



Working Document

Sustainable Livelihood through Education-The Way Forward for the Northern Hilly Areas

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About the Organisation:

LexQuest Foundation (LQF) is an independent, non-profit, research and action organisation, established in 2014, in New Delhi. We are striving to create, advocate and implement effective solutions for a diverse range of development issues.

To endorse participative governance, we engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from various sections of the society, to ensure that policy-making remains a democratic process. We utilize pragmatic and futuristic research to disseminate actionable knowledge to decision-makers, experts and the general public.

Our key activities include capacity and skill-building workshops, policy advisory programs, public outreach, and stakeholder consultations. We collaborate with the government, other organizations and individuals for impactful policy formulation and execution.

By employing sustainable and equitable solutions through our multidisciplinary, intersectional initiatives and programs, we are constantly working towards creating empowered communities.



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*“A **livelihood comprises** the capabilities, assets, activities, and relationships required for a decent and dignified life. A **livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with, and recover from, stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future**, while not undermining the natural resource base.”*



Ever increasing consumption, rapid growth in population and modern production systems have resulted in greater demand for natural resources. Hilly areas of Northern India are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and indiscriminate exploitation of nature, as they are rich sources of biodiversity and natural resources. In these challenging times, sustainability is the way forward for these areas and sustainable livelihood is an important component of it. **According to UNDP**, Sustainable Livelihood is the capability of people to make a living and improve their quality of life without jeopardizing the livelihood options of others, either now or in the future. **The objective of this Working Document is to suggest a policy framework aimed at making livelihoods sustainable through education. This paper looks into the current state of the economy and livelihood in Himachal Pradesh**, a crucial north Indian Himalayan State. Education is a key element of the asset base of rural livelihood and also an effective medium to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Therefore, we have also



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examined the current education structure in Himachal Pradesh and analysed as to why the quality of education there is low, despite the State's high literacy rate.



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Introducing the Terrain

As a developing nation, we are often grappling with myriad problems and multiple challenges that our governance structures alone aren't equipped to resolve. This is why it becomes imperative that the citizens engage, ideate and deliberate on change that they seek, as it will not only encourage proactive citizenry but will also help attain effective and impactful solutions.

Since we believe that effective policy formulation is crucial to shift the paradigm, when it comes to our most ignominious failings as a nation, we are committed to facilitate the learning curve as far as policy analysis, assessment and awareness is concerned. Keeping in line with our aim to nurture and fuel thoughts, we decided to enter into the realm of policy innovation through our initiative- [The Policy Troupe](#), the 2nd Edition of which was organised at Chamba, Himachal Pradesh on the 1st and 2nd of June, 2019.

The city of Chamba is spread out on both sides of the 'Chaugan' with an outstanding view of the snow capped mountains at the farther end of the street. The market area running adjacent to the District Court and several government offices makes the place look self-sufficient. However, **owing to the poor access, connectivity and a lack of basic amenities in the city, it's easy to understand why Chamba is recognised as one of the most backward Districts of India.**

Even as a part of one of India's best performing States, Chamba Valley is amongst the most backward areas of Himachal Pradesh. **Chamba District is also among the 250 most backward Districts of the Country. With the lowest rates of literacy and the largest gender disparity in education and employment, Chamba remains a place with little opportunities of sustainable income and livelihood.**

In a State thriving with hydropower surplus, cashing on its horticultural harvest, and attracting a vast majority of tourists, **why is a District plagued by the inability to extend education that aids sustainable livelihood?** That too, when Himachal Pradesh is one of the "most literate States of India", and is considered comparable to Kerala in terms of human development indicators.



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The backward status of Chamba, raises the following doubts:

- Is literacy rate a good scale to measure the actual impact of education?
- Is our school education system capable of aiding viable livelihood opportunities?
- Is school education effective enough to lead to sustainable livelihood?
- Is education for livelihood a determinant of quality education or the goal of it?
- If education does not guarantee a source of livelihood, can it still be beneficial?

In a course of two days, through **our explorations and conversations with both the privileged and the underprivileged local population, meetings with government officials and through the Troupe's deliberations**, varied activities and exercises, while braving the afternoon sun and travelling the distance to this Himalayan town, **we learnt the difference in the challenges of one Himalayan region from that of the other, and the role the government interventions or the lack of them play in attaining the best sources of livelihood for the local population.**



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Economy and Livelihood in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh (HP) is one of the northern States of India with a population of 68,64,602 and density of 123/km². It was made a separate State on the Indian map in 1971, consisting mainly of hilly regions. Since then, this **State has made notable strides in the development of most sectors, particularly in education and health**. As per the 2011 census, **the overall literacy rate of HP is 83.78%**, holding **11th rank** among Indian States and Union Territories.

Agriculture is the primary **source of income and employment** in Himachal Pradesh. **90% of the population in the State depends directly on agriculture which provides direct employment to 62% of the total workers of the State**. Wheat, maize and rice are the main cereals grown in the State while apple is the main commercial crop of the State.

The **tourism sector** of Himachal Pradesh **contributes to 6.6% in the State's domestic product**. In 2018, 1.6 Crores domestic and 3,56,000 foreign tourists visited the State. The Himalayan landscape and hill stations make the State attractive for tourists.

In **Chamba District**, agriculture is the mainstay of 77 percent of the total population but its contribution to GDP amounts to 22 percent. **The remaining population subsists on handicrafts and tourism. Chamba District exhibits widespread backwardness despite being a part of Himachal Pradesh, one of the advanced States of the country. 62 percent of households as per the 2001 census in the District have been found to be poor**. The District is predominantly rural with 1118 inhabited villages. Of the total 4.61 lakh people in 2001, 92.5 percent of people lived in rural areas. 30.47% of the backward Gram Panchayats of Himachal Pradesh are in Chamba district. **More than 48 percent of the District is inhabited by socially backward Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population**. Bharmour and Pangi are tribal blocks with 80.46 and 87.15 percent ST population.



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Current Education Structure in Himachal Pradesh and its Problems

Himachal Pradesh has one of the highest literacy rates in the country. According to Census 2011, the literacy rate in HP is 83.78%. It is 90.83% for the male population and 76.60% for the female population. **Among the northern States, Himachal Pradesh has the lowest share of individuals with no education, a trend that holds across all social groups in rural areas.** Himachal Pradesh made substantial progress in improving its primary and secondary schooling outcomes in the decade between 1993–94 and 2004–05, and thereafter in higher educational attainment. While less than one-third of Himachal Pradesh’s rural population had no education in 2011, in most other neighboring States, that number was nearly two-fifths or half of the population. Furthermore, the **overall proportion of residents with post-secondary education was the highest in Himachal Pradesh in 2011 across northern States.** Nearly 15–17 percent of the rural population and 31 percent of the urban population had received post-secondary education.

However, quality continues to be a critical issue which policy makers and citizens continue to face. **Repetition rate (almost 20 per cent) in class 1 and onward is quite high. Despite the no-detention policy, teachers are concerned about children’s competency and detain children to maintain high pass percentage in class 5. The mid-term assessment survey (MAS) by Lokesh Koul, Head and Dean, Himachal Pradesh University, in September, 2000 reveals that learning achievements in mathematics and languages in class 5 are low.** The MAS study shows that while pass percentage in class 5 was high, the majority of students secured marks in the range of 45-59 per cent only. Continuous evaluation systems in the form of quarterly tests, regular exams and report card systems are still absent in government schools. **Pedagogic learning, activity based teaching and use of learning material (LM) is rare in government schools.** This is attributed to limited accountability of the government teacher to local communities. **Also the multigrade where a teacher has to simultaneously teach two or more classes is an important reason for mechanical teaching processes. Teachers feel that activity based teaching takes more time thereby affecting syllabus completion.** The quality of physical infrastructure in schools is also not upto the mark.



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Efficacy of Literacy Rate as a Scale to Measure the Impact of Education

Despite having high literacy rates, the quality of education is not upto the mark in Himachal Pradesh which leaves us with the question whether literacy rate is an effective scale to measure the actual impact of education. For this, one needs to delve into the concept, definition and way of measurement of literacy. [Literacy](#) is defined by UNESCO as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written (and visual) materials associated with varying contexts. A literate person is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement relevant to his everyday life. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society.

The [National Literacy Mission](#) defines literacy as acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and the ability to apply them in day-to-day life. The working definition of literacy in the Indian census since 1991 has been the total percentage of the population of the area at a given time aged seven years or above who can read and write with understanding.

In practice, data used to monitor the [Education For All](#) (a global movement led by UNESCO, aimed at meeting the learning needs of all children, youth and adults) and other international goals, is currently collected using a variety of different definitions. The data used to monitor these goals usually originates from national censuses or household surveys. In a few countries, the interviewers present a written sentence to the respondent and judge whether they read it aloud correctly. In most cases, the respondents are simply asked whether they are literate or not, sometimes the questioner may quote the UNESCO definition ('Can you read and write, with understanding, a simple sentence relating to your daily life?' Yes/No), or variations on this theme. Questions like these result in overestimation of the literacy rate, due to several reasons. Some respondents consider that they are literate because they can write their name, whilst others may be reluctant to admit that they cannot read.

According to a report by the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in March 2015, a large number of students completing primary school are still unable to read or write properly or perform basic arithmetic. The outcome of primary education is still deficient despite our literacy rate going up. The substandard quality of education and the lack of proper teaching methods can be attributed as reasons for this crisis. Therefore, the literacy rate, in its current method of measurement, has very limited efficacy in capturing the actual impact of education. Unfortunately, the kind of



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education that reaches out to the masses in our country has become merely a number or publicity stunt to flaunt the growing literacy rate or the rising enrolment rate. The quality aspect of education, which looks at cognitive, social and moral skills that are essential for constructing a highly skilled workforce, is hardly ever scrutinized and evaluated.



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Is our Education System capable of making our Youth Employable?

The Himalayan States suffer from the [problem of migration](#). A large number of educated youth have to leave the State and go to other parts of the country in search of jobs. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to see whether higher education has been effective in making the youth employable and providing them with ample job opportunities.

65% of India's population is young. To reap the benefits from this demographic dividend, India must provide quality education to its young population. **Education was the key factor in the economic surge of East Asian nations. However, in India, the education system is failing to make the young graduates employable.** University curriculums are often outdated and do not provide any practical experience. The latest [National Employability Survey for Engineers 2019 Report by Aspiring Minds](#) reveals that **80% of the passouts are not fit for any job in the knowledge economy and only 2.5% of them have skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI) as required by the industry.** According to [a study](#) done by the Hindustan Times Group, only 26% of the respondents felt that education contributed to the development of their interpersonal skills. **Most of the employed youth attributed their jobs to factors other than education.**

According to [a report](#) published by ASSOCHAM last year, **only 20 percent of the five million students who graduate every year get employed.** This is an alarmingly slow rate; if we continue to have our graduates employed at such a slow rate, there will be a gaping deficit in India's demographic dividend. **The gap in the industry requirements and education curriculum is the most common reason responsible for this.**

Hence, the current education structure in India and in Himachal Pradesh is failing in making the youth employable and providing them with job opportunities. **With rapid increase in population and jobless economic growth, livelihood oriented education based on approach of sustainability is the way forward.**



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Need for Livelihood Oriented Education Policy

To fill the gap between school education and livelihood requirements, following steps need to be taken:

- Developing a **pool of trainers and assessors, developing a network of skill centres and better integration of vocational training** in school and undergraduate education.
- Study of **agriculture and handicrafts could be made compulsory at the primary level**. At the **matriculation level, students should be allowed to choose either agriculture, tourism or handicrafts** as a subject. Focus should be on practical training of the subject.
- At the matriculation level, students who have opted to study agriculture, should learn the following things:
 - ◆ They should **learn about pests and diseases which assist them in solving outbreaks** by, for example, spraying crops and livestock using better pesticides.
 - ◆ They should also be **taught about soil compositions** and the trees/plants that could be useful for the region.
 - ◆ They should learn **how to diversify production to be more resilient to shocks** by including different crop types.
 - ◆ Learners should receive information about favorable planting and harvesting seasons. More **preventive skill training should also be in place, such as building terraces and ridges to avoid erosion**. Teaching these aspects through the school curriculum will also **help in protecting the environment of that area**, along with providing sustainable livelihood to the inhabitants.
- **Skill development of migrant workers** and **entrepreneurship development among returnees** could be strengthened through public-private partnership.
- Development of **occupational standards for unconventional sectors** that are relevant for hilly regions. This must be supported by the **empowerment of skill missions at the Centre and within the Himalayan States to ensure convergence of Central and State schemes** and programs.
- An institution should be established in **Himachal Pradesh based on the model of National Institute of Design to promote high end education and training in handicrafts and design**.
- Chamba Rumaal, Miniature Paintings, Metal Craft, Jewellery of Himachal Pradesh, Stone Carving, Himachali Shawl, Kullu Shawl and Pullas are **the main handicrafts of the State** and source of living for a sizable portion of the population. A **livelihood oriented education curriculum should train the students from primary level for handicrafts so that they could adopt it as a profession** if



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they wish to. Skill development centers/polytechnics should offer courses in handicrafts. Students **who have studied handicrafts as a subject at matriculation level, should be provided lateral entry into institutes of higher learning.**

- **Community learning centres should be established to provide vocational training** to non-young citizens in a less formal way.
- Courses on **sustainable development and livelihood should be introduced in the teacher training system.**
- Training should be provided at the **school level itself regarding preparation and safety during natural calamities.**
- Capacity building systems should be developed to **promote sustainable tourism and its packages (homestays, rural tourism, heritage management) need to be blended within the curriculum and delivery design of educational institutions** (e.g. vocational centres, universities, schools) serving different stakeholders.
- Specialised institutions should be established in the region for **training in tourism and hospitality, hotel management, catering and foreign languages so as to provide a skilled workforce for the tourism industry.**
- Facilities should be developed for **Adventure Sports Tourism, Wellness, Health & Herbal Tourism and Farm & Flower Tourism.** Tourism study Institutes should be established, that could offer **specialized courses aimed at preparing manpower** for these offbeat tourism areas.
- A specialized **Incubation Centre should be set up to promote entrepreneurs in the field of tourism, handicrafts and agro based industries.**
- **Easy credit services should be made available** through a government scheme to those local entrepreneurs who want to start their firms in the abovementioned and related sectors.
- Literacy programs should use a **functional literacy approach, which seeks to develop literacy and numeracy skills in a context that is meaningful and motivational to the learners.**
- Extensive **use of technology (ICT, biometric attendance, CCTV cameras etc.) should be made to assess and monitor the learning activities** in schools.



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Conclusion:

Quality education is the foundation of sustainable development, and therefore a *sine qua non* to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. As a policy intervention, **education is a force multiplier that enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills**, and improves people's lives by opening up opportunities for better livelihoods. Moreover, the **Sustainable Development targets for 2030 call for ensuring the completion of primary and secondary education by all boys and girls**, and guaranteeing equal access to opportunities for access to quality technical and vocational education for everyone. Sustainable livelihood oriented education will certainly go a long way in achieving these goals.



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