Gender Issues and Dropout Rates in India: Major Barrier in Providing Education for All

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Abstract

Education is the only key to bring Gender equality. Conceptual approaches in gender education are discussed in this paper along with the major Government policies for gender equality. Statistical data for Primary, Elementary and Secondary Schools dropout rate in India are taken from 1999-2000 to 2010-2011 for analyses. The dropout rates at the three different levels are compared and it is represented in graphs. The reasons for dropouts in India are discussed with various research project outcomes.

Key Words: Dropout, Gender Equality, Poverty, Social Status.

Introduction

The concept of Egalitarianism among Indian society is still a long distance vision for the Government, Educators and People who are working towards equality. Government of India is implementing many policies in the field of Education to achieve equality among the society in all the cases. Though there are visible amount of attainment in the field of Education in achieving the goals of the Government policies, we have not reached equality in providing education for all. There are large number of social barriers prevail in our society in attaining equality in Education. The main aim of Millennium Development Goal is to achieve basic education for all by 2015. This paper shows the present condition of gender issues in education and drop out rates at primary, elementary and secondary levels.

Gender in Education- Conceptual Approaches

Education is the only key to bring Gender equality. Increase in literacy rate should bring equality based on gender but in Indian society gender equality is not yet achieved upto the expected level. Because the roles of gender are taken from the society that plays a root cause for inequality though women are educated.

The established norms for boys and girls are constructed to make unequal relations seem “natural”, and can be naturalized only under the duress of socialization. While girls endure unwarranted social control, discrimination and domination, boys too suffer from the stereotyping
that exists in a patriarchal culture. Discouraged from being emotional, gentle or fearful they are thrust into the role of breadwinners, protectors, and warriors. Thus unequal gender relations stunt the freedom of all individuals to develop their human capacities to their fullest. Therefore it is in the interest of both men and women to liberate human beings from existing relations of gender (National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education, 2006).

Structural-functional explanations are used especially in cross-cultural examinations of gender in family and society. Shalinsky's (1980) examination of the acquisition of gender identities in Afghanistan, for example, focuses on how family structure perpetuates gender roles across generations. Because girls’ education resides in the family, especially with the mother, Shalinsky suggests that the strength of the mother-daughter bond assures social replication across generations. This continues the earlier focus on social structures as the locus of traditional roles and expectations. Dobbert (1975), for example, had observed that in school, boys are assigned manipulative jobs while girls are given nurturing tasks. This complementary division is reinforced by boys’ are being encouraged to lead and act, whereas girls are encouraged to follow and watch. The relationship between gender and the physical environment is examined by Cone and Perez (1986) in a comparison of four elementary classrooms in an open school. Students constructed classroom territories around gender identities. Although teachers deemphasized gender, student peer groups focused their use and control of physical space around these identities, which reinforce U.S. society's stereotypic notions of femininity and masculinity. In this situation, children adapted what had been a gender-neutral physical environment to suit peer definitions of boyness and girlness.

**Government Policies and Programmes and gender equality**

Indian government is continuously taking steps to bring gender equality in education through various policies. One of the key themes in the 1986 National Policy on Education (NPE) is the positioning of education as a tool for bringing the constitutional aim of social justice and equality (Government of India 1986, 1988b: 69, 75–76). Gender equality in education among Indian society was focused with modifications in the curricular frame work. The revision of the content of education and the planned programme of research into pedagogic innovation involving a number of national educational institutions, for example, would ensure ‘the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers’ (Government of India 1986: 6).

Mahila Samakhya programme for women’s empowerment, which has been implemented across several states since 1989. Significantly, the title of this programme means ‘woman speaking with equal voice’. In order to change the status of rural women, it was agreed that education must help women to question rather than accept, to enable them to affirm their own potential and sustain processes so that, they could move from situations of passive acceptance to assertion and collective action. Women were to take control of their lives through the medium of independent and conscious collectives (sanghas) that would sustain social change processes (Mohan & Vaughan, 2008).

No equivalent comprehensive central government reform of education was undertaken until the 2001 introduction of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which was developed after a decade of participation in the international ‘Education for All’ campaign (Ramachandran, 2003). The SSA was conceived of as an umbrella programme for achieving universal elementary education across the entire country, making free and compulsory education to children of ages 6–
14, a fundamental right mandated by the Constitution of India. Girls were identified as a target group, requiring particular attention as ‘their participation in primary education has been far from desirable’; the framework clearly states that there will be efforts to mainstream gender concerns into all of the SSA activities (Government of India 2001: Section 5.1.1–2; Government of India 2005c:58).

This paper discusses the drop out rates in India at primary, elementary and secondary level school students with respect to gender from 1999-2000 to 2010-2011. The data were taken from the published statistics of Human Resource Development, Government of India. (13456) & Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 867, dated on 30.11.2012.

Table I Dropout Rates at Primary, Elementary and Secondary Schools in India (1999-2000 to 2010-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary (I-V) Classes</th>
<th>Elementary (I-VIII) Classes</th>
<th>Secondary (I-X) Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>38.80</td>
<td>41.00</td>
<td>40.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>39.70</td>
<td>41.90</td>
<td>40.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>38.40</td>
<td>39.90</td>
<td>39.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>35.85</td>
<td>33.72</td>
<td>34.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>33.74</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>31.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>31.81</td>
<td>25.42</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>28.71</td>
<td>21.77</td>
<td>25.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>24.57</td>
<td>26.75</td>
<td>25.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>25.70</td>
<td>24.41</td>
<td>25.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>26.68</td>
<td>22.90</td>
<td>24.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10*</td>
<td>30.25</td>
<td>27.25</td>
<td>28.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11*</td>
<td>28.70</td>
<td>25.10</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total dropout during a course (stage) has been taken as percent of intake in the first year of the course (stage). Primary, Middle and Secondary stages consist of classes I-V, I-VIII, I-X, respectively.
*: Data are Provisional.
Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development Govt. of India. (13456) & Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 867, dated on 30.11.2012.

From table I it is obvious that the drop out rate of girls have come down compare to boys from the year 2002-03 to 2005-06 and after that from 2007-08 to 2010-11 at primary level. At elementary level the drop out rate has increased in 2010-11 and also except the period of 2006-07 to 2009-10 the drop out rates is high in the previous periods also. At secondary level, from 2009-10 and 2010 to 11 periods only the drops out rates of girls are less. Decreased total drop out rates are observed at primary, elementary and secondary levels. Drop out rate starts increase from elementary level and it is very high at secondary level in all the periods (Primary (27%), Elementary (40.6%) and Secondary (49.3%)).
Dropout Rates at Primary, Elementary and Secondary Schools in India (1999-2000 to 2010-2011)

Figure (1) Shows the Dropout Rates at Primary Level in India (1999-2000 to 2010-2011)
Figure II Shows the Dropout Rates at Elementary Level in India (1999-2000 to 2010-2011)
Figure III Shows the Dropout Rates at Secondary Level in India (1999-2000 to 2010-2011)

Total (Boys and Girls) Dropout Rates at Primary, Elementary and Secondary Schools in India (2010-2011)

Figure IV Total Dropout Rates at Primary, Elementary and Secondary Schools in India (2010-2011)
With the implementation of Right to Education (RTE), of course, there has been a gradual decline in the annual average dropout rate from 9.1 in 2009-2010 to 6.9 in 2010-11 (Daily News and Analysis) but there have been more children dropout in 2010-11 as compared to 2009-2010 in 10 out of the 30 states where RTE has been notified, including progressive states like Tamil Nadu and Gujarat that had increased dropout ratio from 0.1% to 1.2% and 3.9% to 4.3% respectively in 2009-10 and 2010-11 (Times of India). The reasons for dropping out may be many like, failure in academics, non-availability of schools, inaccessibility of schools, pushing out due to teachers’ behaviour/school environment, financial problems etc (Govindaraju & Venkatesan, 2010).

The increase in dropout rate takes place mostly after Class VIII and X post the exams. Children cannot be failed before Class VIII according to the Right to Education Act. According to Mehra, children find it difficult to cope afterwards and leave school. The above statistical outcomes agree with this point (RTE India Blog, 2013).

Education researcher Farida Lambay concurred with the DISE data and said the drop-out rate increases in higher classes like VIII, IX and X. "There are many reasons lack of high schools in the vicinity, cultural factors, caring for younger siblings, etc. Girls are often sent to fetch water. In some cases, parents hesitate to send their daughters to schools away from home due to security reasons (Times of India, April, 18, 2013).

**Reason for Dropouts in India**

**Facilities in Rural and Urban Areas**

In rural areas the facilities in schools are not at equal level to the urban schools. Rural-urban differences have also been found to be significant in accessing the resources and the facilities provided by the state. For example, children in rural areas have less access to schooling because the schools are either not available or physically and/or socially inaccessible. Coupled with that is the integration of the children, especially girls, in the village and household economy. Therefore, rurality has also been recognized as a critical indicator of who can participate in education. Moreover, the urban poor living in the slums of the metros and the children of migrant labour are another vulnerable category which have been adversely affected by the lack of sensitivity of government policies to their existential condition (National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education, 2006).

The number of schools at some places is less and also at some places especially at tribal areas there are no sufficient qualified teachers who work among the tribes with total dedication. Girls’ hostel and separate toilet facilities are expected from the parents. If they find there is any difficulty in accessing these they stop schooling. The distance of the school after elementary level is also a big issue in rural area which affects especially girls’ education. Educationist J M Abhyankar estimates that if 100 students have enrolled in primary section, only about nine complete their higher education, including post-graduation, in the state. "Out of these nine, ideally four or five should be girls, but unfortunately only two reach that level. There are several dropouts in rural areas even as they move to secondary schools. The schools are usually at a distance of 8-11 km and families do not wish to send their daughters so far (Times of India, April, 18, 2013).
Poverty:

The main reason for dropout at all the level of school education irrespective of the locality is poverty. Child labour arises from the extreme poverty of the family. Family problems lead the child to get into a work to become independent or to support the family. Both statistical data and empirical research suggest that children from better off households are more likely to remain in school, whilst those who are poorer are more likely never to have attended, or to drop out once they have enrolled (Hunt Frances, 2008). According to activists, poor child-teacher ratio and child labour could be the other reasons for the high dropout rate (RTE blog, 2013).

Poor SC/ST parents are unable to send their children to ‘free’ schools because of costs other than the tuition fee and of forgone income from the children’s work (Tilak, 1996). Even those who can meet the expenditure of the education of their children, spend less on the schooling of their daughters than the sons (Tilak, 1996; Chanana, 1996). Prof. Amartya Kumar Sen, Nobel laureate in Economics of 1998, has also pointed out that for sustainable development even the poorest of the poor should be provided proper education and accordingly steps have to be taken to bring primary education to the doorsteps of the rural people, since more than 75 per cent of Indians live in rural areas (Do it yourself staff, Making a Difference - Ways To Lower Drop Out Rates, 2012).

Social Status of the Groups

Social Status begins from the caste system. In many communities girls are married at the very young age. This is the main reason for dropout at secondary level. Educationist Abhyankar has said that in cities like Mumbai too, certain communities refuse to allow their daughters to pursue higher education after a point. "They believe marrying at the ‘right’ age is more important than studying. Many find higher education is unaffordable. If they do have money, they prefer sending their sons to colleges (Times of India, April, 18, 2013).

Based on community status or the wealth of the family working condition of the people also differs. The in-depth study of elementary education of the poorest and other deprived groups by Jha and Jhingran (2002) sheds light on competing factors that frame educational decision-making in poor households. They argue that enrolment and attendance is not only determined by economic situation but also by the social status of groups. In the caste/gendered segmentation of the labour market women are disproportionately found in agricultural/rural labour, traditional domestic, low skilled, low status, or caste related (sweeping – scavenging) services in rural sectors. In urban sectors, poor women are located in lowly unskilled, low status feminised service sectors in urban informal economy. Educational careers of most dalit girls are shaped by this structure (Padma Velaskar, 2005).

Recent qualitative studies mapping factors that facilitate/impede successful primary school completion reveal a complex picture. Caste and community of children influence educational participation and outcomes along with the economic status. While an improvement in economic situation certainly makes a difference, this alone does not explain lack of access or regularity of attendance in school and explains why the SC, ST and other minority groups (Muslims in UP) in the sample emerge at the bottom of the educational ladder. The attitudes and prejudices of teachers and children regarding social and community identities of marginal groups in the school also play an important role in defining educational outcomes for the latter (Vimala Ramachandran, 2003).
In the earlier period the dropout rate among Muslim girls and also boys were high but in the recent years the situation has come down. In the context of Muslim girls too, recent research has revealed that contrary to prevalent stereotypes about forces of conservatism being the cause for low levels of education, financial constraints seem to outweigh parental opposition as women’s chief obstacle to continuing studies. In the north zone, financial constraints are much more important for Muslims than they are for Hindus, underlining once again the poverty of Muslim households in this part of the country, and this provides the most powerful explanation for the poor levels of Muslim women’s education in the north India (Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, 2004).

Lack of Quality Education

Some people are not interested in classes because the education provided to them is not interesting or de-motivation by the school authorities by scolding them or not considering them. Behavioral problem children are given corporal punishment still in school level. Ashok Agarwal, an activist who has joined the Aam Admi Party, said that the practice of meting out corporal punishment in schools could be responsible for children dropping out from schools (Times of India, April, 18, 2013). These kinds of people lose interest in studies and they dropout from schools. Sen’s capabilities approach highlights poor quality education as a primary driver of school drop-out (School drop-out: Poverty and patterns of exclusion, 2012).

Conclusion

Dropout rate of children from primary to secondary level has been discussed in the present paper. From that it is observed that the number of dropout is high in all the periods at secondary level. Some of the major reasons for dropout in India are discussed and it is concluded that the mindset of the society towards gender based discrimination should be changed with the help of Educators, Administrators, and Curriculum and Policy Makers.

References


