

1. Introduction

Education contributes to the economic stability of the nation by increasing the knowledge and skills of the people, leading to increases in income. In addition to economic stability, education promotes civil and international peace as well as cultural tolerance and understanding. It has multiple effects, empowering people to bring about informed and necessary changes in their lives. Thus, not only does education benefit the person learning, but also the community in which they live.

Maldivians attach great importance to education. As such, approximately 15 percent of our total government expenditure is spent on education in 2006. Maldives also receives aid from international donor agencies and countries.

The Maldives has had a long history of semi-formal religious-based education for the masses and this is still practised today. The traditional system consisted of children gathering in homes called 'edhuruge' to learn Dhivehi language and the Arabic script and to learn to recite the Holy Quran. In addition, there were special classes for navigation, languages, and for Muslim theology. Although educational attainment in the traditional system is low in terms of performance in formal examinations, the system has contributed towards achieving many educational objectives – the most important of which is the relatively high rate of literacy and the preservation of national culture and tradition.

The initial challenge to this traditional system occurred in 1927 with the establishment of the first government school in Male'. This school was first limited to the education of boys but later in 1944 a section was opened for girls and young women. Instruction in this school covered Dhivehi language, Islam, Arabic and Arithmetic. By 1945 each inhabited island had a traditional school (maktab) providing instruction at the lower primary level.

Rapid changes followed. In the 1950s the education system was remodelled to meet the requirements for trained people in a growing economy. In 1960 a dramatic change in the education system occurred with the introduction of two English medium schools in Male' as part of a conscious effort to prepare its citizens to meet the increasing development needs of the nation. However, this resulted in two distinct forms of education systems existing side by side. Nevertheless, until recently government schooling has been concentrated mainly in Male'.

The most recent historic development in education in the Maldives occurred in 1978, with the decision to move to a unified national system of education and to promote a more equitable distribution of facilities and resources. The policy focus was on providing Universal Primary Education for All and thus the strategies involved the formulation of a unified curriculum for Grades 1-7, improvement of teacher training and the establishment and upgrading of new schools in the atolls. Two government schools (one Atoll Education Centre (AEC) and one Atoll School (AS)) were established in each atoll and today these schools represent the availability of high quality basic education for the children in their locales.

Recent educational development of the country is characterized by a very rapid increase in student

enrolment and the number of educational institutions. During this period, the provision of basic education remained the main priority of the sector for a number of years. Many schools have been constructed, a national curriculum was introduced and later revisions were carried out, and local textbooks and teacher guides have been developed for all the primary education grades (grades 1-7).

School enrolment has risen rapidly (from 15,000 in 1978 to 102,073 in 2005) and the education sector's share of total Government expenditure in the last 5 years (up to 2006) has been an annual average of 15.8 percent. Access to primary education (grades 1-7) has been provided throughout the country, while secondary and higher secondary education is being expanded. In addition, programmes to support tertiary education locally and overseas have been initiated by government and private sector.

Present plans for education emphasise access to 10 years of universal basic education by the year 2010; expanding and improving early childhood care and education; inclusive education especially for children with special needs, continuing education for all; equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills, increasing curricular relevance; expanding national capacity for secondary teacher education and post-secondary education; strengthening of partnerships with parents and the community to support educational expansion and development; and enhancing the quality of education.

The impact of the 2004 tsunami had an unexpected effect on the Maldivian economy and destroyed or damaged the educational infrastructure in some islands. However, with the help of donor agencies and countries, the Maldivian government started to accelerate and minimize the setbacks occurred in the disaster.

The purpose of this chapter is to give an analysis of education data collected during the 2006 Census. The chapter began with an introduction to the educational development of the Maldives. What follows is an overview of the education system in the Maldives. The rest of the chapter is structured to provide the analysis of the Census 2006 data, with respect to educational characteristics and trends in Male' and the atolls and finally, concluding remarks and recommendations are presented.

2.0 Overview of the education system

The Maldivian population consists of a high proportion of children, with nine percent of its population under 5 years, and 31 percent below 15 years. Provision of education to over one-third of its population is by no means a minor challenge for a developing country like the Maldives. Despite this, all children in the Maldives have access to the first seven years of formal schooling.

Since the re-conceptualisation of educational policy in 1978, remarkable progress has been made in the sector. Early Childhood Care and Education has been expanded, primary education has been universalised, secondary education has seen marked growth, illiteracy has been nearly eliminated, and higher secondary opportunities have been expanded by establishing higher secondary schools regionally. Government policies to encourage girls' schooling, mothers' education, and changes in societal perception have contributed to the Maldives achieving gender parity in education enrolment.

The primary education system is a 7-year cycle where children are expected to begin at age 6. This primary school cycle is preceded by a 3 year cycle of pre-primary education (nursery, lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten years). Thus the formal grade cycle of 1-7 (primary level) makes up what the Ministry of Education (MoE) calls the basic education cycle. Secondary education in the Maldives consists of Grades 8-10 (lower secondary) and 11-12 (higher secondary).

Schooling is provided by the government, the community and the private sector. In 1998, community schools provided 43 percent of student enrolment in the nation as a whole but most of this provision is at the primary level. The government supports community and private schools by providing a certain percentage of teachers depending on school size, and by providing infrastructure, facility support and financial subsidies. In order to minimize the differences in giving provisions to schools, 135 community schools in the atolls were converted to government schools in 2005.

Universal primary education for the Maldives has now been achieved. Net enrolment in Grades 1-5 is over 100 percent. Secondary school provision is being expanded at a very fast rate in the atolls. In 2005, 25 new schools introduced grade 8, and 24 new schools did the same in 2006. As of 2006, secondary school education is not available in 42 islands. In these 42 islands the secondary school enrolment is below 100, with total enrolment at just about 200 or less. Higher secondary schooling has also been extended into the atolls with 24 schools registered at this level in 2007. With these developments underway, the challenge now for the school system is to provide consistent high quality schooling throughout the country.

One of the significant achievements in education has been, nearly eliminating illiteracy in the Maldives. Non-formal education has played a major role in establishing the literacy rate of the country at below 95 percent. In addition, this programme has achieved considerable success in providing basic education for youth and adults who have missed the opportunity to complete basic education.

3. Education data in the 2006 Census

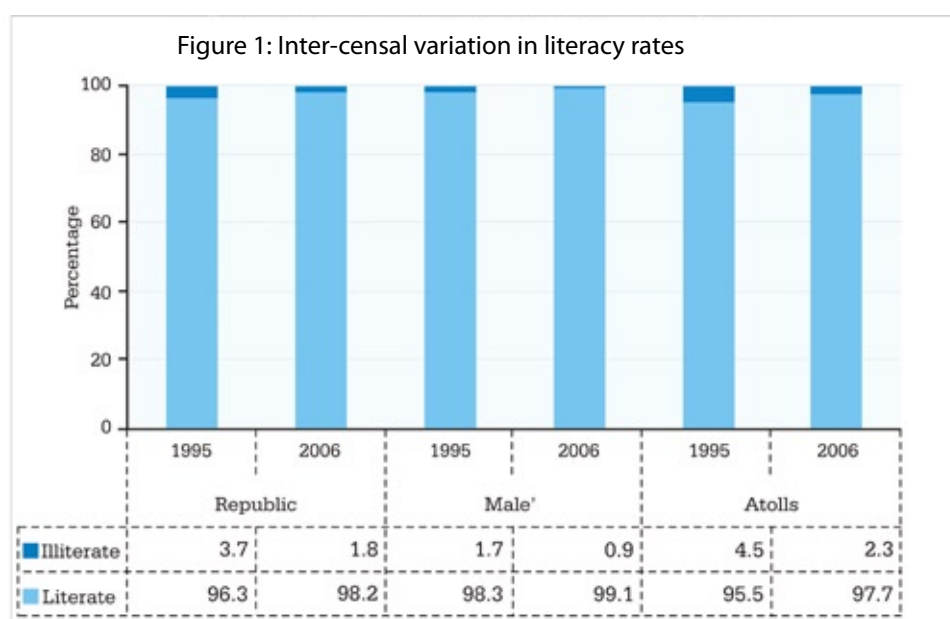
There are two main sources for collecting information on educational developments: the censuses and the annual statistics collected by the Ministry of Education. In the 2006 population census conducted during 21 – 28 March 2006, questions on education obtained information on literacy, number and level of school attendance, highest level of educational attainment and information on

vocational training. These questions were asked of those who were 6 years and over.

4. Literacy

The United Nations (UN) defines a literate person as someone who can both read and write, with understanding, a short simple statement (in any language) on his/her everyday life. A person who cannot read or write is illiterate. The literacy rate is a useful tool to determine the extent of interventions needed in the education sector in terms of literacy programs and quality education at the lower levels. A literate person can harness his or her potential for intellectual growth and thus contribute positively to the economic, social and cultural development of society. Thus, data on literacy provides a meaningful indicator for measuring the progress in the achievement of the goal towards education for all.

To determine literacy, the question asked in the 2006 Census, probed for the person's ability to read and write, with understanding, the local language Dhivehi. Figure 1 shows the result.



Note: These rates exclude not stated. Percentage not stated for Male' was quite high at about 9% distorting the overall literacy rates.

Figure 1 shows, in the year 2006 the overall literacy rate for the country is 98.2 percent. Literacy rate for Male' is slightly higher at 99.1 percent compared to 97.7 percent in the atolls. In 1995 this rate was lower to that of 2006, and therefore it illustrates an increasing trend in the literacy rates of the country both in Male' as well as in the Atolls. There is no significant difference between female and male literacy rates in the country. In fact female literacy rate is slightly higher than the male literacy rate. This has been observed since 1960's.

It is remarkable that in the list of seven South and West Asian countries, Maldives is at the top of adult literacy. That is 96.3 percent, including 96.2 percent men and 96.4 percent women. (EFA global monitoring report 2006, UNESCO).

One of the reasons for higher literacy rates is achievement of universal primary education in the country. In 2006 almost all children complete primary education (7 years of basic education), and it is assumed that any person who complete grade 7 will be literate. In the 1995 census primary level was up to grade 5 instead of grade 7 and hence the literacy question was asked from everyone who had not completed primary education.

From 1995, to 2006, the overall literacy rate for the country has improved by about two percent. This trend is true when the figure for atolls and Male' are considered as well. The increase in literacy rates for Male' is one percent and for the atolls it shows about two percent from 1995 to 2006.

5. Current Attendance to Educational Institution

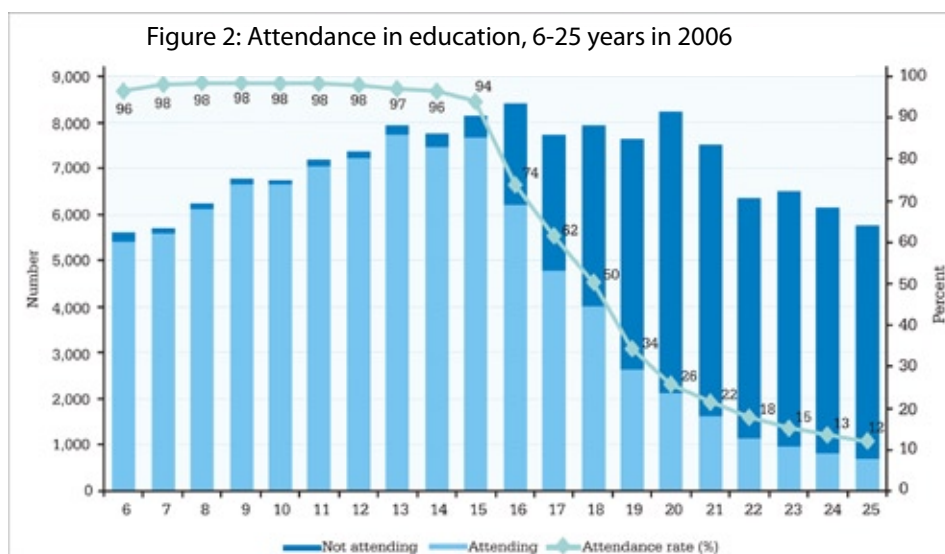
In the 2006 Census, the question on attendance to any educational institution was asked for all persons aged 6-64 years attend school during the reference week, which was 21- 28 March 2006.

The current school attendance of the population is based on whether or not an individual is attending formal school in the age group 6-25 years.

5.1: School attendance, for the Republic

The primary schooling in the country starts from grade 1 at the age of 6 years, lower secondary (grade 8-10) at the age of 13 and higher secondary (grade 11-12) at the age of 16 years. Higher secondary schooling is completed at the age of 18 years. However the census data on school attendance reveals the presence of over-age students in the school system even at the age of 25 years as seen in figure 1. This is due to the differences in the quality of education among the islands. Hence often times those who complete primary education in their own islands have to complete the last year of primary education again in the island where they go for secondary education. Similarly the same situation arises in the entrance to higher secondary especially in Male'.

¹Here formal schools are counted as schools that follow the national syllabus for respective grades and that require students to wear a uniform.



The current attendance rate stays high in the ages 6-15, then decreases sharply. This is mainly due to the fact that all islands have schools that teach up to primary level and many of the islands have lower secondary schools. The decrease in current attendance rate from 94 percent at age 15 years to 74 percent at age 16 years seen from figure 2 is mainly due to this reason. Furthermore the atoll education centres and some atoll schools provide an opportunity to attend lower secondary schooling within the atolls. However, higher secondary schooling is available only in a few islands apart from Male'.

The decrease in current attendance rate in the age 15 to 16 years is a little under 20 percent, indicating that 20 percent of secondary school leavers do not continue to higher secondary schooling. From this age onwards attendance rapidly declines. At the age of 18, when a student will normally start tertiary education, almost half are enrolled (50.3 percent). However, this percentage, in part, reflects attendance in secondary education, not tertiary education.

Here it is assumed that the a student might stay in school till 19 years of age, to allow room for students who join school late, and for students who come to Male' to join school.

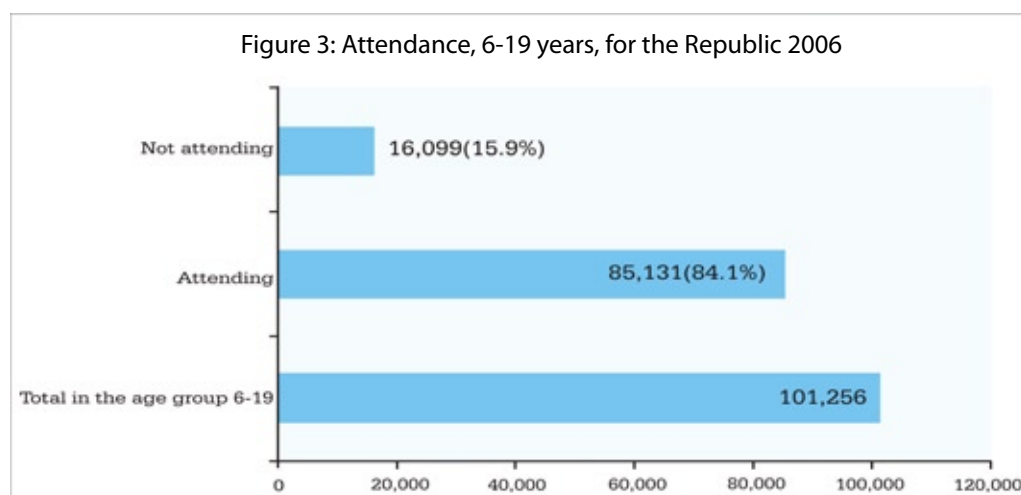


Figure 3 shows that, of the total population in the age group 6-19 years, 84.1 percent attended school in the reference period of 21-28 March 2006 while 15.9 percent did not attend school. Inevitably there are going to be a certain percentage of children in this age group who do not attend school up to the completion of higher secondary schooling.

The percentage of students not attending in this age group (6-19 years) is inflated mainly due to the fact that after finishing lower secondary school, many students do not have the opportunity to continue to higher secondary level, leading to a large drop-out from the formal school system.

This can also be seen from Table 1. The breakdown of percentages for the age groups 6-16 years and 17-19 years gives a different outlook.

Table 1: Difference in attendance between 6-16 years & 17-19 years age groups, for the Republic, 2006

Age group	Attending	Not attending	Not stated
6 - 19	84.1	15.9	0.0
6 - 16	92.4	5.4	2.3
17 - 19	46.4	51.6	2.4

The attendance rate within the age group 6-19 years stays at 84 percent. However, when the age groups are further broken down to 6-16 years and the age group 17-19 (the years in lower secondary school and higher secondary school) is taken separately, the percentage of students who attended increases to 92 percent for 6-16 years while it decrease to 46 percent for 17-19 years. It is noteworthy that a remarkably high percentage of children attend primary and lower secondary level. On the other hand it is very important to highlight that half the higher secondary level attending age group (17-19 years) do not proceed after the lower secondary level.

This is due to various reasons including limited availability of higher secondary schools in the islands and limited seats in the existing higher secondary schools in the capital Male' where 1/3 of the population resides. Also a high proportion of students completing lower secondary education and following the 'O' level examination do not attain adequate level of passes required for entry to the higher secondary level. Other reasons include parents' reluctance to send their children to other islands for schooling, difficulties in finding reasonable accommodation, difficulties for parents to leave young ones and family home in the island to go and stay with them. Another reason is the census time falls between the termination of lower secondary classes and commencement of higher secondary classes for new entrants to higher secondary schools in 2006. Thus the actual percentage of those not attending higher secondary schooling may not be as large as shown in Table 1.

However it is important to note that even after students drop out of the formal school system, some of them continue to study through the informal education.

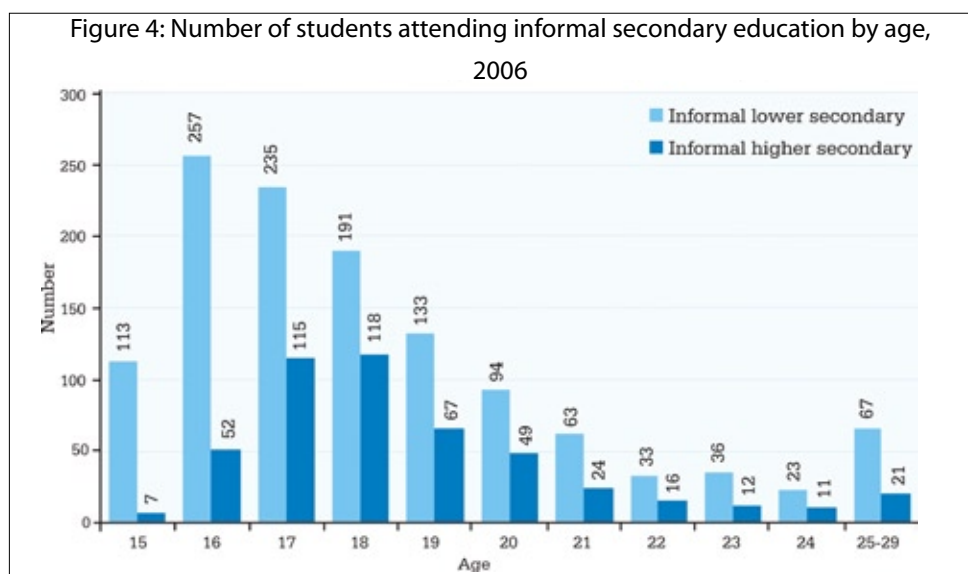


Figure 4 gives a breakdown of the number of students who attend informal secondary classes. About six percent of the age group 15-29 years attend informal O' Level and A'Level classes operated by private teaching institutions.

The proportion attending informal lower secondary classes (O'level classes) remains high at ages 15 to 19 years with the highest number at age 16. The presence of lower secondary level age students beyond that of lower secondary education completion age could be an indication that those who do not get adequate number of passes in the O' level continue their studies through informal education and resits exams for better results. The proportion attending informal higher secondary is also high for 17 to 18 years mainly due to the fact there are limited number of seats in the higher secondary schools.

5.2: Attendance upto lower secondary school, Male' vs atolls

Table 2: Attendance by locality, 6-16 years, and 2006

Age	Percent attending			Percent not attending		
	Republic	Male'	Atolls	Republic	Male'	Atolls
6	96.2	97.3	95.9	3.7	2.7	4.1
7	98.0	98.3	97.9	2.0	1.7	2.1
8	98.2	98.5	98.0	1.8	1.4	1.9
9	98.2	97.8	98.3	1.8	2.2	1.7
10	98.4	98.5	98.4	1.6	1.5	1.6
11	98.2	98.3	98.1	1.8	1.7	1.8
12	98.0	98.6	97.8	2.0	1.3	2.2
13	97.2	98.4	96.7	2.8	1.6	3.3
14	96.2	97.2	95.8	3.7	2.7	4.2
15	93.9	95.1	93.3	6.1	4.9	6.7
16	73.6	72.3	74.4	26.3	27.6	25.6

There is no significant difference in the attendance rates between Male' and the atolls, as seen in table 2. But a significant decrease can be observed in the age 16 years which is more for Male' than the atolls. There is also a noticeable drop at the age of 14 to 15 years from 97.2 percent to 95.1 percent in Male' and from 95.8 percent to 93.3 percent in the atolls. The drop in percentage students attending school after the age of 15 is significant. In Male' 72.3 percent of the 16 year age group attends school while 74.4 percent of the same age attends school in the atolls. Age 15 is a landmark age in schooling and most students finish Grade 10 at the age of 15 or 16. However due to the limited opportunities within the island, students who complete Grade 10 may decide whether they would continue for higher secondary schooling in another island.

5.3: Attendance up to higher secondary education , Male' vs atolls

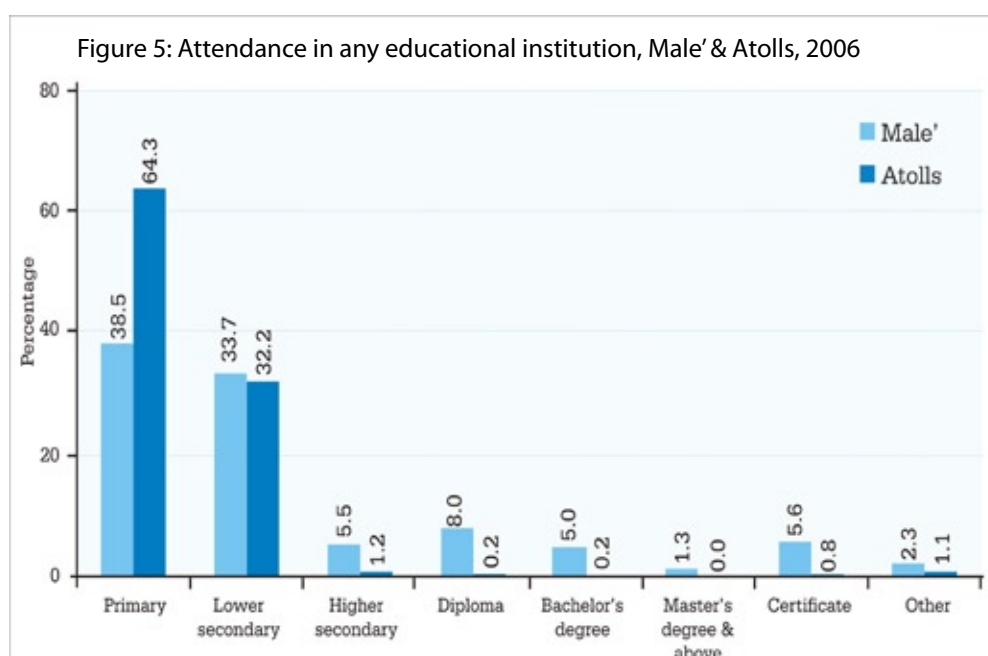


Figure 5 shows that attendance rate of primary level in the atolls is predominant due to the higher proportion of primary school age children in the atolls. Accessibility in lower secondary schools in the islands have made the rates equivalent to that of Male'. But the rate decreases for the atolls for the higher education levels. This is to be expected since in the atolls there are very limited opportunities to pursue education after secondary schooling is completed. Hence, the rate is much lower when it comes for the tertiary levels, where the percentage attending is less than one percent in the atolls.

6. Inter-censal variations

Trends in attendance over the decade are analysed for the age groups 6-16 years, because higher secondary schooling was not introduced at a wider level in the atolls before the year 2000.

6.1: Inter-censal variations for the Republic

Figure 6: Attendance, 6-16 years for the Republic, inter-censal variation

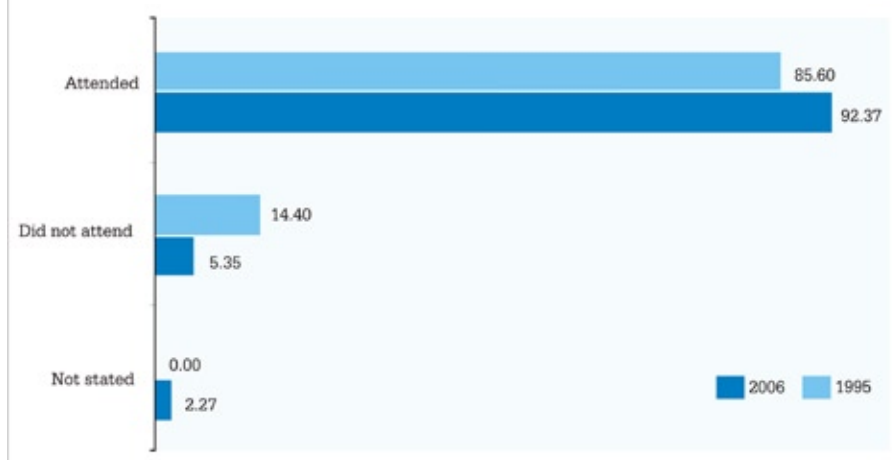


Figure 6 shows that from 1995 to 2006 there has been an increase in attendance, from 85.6 percent to 92.4 percent. A closer look at data in Table 3 reveals that the increase in attendance is in fact a decrease in non-attendance in the ages 6 years and 7 years. In 1995, a total of 3368 in the age 6 years and a total of 1191 in the age 7 years did not attend school.

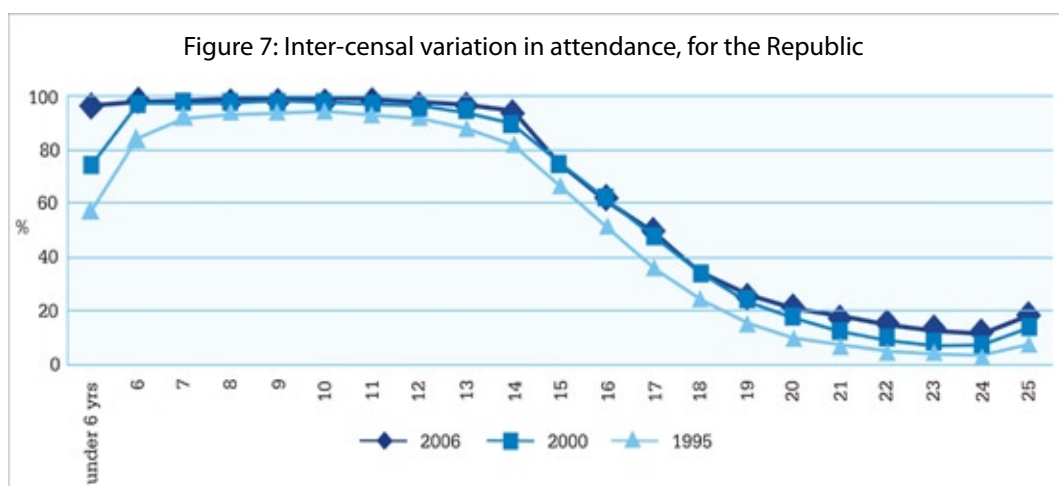
Table 3: Inter-censal variation in attendance, 6-16 years, for the Republic

Age	Total		Attended		Did not attend	
	2006	1995	2006	1995	2006	1995
	6	5,612	7,635	5,002	4,267	210
7	5,703	7,704	5,460	6,513	112	1,191
8	6,245	8,461	6,022	7,720	112	741
9	6,793	8,334	6,539	7,716	122	618
10	6,759	8,088	6,517	7,611	106	477
11	7,180	6,990	6,918	6,588	129	402
12	7,367	7,381	7,078	6,873	145	508
13	7,943	6,839	7,577	6,283	224	556
14	7,750	6,572	7,320	5,799	290	773
15	8,160	4,592	7,511	4,489	501	103
16	8,428	4,866	6,053	3,222	2,219	1,644

Note: Total includes not stated which is not shown separately in the table.

The decrease in the student numbers who did not attend school in the year 2006 reflects the expansion of government schools in most of the islands and also an awareness in the general public of the importance of sending children to school in early age.

Figure 7 clearly shows that the same variation is evident over the entire decade in the primary school ages, attendance remains high and tapers off once the secondary school ages are reached.



7. Educational Attainment

An analysis of the educational attainment of the population is a key factor in measuring the human capacity, progress, and development of a nation. Two questions on educational attainment were included in the Census 2006. These include highest grade completed at school and highest educational certificate achieved.

7.1: Educational attainment for the Republic, 2006

Table 4 shows the composition of the population 6 years and over by level of highest educational attainment as of March 2006.

Table 4: Highest educational attainment by locality, 2006

	Republic			Percentage (%)		
	Total	Male'	Atolls	Republic	Male'	Atolls
No standard passed	45,595	9,415	36,180	17.6	10.4	21.5
Basic literacy certificate	5,832	1,019	4,813	2.3	1.1	2.9
Literate	35,248	7,334	27,914	13.6	8.1	16.6
No grade 1	4,515	1,062	3,453	1.7	1.2	2.1
Primary school	113,529	28,363	85,166	43.9	31.4	50.6
Grade 1	7,488	1,673	5,815	2.9	1.8	3.5
Grade 2	8,956	2,067	6,889	3.5	2.3	4.1
Grade 3	14,553	2,945	11,608	5.6	3.3	6.9
Grade 4	11,306	2,849	8,457	4.4	3.2	5.0
Grade 5	19,658	4,918	14,740	7.6	5.4	8.8
Grade 6	17,155	4,177	12,978	6.6	4.6	7.7
Grade 7	34,413	9,743	24,679	13.3	10.8	14.7
Secondary school	68,506	33,319	35,187	26.5	36.8	20.9
Grade 8	15,879	6,327	9,552	6.1	7.0	5.7
Grade 9	10,915	5,017	5,898	4.2	5.5	3.5
Grade 10	4,274	2,677	1,597	1.7	3.0	0.9
O' Level	37,438	19,298	18,140	14.5	21.3	10.8
Higer secondary	4,926	3,899	1,027	1.9	4.3	0.6
Grade 11	806	559	247	0.3	0.6	0.1
Grade 12	211	169	42	0.1	0.2	0.0
A' Level	3,909	3,171	738	1.5	3.5	0.4
Diploma	4,174	3,193	981	1.6	3.5	0.6
Certificate / Sanadhu	19,643	10,157	9,486	7.6	11.2	5.6
University level	2,372	2,090	282	0.9	2.3	0.2
First degree	1,546	1,342	204	0.6	1.5	0.1
Masters degree & above	826	748	78	0.3	0.8	0.0

Note: About 13% have not stated their level of education; therefore the percentages are based on excluding the category "Not stated".

The overall educational status of the population is not high. By March 2006, about 15 percent and two percent of the population have completed O' Level and A' Level, respectively in the country. In addition, only about 12 percent have reached secondary level (grade 8-10) education and only one percent has attained university level education.

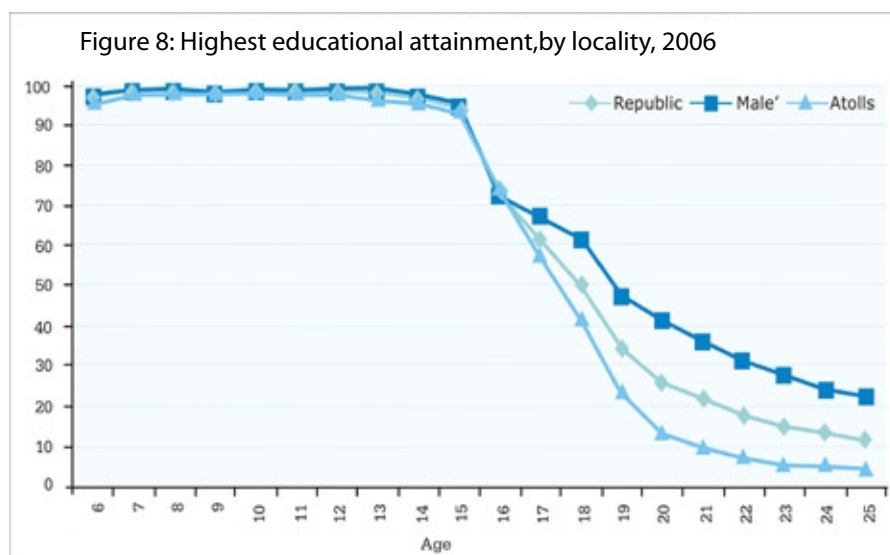


Table 5 shows the highest educational attainment by broad age groups. Educational attainment over broad age groups gives some information about the long term improvements in access to education, and higher educational attainments of younger groups reflect a sustained effort in the improvements.

Table 5: Highest educational attainment, by five year age groups, for the Republic, 2006

Level	6 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 59	60+
No standard passed	19.4	0.4	1.5	2.7	5.2	25.0	47.9	64.4
Primary	73.3	88.8	22.4	21.2	36.6	43.0	36.0	28.1
Lower secondary level	-	8.6	69.8	57.6	37.4	13.8	3.5	1.1
Higher secondary level	-	-	2.8	7.4	2.8	0.9	0.2	0.1
Diploma	-	-	0.3	3.4	4.7	2.7	0.8	0.1
Certificate / Sanadhu	7.3	2.2	3.2	6.9	10.7	12.4	10.6	6.1
Bachelors degree	-	-	-	0.8	2.0	1.2	0.5	0.1
Masters degree & above	-	-	-	0.1	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.1

In 2006, 19.4 percent of the age group 6-9 years are reported as having not passed any standard at all. This is because children attending 1st grade are counted as having not passed any standard as of 2006. However, the proportion of the population who have completed relevant age-specific schooling is very high about 73.3 percent of the age group 6-9 years and 88.8 percent of the age group 10-14 years have attained primary education. Students are expected to complete primary education by the age of 14 years. A small proportion 8.5 percent of this age group has reached secondary school as well.

For the 15-19 years age group, 69.8 percent have attained lower secondary education. This percentage is noteworthy because a student is expected to complete secondary education by the age of 17 years. A very small proportion 2.8 percent of this age group has reached higher secondary level.

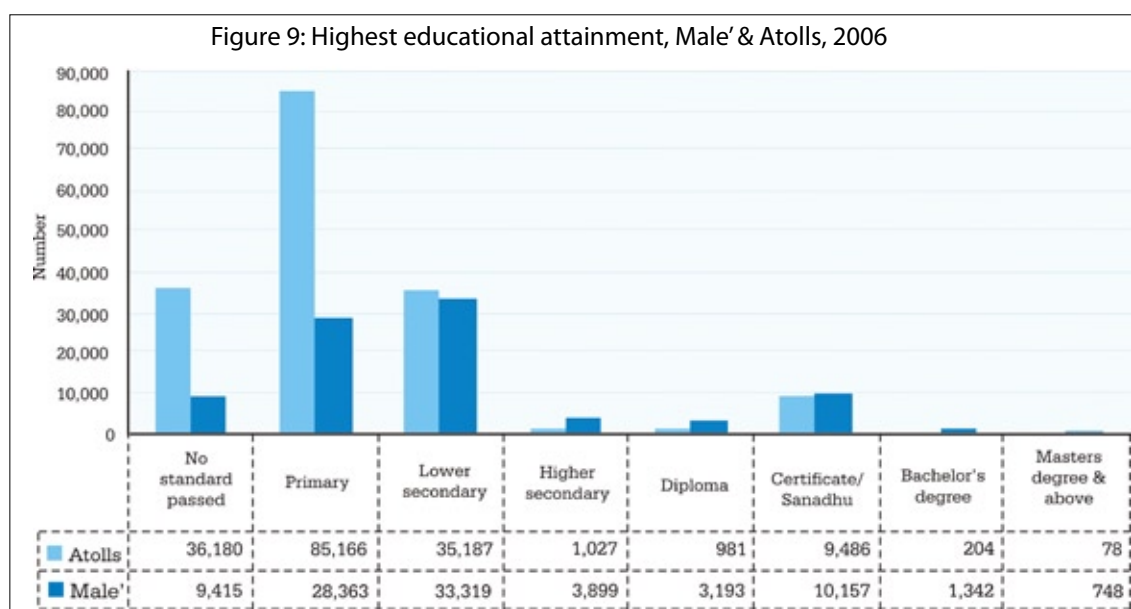
In terms of the highest educational attainment, the best educated population is found in the age group 25-29 years. In this age group, 4.7 percent have attained a diploma, two percent have a bachelor's degree, and 0.6 percent have a masters and above.

For most education levels the percentage of persons who had attained age specific education shows that, over the years, access to these education levels has increased. For instance, secondary level education shows an increase for the relevant age groups. Likewise, both for bachelors degree and masters and above, the trend is the same.

7.2: Educational attainment, Male' vs Atolls

The disproportionate growth of Male', the capital, relative to the other atolls is an issue of major concern. Between 1974 and 2006, the share of Male' population increased from 13 to 35 percent due to internal migration, one of the main reasons is for education. Relatively better employment and health care facilities available in Male' are the other major reasons for this drift to Male'. According to 2005 educational statistics, 29.5 percent of all school enrolments were in Male'. Nevertheless, access to primary education is provided in all the islands, and secondary education is being expanded in the atolls at a very fast rate as evident from the data from the 1995 Census and the 2006 Census as shown in Table 7. The causes and impacts of this disproportionate division of educational opportunities extend beyond the education sector and relate to other economic and social problems.

Figure 9 and in Table 4 show a comparison of the highest educational attainment between Male' and the atolls for the year 2006 .



The data shows that educational attainment in Male' is comparatively more in higher secondary and tertiary level (Diploma, Bachelors degree, Masters degree and above) education than in the Atolls. There is a significant proportion of people in the No standard passed in the atolls which is of a concern. This may be also be due to the fact that a significant number of students six years old have not completed grade 1 falls to this category.

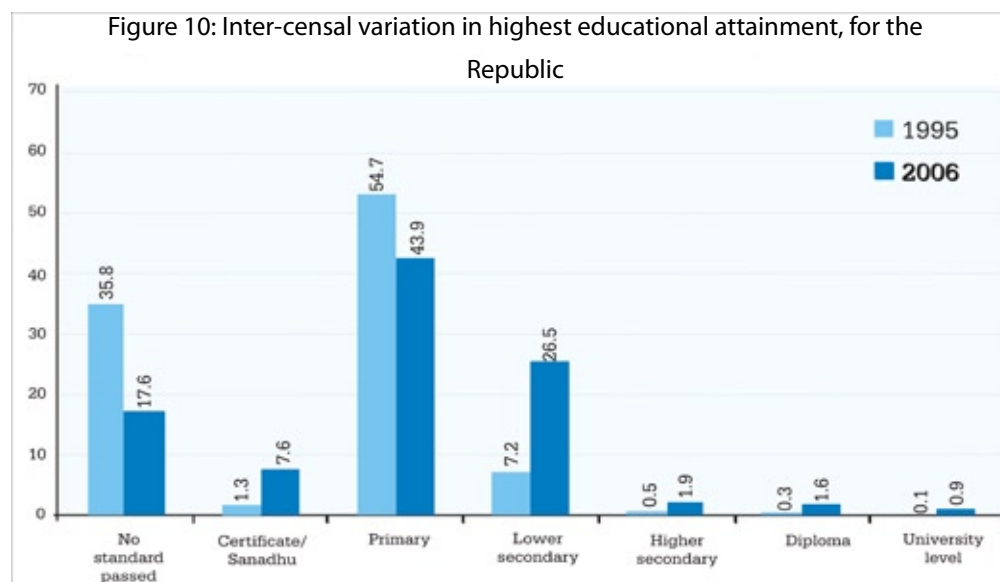
8. Inter-censal variation for the Republic - from 1995-2006

Some levels in the educational system have been changed and therefore the data has been modified to make them comparable across censuses. Table 6 and Figure 10 show a comparison of the highest educational attainment over the decade.

Table 6: Trends in educational attainment, for the Republic

	2006		2000		1995	
Total population 6 years & above	267,283	%	232,075	%	199,217	%
Grade 5 & above	170,947	64.0	123,418	53.2	67,909	34.1
Grade 7 & above	134,134	50.2	77,886	33.6	33,419	16.8
Grade 10 & above	72,827	27.2	21,349	9.2	9,941	5.0

In 2006 for grade 5 and above about 64.0 percent had attained an educational level when compared to 1995 and 2000 this was 34.1 percent and 53.2 percent respectively. Similarly the same pattern has been seen for the above two levels (Grade 7 and above and grade 10 and above) where an increasing trend can be noticed. The greatest increase between 2000 and 2006 is in those who had achieved a minimum of at least Grade 10 level which has increased from 9.2 percent in 2000 to 27.2 percent in 2006.



Overall, the trend is that educational attainment of the population is improving. However, there is a decrease in the percentage of those who do not have any standard pass in the year 2006 from the year 1995, reflecting an increasing enrollement in formal schools. There is also a decline in the proportion of students who have not gone beyond primary schooling and an increasing proportion reaching lower secondary and higher secondary levels of schooling.

Figure 10 also shows that there is a dramatic increase in diploma education, from 1.3 percent in the year 1995 to 7.6 percent in the year 2006. It is important to note that the attainment of higher secondary level is still in focus, which is only 1.6 percent in the year 2006. The higher secondary level percentages increased from 0.3 to 1.6 percent in the year 1995 to 2006 respectively.

8.1: Inter-censal variation Male' vs Atolls, 1995 & 2006

Table 7 shows inter-censal variations in educational attainment between Male' and Atolls.

Table 7: Inter-censal variation in educational attainment, Male' vs atolls

Level	Atolls		Male'	
	2006	1995	2006	1995
No standard passed	21.5	39.4	10.4	26.0
Primary	50.6	56.6	31.4	49.5
Lower secondary level	20.9	2.6	36.8	19.4
Higher secondary level	0.6	0.1	4.3	1.8
Diploma	0.6	0.2	3.5	0.8
Certificate / Sanadhu	5.6	1.1	11.2	2.0
University level	0.2	0.0	2.3	0.4

There are significant differences between Male' and Atolls when compared to the educational categories. Both in Male' and in the Atolls the proportion of the population whose highest educational attainment is 'no standard passed' and 'primary level', has declined over the years.

However, both Male' in and the atolls, except for the 'lower secondary level', the proportion of the population whose highest educational attainment is in the higher levels have increased over the decade. This is a clear sign of progress in the education system as well as an indication of the improvement in access to higher levels of education.

9. Conclusion

The data of the 2006 Census shows that literacy rates have increased. However literacy rates are lower in the in atolls compared to Male'.

All islands have schools that teach up to primary level and many of the islands have lower secondary schools as-well where the current attendance rate stays high in the ages 6-15 years, then decreases sharply from 94 percent at age 15 years to 74 percent at age 16 years.

The lower secondary school leavers do not continue higher secondary schooling, due to limited higher secondary schools in the islands and limited seats in the existing higher secondary school in the capital Male'. The rate is much lower when it comes for the tertiary levels which is less than one percent in the atolls.

Students finishing lower secondary school from the islands do not have the opportunity to continue to higher secondary level leading a large drop-out from the formal school system. Some of them continue to study through the informal education. In addition about six percent of the age group 15-29 years attend informal O' Level and A'Level classes operated by private teaching institutions.

The overall educational status of the population is not high. By March 2006, about 15 percent completed O' Level, two percent completed A' Level, about 12 percent, have reached secondary level (grade 8-10) education and only one percent has attained university level education.

A large proportion in the population of the country has obtained primary level education. When attainment is compared between Male' and the atolls, the data reveals that most of the population in Male' have attained higher levels of education than in 2000. The trend in educational attainment over the decade shows that highest educational attainment is moving towards the higher levels of education. The same is true for when Male' and the rest of the country are considered separately.

Overall, the trend is that educational attainment of the population is improving. However, both Male' and in the atolls, except for the 'higher secondary level', the proportion of the population whose highest educational attainment have increased over the decade. This is an indication of progress in the education system and an improvement in access to higher levels of education.

10. Recommendations

10.1: For further analysis and/or research:

- 10.1.1 Further analysis and research on literacy rates to see in fact, whether literacy rates obtained by the Censuses are correct;
- 10.1.2 Further analysis on inter-censal variation in highest educational attainment between Male' and the atolls;
- 10.1.3 Further analysis on inter-censal variation in highest educational attainment in broad age groups; and
- 10.1.4 Atoll level analysis to find out the access to formal education up to higher secondary level;

10.2: For policy changes:

- 10.2.1 Since a large percentage of secondary students attend informal classes, it is recommended that the government takes steps to increase opportunity in the formal system for these students, especially at the higher secondary level;
level;
- 10.2.2 Although highest educational attainment is on the increase towards higher levels, the government needs to increase opportunities for students to undertake tertiary education in and out of the country; and
- 10.2.3 The proportion of atoll population whose highest educational attainment in the higher levels is much lower than in Male'. Therefore, the government needs to take affirmative steps to rectify this.