



Dropouts in School Education in India: Magnitude and Reasons

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ABSTRACT

India has faced many challenges with a phenomenal growth in education in terms of the number of institutions or enrolments since independence. Dropout rates are one such problem. Students who enrolled in the education system from standard 1 and earlier were not able to complete their education till standard 10th and above. The current research is an attempt to understand the status of dropout rates in education till standard 10th for boys, girls, and students belonging to SC and ST category separately. Attempt was also made to identify the underlying reasons for the dropouts. Across various studies financial constraint was identified as a major reason for dropouts. Reasons responsible for dropouts of males and females were different. A lot of policy initiatives are already in existence although efforts to identify the students that are most likely to dropout and designing the policies to control the dropouts is imperative.

KEYWORDS

India, dropouts, schools, gender and ethnic disparity, reasons

INTRODUCTION

India is striving to assure an opportunity for access to education to all its citizens with equity and quality. While the education system has grown manifold since independence, the growth has come with its own set of challenges. It is not enough to feel contented merely by the enrolments. It is equally crucial to analyze and assure that maximum numbers of students are able to sustain and complete the entire education.

Efficiency is associated with an analysis of inputs and outputs. A system is considered efficient if per unit of input, more output can be derived. Education system has very peculiar characteristics. Efficiency of an education system can be measured by the unemployment rates, rates of returns on education and dropout rates among others. Dropout rates are considered to be a great wastage in the education system.

The objectives of the current research are to study the magnitude of dropout rates for school students from 2005-06 to 2013-14 and the underlying reasons for the dropouts by the students who enrolled in education and discontinued.

METHODOLOGY

Dropout rates for school children from standard 1 to standard 10 based on the secondary data from a report released by the MHRD (2014) have been analyzed. The study is undertaken for the period of 2005-06 to 2013-14. The data for 2013-14 were provisional. Dropout rates for school education were used as a tool. Dropout Rate is defined as 'the percentage of students who drop out from a given grade or cycle or level of education in a given school year.' The dropout rate for students from standard 1 to 10 in total, and separately for boys and girls had been analyzed. Thereafter the dropout rates for students belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) were compared with the students belonging to all categories in total. The scope of the research was restricted to the study of dropout rates till 10th standard, while dropouts continue at higher levels of education after 10th too.

An attempt to identify and study the reasons for dropouts in India at school levels were pursued in later sections of the paper using secondary data like reports and research papers.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Figure 1 depicts the dropout rates from standard 1 to 10 for boys, girls and for all students in total.

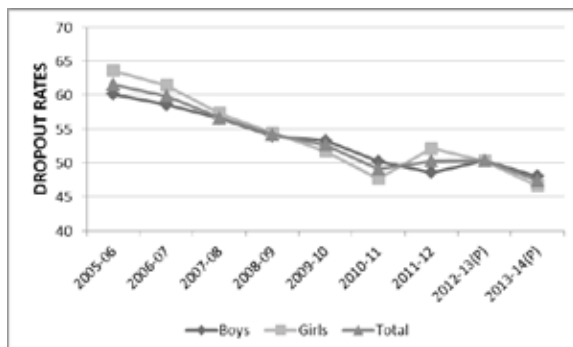


Figure 1: Dropout Rates of students from standard 1 to 10 from 2005-06 to 2013-14 (P) for boys, girls and total
Source: MHRD (2014)

All the three curves sloped downwards and were almost interwoven. Thus the down fall in the dropout rates for the period of 2005-06 to 2013-14(P) was praiseworthy. It fell almost by 18-20 percentages. Gender bias could not be observed much in the rate at which the drop outs reduced for boys and girls. Nevertheless for 2013-14 about 48% of boys and about 47% of the girls dropped out of the schools before completing standard 10. Almost about half of the students that enrolled in standard 1 could not complete their education till 10th standard. It is a cause of concern for policy makers.

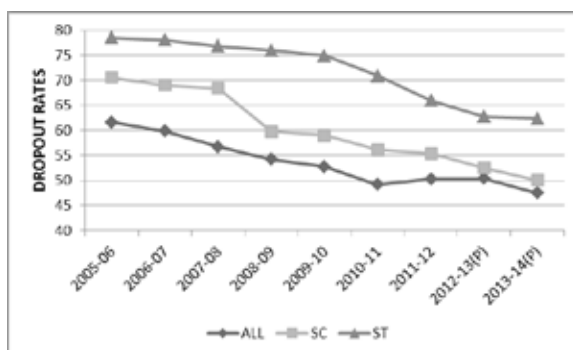


Figure 1: Dropout Rates of students from standard 1 to 10 from 2005-06 to 2013-14 (P) for students belonging to SC, ST and all categories

Source: MHRD (2014)

A reduction in the dropout rates for students belonging to SC, ST and all categories over the period of 2005-06 to 2013-14(P) was observed as depicted in figure 2. Throughout the research period, the ST population faced the highest dropouts followed by SC population and then population belonging to all categories. The dropout rates fell from 79% to 62% for ST, from 71% to 50 % for SC and from 62% to 47 % for students belonging to all categories from 2005-06 to 2013-14(P). Although the reduction was noticeable and appreciated a dropout rate of around 50% and above in 2013-14 was also a cause of concern. Particularly, for ST population more than 60% of all the students who had enrolled in standard 1 were not able to complete their education till standard 10th.

The sections of the population belonging to the SC and the ST category have been historically disadvantaged and there are various provisions in the Constitution of India to assure that the people belonging to the disadvantaged groups get an equal opportunity to join the mainstream in all walks of life and in pursuing education, in particular.

REASONS FOR DROPOUTS

Various studies at national and state levels had been undertaken to identify the reasons for dropouts in the school going age-groups. NSSO (2010) was a comprehensive report on participation and expenditure on education in India in 2007-08. One of the objectives of the study was "to study the extent of educational wastage in terms of dropouts and discontinuance, and its causes" (NSSO, 2010). A research by Chugh(2011) identified the reasons for dropouts in secondary education for slum areas in New Delhi. Another research by Uma Rani (2011) identified various reasons for the dropouts among rural girls in Tamil Nadu. A study across 21 states of India TNS (2013) also attempted to identify the reasons for dropouts from education. In yet another study by the Government of Punjab (2009) various reasons resulting in dropouts in school education across Punjab had been identified. All of these studies had been undertaken for respondents belonging to different groups on the basis of level of education, gender, ethnic backgrounds, and geographical location by states or rural-urban, economic indicators, among others. In the current research the common reasons across various studies have been identified and cited.

The major reasons for dropouts identified by NSSO (2010) included "financial constraints (21%), child not interested in studies (20%), unable to cope up or failure in studies (10%), completed desired level or class (10%), parents not interested in studies (9%), for participating in other economic activities (6%), to work for wage / salary (6%), to attend other domestic chores (5%), for helping in household enterprises (3%). Other reasons included marriage, school was far, unsuitable timing of educational institution, unfamiliar medium of language / instruction, to look after younger siblings, amongst others" (NSSO, 2010).

Factors that were identified in the studies mentioned previously that affected the dropouts were financial constraints, the association between the desire to educate their children and the literacy levels of parents, lack of any employable skills viz a viz the education cost and opportunity cost of time invested in education, migration of family and prolonged illness of children.

The factors that influenced the boys included that they were themselves not inclined to continue further education, to help in household occupation, many did not find education important for future, among others. Whereas the factors that resulted in higher dropouts for girls included disapprovals from the families, lack of interest in pursuing further studies, distance from their residences, the dismal state of infrastructural conditions in the educational structures non-conducive to female education, expectations of the parents from the girls to help in household chores and taking care of the siblings, parents perception that the education of girls was unimportant, difficulties during marriage, among others.

CONCLUSION

Dropouts at school level in India are a serious matter of concern. While India is moving forward towards ensuring 'admission for all' with the Right to Education, concerns for the dropouts as serious as children belonging to the relevant age-cohort and not enrolling. Dropouts result into wastage of education system thereby proving it to be inefficient. Closer to half of the population in India chose to discontinue its studies after 10th standard, with ST population having a dropout as high as 60+ percentages.

Identification of the reasons for such a situation to occur is the first step towards policy designing and implementation. Various studies undertaken for different sections of the Indian population at different locations for different magnitudes had attempted to identify the reasons for dropouts respectively. The lack of financial resources to pursue education was identified as the most dominating reason for dropouts across various studies. Amongst other reasons lack of interest in education, conducive and closely located infrastructural amenities, various perceptions of the parents related to the access of education and its repercussions / expectations, were also identified. Reasons specific to boys and girls were also identified separately. Primarily boys were expected to contribute to the family income by dropping out of education rather than continuing education with an expectation of greater returns later. Whereas for girls, female conducive infrastructure and environment, perceptions of the parents regarding the association between marriage and education attainment, household chores and taking care of siblings were identified as major reasons for dropouts.

Equitable and continued access to education necessitates the access to sufficient provision of resources and amenities to assure the opportunity of being educated. Various schemes by the government have consistently strived to assure the availability of resources and the opportunity to pursue and continue education, but a lot more is desired. To sojourn dropouts carefully designed policies, identification of prospective dropout students and effective policy implementation is necessitated. Increased enrolments are just the necessary condition to enhance the opportunities of an equitable access to education. Curbing dropouts as a sufficient condition is imperative to the success of the education system in India.

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