, however, has been the differential in change for gender. It is calculated that the percentage of female youths presently going to educational institutes has increased at much rapid speed as compared to that of male youth. In other words, girls have bridged-up the gap with males at a faster pace. The rate of change accounts to 135 and 437 percent for male and female youths respectively. The percentage of youths attending education is also found to be increasing by the educational level of the head of the households during the mentioned periods. Though the percentage of attending education is found higher for educated household heads, the percentage change accounts higher (267 percent) for illiterate groups based on education of household heads.

**Table 2:** Percentage of rural youths attending education by socio-economic status

Characteristics of youths	38 <sup>th</sup> round (1983)	68 <sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)	Percent change
Gender			
Male	16.2	38.1	135.2
Female	5.2	27.8	434.6
Religion			
Hindu	10.5	31.8	202.9
Muslim	8.3	32.8	295.2
Christian	19.7	42.9	117.8
Others	9.5	37.2	291.6
Social Group			
ST	8.6	33.4	288.4
SC	7.5	28.5	280.0
Others	11.8	34.1	188.9
HH Economic activities			
Self employed	11.7	33.7	188.1
Regular wage/salaried	21.3	39.9	87.3
Casual labour	5.4	23.6	337.1
Other	12.1	46.1	280.9
Education of HH Head			
Illiterate	6.8	25.0	267.6
Up to secondary	15.2	33.4	119.7
Above secondary	23.8	48.7	104.6
HH Land holding			
Land less	8.2	28.0	241.5
Marginal	9.3	32.4	248.4
Others	12.3	35.5	188.6
Total	10.7	33.0	208.4
N	104776	74219	

Source: NSSO 38<sup>th</sup> (1983) and 68<sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)

**Over-Time change in Literacy Rate**

The overtime change of literacy rate remained marked. The gap between the two time periods is visible for every single age of a youth (Table-3), which accounted for around 30 percent. The youth literacy rate varied from the rate of 56.5 percent for 19 years youths to the rate of 52.7 percent for the age of 29 years for the data point 1983. It ranges from 96.2 to 86.7 percent for the year 2011-12. Therefore, educational improvement is also found to have taken place in terms of literacy rate. It has become almost universal (95.2 percent) among the younger generation.

Like the scenario for currently attending educational institutions, changes of literacy rate are found to be associated with socio-economic status of youth (Table-4). It remains negatively associated with socio-economic status. The rate of increase is found to be decreasing with the

increase of landholding. It accounts for 86 percent and 70 percent for landless and large landholding groups respectively. The rate of change was higher among Muslims (116 percent) as compared to that of Hindus (87 percent). It was higher among SC youths (145 percent) as compared to the 'other' category (68 percent). Again, the percentage change in the literacy rate was higher among youths belonging to the household category of casual labour (139.9 percent) as compared to only 29 percent for the category of 'regular/salaried' group. The rate of increase is found higher for 'illiterate' household heads, as compared to the education level of 'secondary education'. The rate of increase has been 162.5 percent and 10.1 percent for 'illiterate' and 'above secondary' level of education respectively.

**Table 3:** Literacy rates of rural youths in 38<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> round and percent change over the period

Age of youths	Literacy rate youths (1983)	Literacy rate youths (2011-12)	Percent change
15	56.5	96.2	70.3
16	55.4	95.3	72.0
17	59.4	96.5	62.5
18	50.5	92.6	83.4
19	56.8	93.8	65.1
20	42.3	90.1	113.0
21	57.4	92.4	61.0
22	46.1	87.4	89.6
23	51.5	89.1	73.0
24	50.5	88.5	75.2
25	39.2	83.2	112.2
26	45.3	85.2	88.1
27	50.1	85.2	70.1
28	42.1	80.6	91.4
29	52.7	86.7	64.5

Source: NSSO 38<sup>th</sup> (1983) and 68<sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)

Yet, another indicator for educational progress has been the graduation of youth towards higher education/higher level of education.

It can be seen from Table-5 that while there has been a sharp fall in the level of illiteracy, the increase for higher

education (higher secondary & above) has been noteworthy. The illiteracy rate has declined by 395 percent between the years 1983 and 2011-12. The percentage increase for higher education has been as high as 2330.0 percent between the mentioned periods.

**Table 4:** Literacy rates of rural youths in 38<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> round and percent change over the period by socio-economic indicators

Characteristics of youths	38 <sup>th</sup> round (1983)	68 <sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)	Percent change
Gender			
Male	63.5	93.7	47.6
Female	34.7	85.6	146.7
Religion			
Hindu	48.0	89.6	86.7
Muslim	39.7	85.7	115.9
Christian	78.2	96.7	23.7
Others	56.6	92.5	63.4
Social Group			
ST	39.5	88.4	123.8
SC	34.8	85.4	145.4
Others	54.2	91.1	68.1
HH Economic activities			
Self employed	57.5	91.0	58.3
Regular wage/salaried	74.1	95.5	28.9
Casual labour	34.1	80.6	136.4
Other	52.6	92.9	76.6
Education of HH Head			
Illiterate	29.3	76.9	162.5
Up to secondary	72.8	94.4	29.7
Above secondary	89.2	98.2	10.1
HH Land holding			
Land less	47.2	88.0	86.4

Marginal	45.0	88.5	96.7
Others	54.5	93.1	70.8
Total	49.1	89.7	82.7
N	104776	74219	

Source: NSSO 38<sup>th</sup> (1983) and 68<sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)

**Table 5:** Percentage distribution of rural youths by educational categories in 38<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> round and percent change over the period

Educational categories	38 <sup>th</sup> round (1983)	68 <sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)	Percent change
Illiterate	50.9	10.3	-79.7
Below primary	9.8	6.2	-36.7
Primary	15.8	11.8	-25.3
Middle	14.6	25.3	73.3
Secondary	7.8	22.2	184.6
Higher secondary & above	1.0	24.3	2330.0
N	104776	74219	

Source: NSSO 38<sup>th</sup> (1983) and 68<sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)

**Over-Time Change in Technical Education**

Technical education is a part of the education system which provides skills to the young generation and helps them to find a suitable job. Generally, youths after completion of secondary education opt for technical education. Keeping this in mind youths of 19-29 years of age are considered for analysis. It can be seen from Table-6 that there has been an increase in the percentage of youth opting for technical education. There has been around 3 times increase (1 percent to 2.9 percent) in the percentage of youth opting for technical education between the period 1983 and 2011-12. The rate continued to vary across socio-economic status. It is found higher among youth belonging to higher socio-

economic status. For example, the percentage of youth attending technical education accounted to 2.1 percent against that of 3.5 percent for others (general) for the year 2011-12; it accounts to 2.4 and 3.6 percent for landless households and large landing category households respectively. As far as overtime change is concerned, there have been signs of convergence. The socio-economic inequality in the proportion of youths taking technical education is found to have reduced between the survey periods. In other words, the rate of increase for technical education has increased at higher speed amongst youths of socio-economically less well-off groups.

**Table 6:** Percentage of rural youths attended technical education in 38<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> round and percent change over the period by socio-economic indicators

Characteristics of youths	38 <sup>th</sup> round (1983)	68 <sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)	Percent change
Gender			
Male	1.4	4.0	185.7
Female	0.6	1.9	216.7
Religion			
Hindu	1.0	3.2	220.0
Muslim	0.5	1.8	260.0
Christian	2.1	3.4	61.9
Others	1.2	2.0	66.7
Social Group			
ST	0.3	1.5	400.0
SC	0.5	2.1	320.0
Others	1.3	3.5	169.2
HH Economic activities			
Self employed	1.3	2.5	92.3
Regular wage/salaried	4.6	5.9	28.3
Casual labour	0.4	1.2	200.0
Other	0.7	4.8	585.7
Education of HH Head			
Illiterate	0.6	1.2	100.0
Up to secondary	1.6	2.4	50.0
Above secondary	2.5	3.4	36.0
HH Land holding			
Land less	0.7	2.4	242.9
Marginal	0.9	2.7	200.0
Others	0.9	3.6	300.0
Total	1.0	2.9	190.0
N	70417	50055	

Source: NSSO 38<sup>th</sup> (1983) and 68<sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)

**Results of logistic regression analysis: Overtime change in attending education**

Age of a youth, gender, religion, social group, household

economic activity, status of literacy of the head of the household and household landholding appear statistically significant in all three models executed taking data of 38th

round (1983), 68th round (2011-12) and the pooled data (Table 3.6.1). It can be seen that there has been remarkable overtime improvement in attainment of education. The odds are found to have almost doubled (2.37) between the two survey periods (1983 & 2011-12). A sign of convergence is also observed between the survey periods. For example, the odds for the large category of landholding household had reduced from 1.1 to 1.31. The odd for the above secondary

level education of the head of the household has reduced from 3.26 to 2.58. Similarly, odd for regular wage/salaried has reduced from 1.26 to 1.07. The exception only remains for the household activity category of casual labour. Odd for this group has reduced from 0.82 to 0.64. It indicates that relative position has deteriorated for attending educational institutions as compared to that of the 'self-employed' group and 'regular wage/salaried' group.

**Table 7:** Odds Ratio of youths attending education by age, sex, HH economic activities, household head education and land holding

Variables	38 <sup>th</sup> round	68 <sup>th</sup> round	Pooled data
Age of youths			
15-19	1.00	1.00	1.00
20-24	.14***	.05***	.09**
25-29	.03***	.01***	.01**
Sex			
Male	1.00	1.00	1.00
Female	.11***	.16***	.13***
HH economic activities			
Self-employed	1.00	1.00	1.00
Regular wage/salaried	1.26***	.86***	.92***
Casual labour	.82***	.64***	.68***
Other	1.16***	1.37***	1.06
HH Head education			
Illiterate	1.00	1.00	1.00
Up to secondary	1.26***	1.39***	1.32***
Above secondary	3.26***	2.58***	2.63***
HH land holding			
Land less	1.00	1.00	1.00
Marginal	1.13***	1.15***	1.13***
Other	1.40***	1.11***	1.21***
Round			2.37***

Source: NSSO 38<sup>th</sup> (1983) and 68<sup>th</sup> round (2011-12)

Note: Religion and social group variables are taken as controlled. \*\*\*Significant at P<0.01 level, \*\*Significant at P<0.05 level and \*Significant at P<0.10 level

**Conclusion**

In conclusion it can be said that education of rural youths has improved significantly during these two time periods and expected that it could have improved much at present time. The improvements are found in terms of attending educational institute, literacy and technical education. Behind this over-time improvement in education of rural youth numbers of factors either directly or indirectly associated. Amongst the factors, household economic status and education of household head are found to have greater impact. It is due to the potential of the households to provide facilities to attain education and motivation by the educated household head. To improve educational standard of rural youth's government policies and support also worked which reflect through overtime change in education. However, it is expected that the scenario of education among rural youth will improve further to harness demographic dividend and to supply plenty of technical and professionals over the globe. So, it is suggested that through providing quality education to youth any nation can expect a better future.

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