CHAPTER- 2
SIKKIM AND ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM

Profile of Sikkim

Sikkim became the 22nd state of India with effect from 26th April, 1975. The state of Sikkim is in the Himalayas, between Nepal and Bhutan (Figure 2.1). It is essentially an enclosed basin of about 100 km wide between two high north-south mountain ranges and about 200 km long. It consists of two distinct regions: (i) the Greater Himalayan region in the north with snow cover, and (ii) the Inner Himalayan area, which is a complex area of forest-clad ranges and river bank slopes.

Figure 2.1: Map of Sikkim
Sikkim is India's least populous state, with 607,688 inhabitants (as per 2011 census). Sikkim is also one of the least densely-populated Indian states, with only 86 persons per square kilometre. However, it has a high decadal population growth rate, e.g. 12.36% between 2001 and 2011. The sex ratio is 889 females per 1000 males, with a total of 321,661 males and 286,027 females (Census Report 2011). With 50,000 inhabitants, the capital Gangtok is the only significant town in the state. The urban population in Sikkim constitutes only about 11.06% of the total. The per capita income in Sikkim stands at ₹11,356, which is one of the highest in the country.

The majority of Sikkim's residents are of Nepali ethnic origin. The native Sikkimese consists of the Bhutias, who migrated from the Kham district of Tibet in the 14th century, and the Lephas who are believed to have migrated from the Far East. Tibetans reside mostly in the northern and eastern reaches of the state. Migrant resident communities include Biharis, Bengalis and Marwaris, who are prominent in commerce in South Sikkim and Gangtok.

Sikkim is the meeting point of various cultures. Its culture is represented by diverse cuisine, lively people, devout religion, jovial language, indigenous art and crafts, melodious music, and vibrant dance. Sikkim has emerged with its own distinct ethnicity even after being influenced by numerous cultures. Besides this, Sikkim boasts of a fusion of different communities, together with their religions. Different communities, cultures, religions, and customs find a perfect blend in Sikkim. Besides the ethnic communities of Sikkim as mentioned above, the developmental activities in the state, like construction of roads, bridges, buildings etc, have attracted immigrant labourers from the plains of India and Nepal.

Languages

Sikkim is a multi-lingual state, where people of diverse communities live cordially. Nepali is the major spoken language in Sikkim. In municipal areas, English is commonly used for day to day communication. Hindi, being the national language, also finds its place in general
communication. In Sikkim, people use several local dialects such as *Tibetan, Bhutia,* and *Lepcha.* English is used for all official communication in the state and Hindi is understood and spoken by the majority of people.

**Art and Craft**

Sikkim has a long history of rich handicrafts. The state Government has been making constant efforts to promote the art and crafts of Sikkim. For this, one Handicraft and Handloom Institute has been established, which is solely dedicated to preserve and encourage the traditional cottage art and craft of authentic Sikkimese design. The wide array of handlooms and handicrafts comprise of carpets, wood carved furniture, and canvas wall hangings.

**Economy**

Sikkim is the smallest economy among all Indian states. Sikkim’s GDP was US$ 0.73 billion in the year 2010-11 (Planning Commission 2011). The Himalayan state’s per capita income was Rs 48,937 during 2010-11, which was the second highest among all the eight north-eastern states.

The per capita income in Sikkim increased to Rs 36,075 in 2009-10 (much above the national figure of Rs 33,731) from Rs 26,693 in 2004-05.

**School Education System**

Sikkim had its traditional monastic educational system primarily for training the Lamaist monks. The formal school education was introduced in Sikkim way back in 1906 with the opening of Bhutia Boarding School in 1906 and Nepali Boarding School in 1907. Subsequently, both of them were amalgamated into Sir Tashi Namgyal Academy in 1924. However, tremendous development in education took place during the past three decades. There has been a significant increase in the number of schools and colleges during this period. The literacy rate among the population aged 7 years and above has gone up from 17 percent in 1971 to 82.20 percent in 2011. The female literacy rate increased from 8.9 percent in 1971 to 76.43
percent in 2011. The Constitution of India now guarantees education as a fundamental right to every child. It has been one of the prime objectives of the State Government to ensure maximum access to educational facilities to all children in the State above the age of 5 years.

The Elementary education covers classes from Pre-Primary to Class-VIII. It has an enrolment of 1,37,656 students (69,577 boys and 68,079 girls) in 1,478 schools (Anonymous 2011). This indicates relatively high enrolment rate of girls, which is almost equal to boys. A complete list of schools in Sikkim is given in Annexure 2.1. The number of schools under different categories in different sub-divisions is summarized in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Sub division-wise distribution of schools in Sikkim (as in 2005).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Sub-Division</th>
<th>Lower Primary</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Upper Primary/ Junior High School</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Senior Secondary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Gangtok</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pakyong</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rongli</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>232</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Gyalshing</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soreng</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Mangan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chungthang</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>Namchi</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ravangla</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>217</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>183</strong></td>
<td><strong>313</strong></td>
<td><strong>127</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>739</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although at present there is a school within walking distance of every child, the state’s hilly terrain demands more Lower Primary Schools to open. Due to Sikkim’s climatic conditions that is characterized by perennial summer rains and extreme cold winters, the construction of *pucca* school buildings is a basic necessity. Hence, a major portion of the budgetary provision for school education is utilized for the construction of school buildings and for the repair and maintenance of the existing structures. The state government is providing incentive schemes like
free education, free text books, free exercise books and free uniforms to achieve universalization of elementary education.

In an effort to upgrade the quality of education, emphasis has been placed in enhancing and improving teachers’ training and provision of inputs like teaching aids. District level offices of education have been playing a very significant role in the development of primary and secondary schools. The District Inspector and the District officer of physical education and youth welfare look after the educational activities, administrative, cultural and physical education activities, respectively. There are numerous schools in Sikkim, which are either affiliated to the ICSE or CBSE Board of education. The major type of schools that are found in Sikkim are: Government, Private, and Government Aided. Some Schools are affiliated to ICSE and some are to CBSE. Sikkim Government runs the schools of lower Primary, Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools. The Directorate of Education conducts the examination up to class VIII, and class X and XII examinations are conducted by ICSE or CBSE.

Schooling in Sikkim starts at the age of 5 when a child is admitted into Class I of the primary stage. The state follows a uniform system of education i.e. the 10+2 system. The primary stage consists of Classes I-V, middle stage consists of Classes VI-VIII and the secondary stage consists of Classes IX-X. The state has encouraged its children by providing free education for the age group of 6-14. The “Sarva Siksha Abhiyan” is running in full swing to raise the literacy percentage in remote areas of the state. There were 739 government schools and 201 private schools in the state during the year 2005.

Regarding the quality control of schools, the state government gives priority to maintain quality education in the state. The government has already signed an MOU with the Quality Council of India (QCI). The National Accreditation Board for Education and Training (NABET) is also involved in this quality up gradation process. NABET follows 52 standards to decide the
quality. It first trains the teachers and conducts the test. Based on the results, 30 teachers are chosen as evaluators and 30 as trainers. Once the teachers get through NABET they are certified.

Most of the schools in the state have separate lavatory facilities for the boys and girls. Only 47 schools which are in the remotest areas do not have such facility. Therefore the state government is working hard on this provision under the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) Schemes.

To give quality education to the students, the Government of Sikkim has taken several steps. One of the initiatives is to train all government school teachers so that they can inculcate the knowledge and expertise to students. In this regard the Technical Education Cell and State Institute of Education, Government of Sikkim has initiated two weeks long English Training Programme for Arts Graduate Teachers from all over the state. More than 200 teachers from all the four districts attended this training programme in which they were given some valuable training and tips about how they can impart the knowledge of English language and literature to the students.

The state has taken serious steps to make Sikkim a total literate state within the time frame of 2015, with a range of educational programs. The government has taken several steps to achieve this objective. Some of these include, providing the best salary structure to government employees/teachers, all possible assistance to teaching fraternity like the backward area benefits and have also rationalized promotion avenues for the working teachers in addition to the existing provision for advancement grade.

Further, teachers appointed under the SSA are being provided salary at par with other teachers which are the highest in the Country. In most of the cases, the SSA teachers in the State have already been regularized and this is also an exception in the country. With over 20 percent of plan allocation for education sector coupled with range of educational incentives and the best
teacher-student ratio, the need is only to sustain the tempo and move ahead. However, in many cases the commitment shown for the welfare of the teachers are not being reciprocated with the same degree of performance, dedication and a sense of duty and commitment. Sikkim has effectively addressed the issue of universal access to education to all children with the best teacher-student ratio of 1:16 found anywhere in India.

Teaching of English as a compulsory subject is well emphasized in the overall educational scenario in the state. Under the modernization and liberalization regime, English, for obvious reason, has emerged as a dominant language both for regular communication, world diplomacy and also for gaining access to other branches of learning including Mathematics, Science or Technical education.

Sikkim is a happy exception to the reported social disturbances in certain parts of the Country and the world. This has a direct bearing on the education of the children. Sikkim has the potential to provide the best environment for making progressive advances on the education scenario in terms of universal access, quality, curriculum and the best education standard. The immediate need is to make the education system child-centric and life-oriented.

The State Government is also genuinely trying to diversify the scope of education and to enhance lifelong employability among youths. This is with regards to hundreds of students who pass out from schools and colleges with purely ‘bookish’ knowledge without having any technical or technological expertise to enter into the expanding job market across the world. Accordingly, over the years, initiatives have been taken to establish the Directorate of Capacity Building, Institute of Capacity Building and one Livelihood School each in every Constituency. Through these centres, the Government has started sponsoring students for higher technical training or train students for basic vocational courses.

The expansion of educational facilities and infrastructure at the school level has been achieved to a satisfactory level. However, there is an arduous task ahead to improve and
consolidate that quantitative expansion at the school level with booster doses of qualitative education and diversified vocationalization. There is also the need to expand facilities of higher education.

The Education Department too has started redefining its role and strategy in administration. In the past, the tendency of the Department to shoulder too many functions and responsibilities imposed severe strains on its limited financial and administrative capabilities. Hence the Department adopts a selective approach based on priorities vis-à-vis its administrative functions and in the allocation of funds. The target of 10% annual growth set for the State is deemed essential for sustainable development and to ensure equity and increase in the income of the poor and under privileged. However, in basic service sector like Education, economic growth cannot be the only objective. Human Resource Enhancement must be the primary consideration. The strategic thrusts in the Education sector during different plan periods were:

1. Ensuring education as a fundamental right of every child of 5 years and above in the state.
2. Need based expansion of physical facilities corresponding to the increase in enrolment.
3. Improvement of existing facilities.
4. Continuance of motivating incentives e.g. free tuition, free text books, free copy books, free uniform.
5. Facilitate active involvement and participation of school Management Committees and Panchayati Raj Institutions.
6. Providing Compulsory teacher training by launching in-service Crash Training Courses.
7. Special remedial training courses in the teaching of English, Maths and Science.
8. DIET to be consolidated.
9. Need based up-gradation of Primary/Upper Primary Schools.
10. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan.
11. Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovation Education (AIE)
The Centrally sponsored scheme of Non Formal Education (NFE) had been introduced in 1979 as an alternative schooling system to support the formal education system to promote universal elementary education. The NFE has recently undergone modification and has now been packaged into two components: (a) Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), and (b) Alternative and Innovation Education (AIE). Both the EGS and AIE have been merged with Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) from the Tenth Plan Period.

Secondary Education is the multi-lane bridge to higher education and professional and technological education. As Sikkim does not yet have an autonomous State board of Secondary and Senior Secondary Education, the State is wholly dependent on the Central Boards. Hence the courses available to the students are limited to science, humanities and commerce streams. The State does not have the facilities to develop research in social science that bear relevance to Sikkim.

The Kothari Commission’s recommendation that 20% students in Class-IX and X should be directed to vocational courses has assumed growing relevance. The Department proposes to initiate restructuring the introduction of vocational courses at the secondary level. This would facilitate an entry mode to professional courses or equip the student for gainful employment. The Department has introduced Computer Education in the regular curricula at the secondary level in the academic session 2002 (Chamling 2002).

The following additional measures have been taken by Government of Sikkim:

1. Expansion of teachers training facilities. A District Centre of English has been recently established in Namchi, South Sikkim in addition to the existing District Centre for English at Gangtok.

2. Up-gradation of SIE to SCERT.

3. Establishment of 2 Centres in Mathematics and Science.

4. Special Coaching classes during the winter vacation in Mathematics, English and Science.
5. Re-introduction of Computer Literacy and School Studies (CLASS) project of Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Technical Education

The Directorate of Technical Education has implemented the World Bank assisted Third Technician Project. Under this programme two polytechnics were established in Sikkim, namely:

1. The Advance Technical Training Centre at Bardang, East Sikkim.
2. The Centre for Computers and Communication Technology at Chisopani, South Sikkim.

The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) at Rangpo has been imparting vocational training in eight trades under the craftsmen training scheme of NCYT. The Sikkim Manipal University, a private venture, has the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology at Majitar which runs course in BE/BCA/MCA. There is proposal to establish 4 more polytechnics through private sector involvement.

Higher Education System

Higher and University education is the apex of the educational pyramid. In the field of higher education, several new colleges are being established to meet the ever increasing demands of the students. The state has one Central University established in 2007 through an Act of Indian Parliament. The establishment of a State Advisory Board for Higher Education is a step in the right direction. It’s imperative to increase the number of colleges and technical institutes. Sectors such as software services and Technical Education enabled services are the new emergent trends that have assumed predominance in the accelerating global economy.

The small State of Sikkim has a dozen of recognized languages. Each ethnic group aspires to fulfil the development of its dialect and language. And it is the responsibility of the State Government to assist and promote the development of these languages. The State Government has recently introduced Sherpa, Tamang, Newari and Gurung language in certain
schools. The exercise to recruit teachers in these languages is in progress. Introduction of Sanskrit as one of the subject in Secondary and Senior Secondary level is in the offing.

The challenges to achieve greater educational achievement are: a) Difficult assess to schools due to the rough terrain and climatic conditions particularly in remote areas, b) Absence of cheap regular transport, c) Lack of training for teachers. Hence there is a work force of untrained and under-qualified teachers, d) A rigid curricula that is not locally relevant, e) Poor state of school room infrastructure.

The Government’s scheme of distribution of free text books and exercise books and uniforms up to class –V make the State’s monthly expenditure of Rs 960 per student, far above the All India average of Rs 210 per student per month. Sikkim has the ideal location, climate and peaceful ambience for the establishment of public and boarding schools. The Government is presently reviewing the requests from private investors and reputed educationists to set up such schools in the State. The state intends to begin a productive partnership and inferred action with Private Sector to develop education into an industry. This could start a new chapter in the education sector of Sikkim.

The incentive schemes of Sikkim have changed a lot in the rate of school drop-outs which has been reduced to a great extent. However, owing to various socio-economic reasons the school drop-out rates continue to be a big challenge. This segment i.e. school drop outs is proposed to be covered through Non-Formal education Centres and by providing them training, on some form of skills through the Vocational Education programmes.

After the initial training, short term refresher courses are a must to keep the teachers update with the latest development in pedagogy and teaching techniques. Teachers being the vital agent for bringing about social change, it is imperative that special training programmes are organized throughout the year. A well trained teacher is not only confident of delivering the needed input but also is a highly motivated person. Sikkim has operationalized the DIETs as
well as cleared the huge backlog of untrained teachers. At least 1000 Primary Teachers at 10 centres and 300 Graduate Teachers at 3 centres were being trained through Distance Education Programme by IGNOU under its 6 months Certificate Course and 2 years B. Ed Course respectively. The Education Department has been transferring annually an amount of Rs 8.00 lakhs as assistance to Zilla Parishads at District Level and Panchayats to enable them to undertaken minor repair and maintenance works of Primary and Secondary Schools.

As per the policy of the state Government, text-books are provided free up to Class-V and 50% of the cost charged to students of Classes VI to XII to reduce dropout rates in schools. The Government is implementing a merit scholarship scheme for meritorious students with special skill in the special field of studies. With a view to improve the quality of education in some private schools, the Government has been supporting some schools by providing them financial assistance in the form of Grant-in-Aids. These government aided schools have made repeated requests for enhancement of grant-in-aid to meet their existing liabilities. These schools are now being encouraged to start the plus II stage in Science and Humanities streams.