

Problems of Drop out Children in Elementary Education in Bihar

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Abstract:Elementary education in Bihar is defined as the education from classes I to VIII, and roughly covers children from the age of 6 to 14 years. Elementary education is further divided into two stages: primary and upper primary education. Primary education lasts up to class V and covers children in the age group of 6-11 years. Upper primary covers the classes from standard VI to VIII, and includes children in the age group of 11-14 years. While this is the Bihar state picture, there are minor variations in some states. Some have primary schooling up to class IV only, while a few have upper primary up to class VII only. However in our study, elementary education has taken from class I to VIII covering children in the 6-14 age group. Primary education is taken from class I to V and upper primary from class VI to VIII covering children in the age-group 6-11 and 11-14 years respectively. It would not be unreasonable to say that the various educational facilities, such as schools, colleges and parameters such as investment in education, enrolment ratios, literacy level and levels of educational development are characterized by unequal distribution over districts of Bihar. They are biased in favour of urban areas and areas or districts, which are relatively developed, causing regional disparities. One will have to identify those areas, which have been able to draw greater benefits than others in terms of allocation of educational infrastructure against those, which have been deprived of it. One will also have to look for reasons as to 'why' and 'how' such patterns have developed. 'What' are the ways and means through which balanced development of all parts of Bihar could be attained?

Key Words: Elementary education, enrolment ratios, literacy level, Drop out Children.

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Introduction-Elementary education in Bihar is characterized by high rates of non-enrolment, discontinuity and low level of educational achievement. The increase in enrolment rates, attendance figures and midday meal distribution do not convey the true picture of the state of the education system in Bihar. The most disturbing fact is the high non-enrolment and dropout of children from the school in Bihar. According to national sample survey (NSS) 353 out of every 1000 person of age 5-29 years have never attended any educational institutions in Bihar. In rural areas, the number is 372 and in urban it is 185. Among males it is 281 and among females it is Among the rural female it is as high as 458. Drop-out indicates a wastage as those who discontinue early often became functionally illiterate. A significant fall in enrolment and attendance is observed as the education-ladder moves on. The highest dropout rate occurs in class I as the student advances to class II. Often, the dropout is a sequence of absence from school for short or long period. Discontinuation of schooling among rural children is observed to be higher than urban children.

In 2015, about 13.4 million children are out of school in India. According to ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) 2017, about 4.2 percent of children in age-group of 6-14 years are out of school. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa account for more than 70 percent of all out of school children. Orissa tops the list with 8 percent of its children out of school followed by Meghalaya (7.5), Assam (6.9), Bihar (6.5), Rajasthan (6.5) etc.

The Indian Constitution recognises education as one of the essential and critical obligations of the state. Under the Directive Principles of state policy, Article 41 directs that "state shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provisions for securing the rights to work, to education and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of unreserved want." Article 45 directs the state to endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the constitution free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. However, the right to education under the Directive Principle is not justifiable in court of law and, therefore if denied cannot be challenged in any court of law. A close scrutiny of Article 41 and 45 reveals that Article 41 merely expects the state to make effective provision for securing the right to education and

that too within the limits of its economic capacity and development. Article 45 makes more strict demand on the state to provide education to all children up to the age of 14 years- 'within a period of ten years' regardless of economic condition of the state. The phrase 'endeavour to provide' in this article refers to time frame within which the goal of free and compulsory education was to be accomplished.

However, in view of the vast difficulties involved, i.e. lack of adequate resources, disproportionate increase in population, resistance to the education of girls, general poverty of the people, illiteracy, and indifference of parents of scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other backward classes (OBCs) adequate progress could not be achieved. It is sad that even after 60 years from the commencement of the constitution, the constitutional directives envisaged in Article 45 remain unfulfilled. Noble Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen rightly observed that primary education continued to remain as a gray land despite the substantial progress made by higher education in India.

The UNICEF in its report on "**State of World Children 1999**" stated that India would be the most illiterate country in the world and Bihar is the most illiterate state in India. Every third illiterate in the world is an Indian. Half of the school going primary school children in the age group of 5 to 11 years in our country is out of schools.

Bihar on the other side has taken long strides in the spread and development of educational facilities especially during the plan period over the last 60 years. As a result, during 1961 only 13.5 percent of people could read and write with understanding. During 1991, the percentage rose to 37.5 percent, 47 percent in 2001 (Census of India, 2001) and 64 percent in 2011 (Census of India, 2011). But still millions in Bihar continue to be deprived of the opportunity to learn. Even the condition in India is not better enough International comparisons give another useful view of this bleak picture. In vast heterogeneous country like India, it is no mean achievement when compared with almost similar situations like China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Brazil and Mexico.

Our educational and literacy is lagging far behind from angle of quality. According to World Bank in India, the average adult has spent a little over two years at school, compared with five years in China, seven years in Sri Lanka and over nine years in South Korea. India appears in a poor light even compared with regions that are often considered here as backward: for instance, female literacy rates are much lower in India

than in sub-Saharan Africa. The gross enrolment ratios (GERs) in urban areas may be higher in selected Indian states, but the GER in rural India is comparable to that in much of Africa. The net enrolment rate (NER) is also generally comparable. Tamil Nadu, a relatively high-achiever state, has indicators that are comparable with high enrolment countries such as Zimbabwe and Kenya, but the indicators for the rest of the Indian states are similar to those observed in rest of Africa. So, we in India are still not able to provide all our children in the age group of 6-14 years free and compulsory education. Of the 173 countries in the world, India ranked 124 on the human development index (HDI) in 2000 and 2002 of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The elementary education provides basic foundation to man to become educationally sound, and politically, economically and socially empowered. "The economic returns to primary education are estimated to be not only positive and high, but also higher than the returns to secondary and higher education. The returns to primary education for weaker sections are also found to be sizeable, and in fact, higher than the return to their respective counterparts. The return to upper primary level of education are higher in rural than in urban areas." Statistical studies showed that the accumulation of physical capital (the stocks of machines, plants, tools, and so on) explained only a small part of the overall rate of growth of different economies. The notion of human capital helped to explain why some economies grew faster than others. For instances, the high rates of growth of East Asia economies such as South Korea clearly had something to do with their high levels of investment in human capital, particularly the early expansion of elementary education. The fact that the economic returns of education were high was a valuable insight. According to Jean Dreze, had there been greater awareness of this fact in the early days of economic planning of India, there would have been more emphasis on elementary education and less on the accumulation of physical capital.

However, these studies were associated with a rather narrow view of education, seen mainly as an 'investment', the main purpose of which was to accelerate economic growth. The wider role of education in enhancing the quality of life was missed in this analysis. The contribution of primary education is not restricted to economic returns only. Its significant effect on improvement in income distribution and poverty reduction, improvement in health and nutritional status of the

people are well known. Its negative relationship with fertility and population growth, and positive association with adoption of family planning methods are noticed in various studies. Its positive correlation with general social, political and economic development and overall quality of life are well organized.

The common minimum programme (CMP) of the United Front government at the centre in 1996 was committed to make education a competing goal aiming for the nation to become fully literate by 2005. Some years ago, similar commitment made at New Delhi, talked about Education For All (EFA) by 2000. However, no significant progress is observed even today. Universalization of primary education is the epicenter of structural adjustment policies integrated with a social programme to improve the welfare of the children, women, poor and deprived people. Even today according to census of India, 2/5th of our people are illiterate comprising 25 percent males and 46 percent females and in case of Bihar, 36 percent are illiterate in 2011. This neglect of girl's education may have cost the children and country very dear, since there are clear-cut evidences, which show that, the total benefits from education multiply when schools are opened to girls and women. In addition to being more productive in market forces, educated women have smaller families; fewer of their children die in infancy; and, the children who survived are healthier and better educated.

Illiterates are concentrated more in villages than in towns and cities. Besides the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the other backward classes too have shown poor performances. The literacy movement at the national and the regional levels therefore requires to be under taken on a war footing in order to achieve sustained economic development in rural Bihar.

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VIII covering children in the 6-14 age group. Primary education is taken from class I to V and upper primary from class VI to VIII covering children in the age-group 6-11 and 11-14 years respectively.

It would not be unreasonable to say that the various educational facilities, such as schools, colleges and parameters such as investment in education, enrolment ratios, literacy level and levels of educational development are characterized by unequal distribution over districts of Bihar. They are biased in favour of urban areas and areas or districts, which are relatively developed, causing regional disparities. One will have to identify those areas, which have been able to draw greater benefits than others in terms of allocation of educational infrastructure against those, which have been deprived of it. One will also have to look for reasons as to 'why' and 'how' such patterns have developed. 'What' are the ways and means through which balanced development of all parts of Bihar could be attained?

In the country, as a whole, approximately 35 million children still needs to be enrolled. Recent surveys indicate that nearly 79 percent of the 6-14 age-group children are attending school. This means that out of the population of 192 million in the age group of 6-14 years in 2000, the number of children attending school is 152 million. Those outside the school system are mostly SC\ST girls, working children, children of poor families, disabled children and children in difficult circumstances. Moreover, India being a large country, one sees a wide disparity in the educational status from one region to another. Thus, while there are some regions, which are close to achieving the goals of UEE, there are other regions, which have still a long distance to go before they can achieve the same. Bihar comes in the region which has lot to do in this regard. Almost all students i.e. 97 percent are in the 15 major states. Two of these states are doing very well, providing almost all their children with a primary education but several are far behind. Six states account for 25 million of the 35 million primary school age children not in school.

Progress in other states falls somewhere in between. Within states, too, there is diversity- with some districts faring poorly even in states that are otherwise doing well, and vice-versa.

The present study seeks to explore the problems of children not attending elementary school at household level of different social groups in Bihar. It compares the scheduled castes and other backward classes households with the non-scheduled non-OBC households in terms of

non-attending school children and thus attempts to underline the socio-economic implications of such a lopsided educational development, especially in the wake of government policies of “protective positive discrimination” in favour of the weaker sections of society.

Bihar is chosen as the area of study because of its general educational and economic backwardness, a large section of children are out of school and in view of the present condition of scheduled castes, backward classes specially the extremely backward classes in the socio-economic milieu of this state where relation of production and distribution of property has been severe and strained against these communities than any other states of our country. According to ASER 2007 report, in about 8 out of 38 districts of Bihar, the percentage of children who are out of school is more than 10.

Apart from these communities, a large section of Muslims, which come under the OBC category in Bihar and almost in every case, women are lagging behind in elementary education. If we take all these communities together, it would make up majority of the total state population. “These populations are characterized by wide illiteracy and low level of occupation, mass unemployment, caste discrimination, low income, low technology and scarcity of resources.” This creates a different and complex situation in terms of access to education and equality of opportunities. These disadvantaged sections suffer from lack of access to and drop out from formal education.

In a society ridden by caste hierarchy, it is imperative to understand how caste plays a significant role in determining the accessibility to education, the quality of transaction that takes place in the classroom and the response of the communities and teachers to education. The politics that operates in maintaining the social distance and the asymmetrical resource distribution amongst various caste groups also forms an integral part of the rural fabric where formal education still functions to reproduce.

A manifestation of the impact of caste system on education in Bihar is the division of educational institutions on the basis of the social differentiation of the student population. Vast differences in the quality of education are found between the educational institutions that serve the upper and lower castes of the society. Educational institutions attended predominantly by the upper castes have better infrastructural facilities and human and non-human inputs so that they provide qualitatively better

education. Consequently, students from the upper castes who attend these educational institutions are in a position to have higher learner achievement. To that extent, social differentiation existing in the larger society is being replicated in the educational system. Thus, the interactions between the system of social stratification on the basis of caste and education, which affect the learning of individual, operates in a vicious circle and exist in different degrees in different parts of Bihar.

So, apart from these problems of availability and quality of school education, society, social groups, caste system etc; there are large sets of social and economic factors which are acting at household level and putting the children out of school. Some of the social factors are education of parents, size of household, age and sex structure of the people within household, child labour etc. Some of the economic factors are size of landholdings, occupation of parents, income of household etc. Poverty seems to be the major cause for the non- enrolment and dropout of children. Poverty of household pushes the children into child labour leading to the dropout at younger age in Bihar.

Though, contributions of public and private efforts have led to the growth of elementary education in Bihar, it is still not adequate with inadequate budgetary allocation having serious implications for quantity, quality and equality of education. A large number of government programmes are implemented in this regard to solve this problem. “The scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a national flagship programme was launched in 2001 with the aim of providing useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6-14 age groups by 2020. It is being implemented in all districts of the country.” The goals of SSA are (i) All 6-14 age children in school/EGS (Education Guarantee Scheme) centre/ Bridge Course by 2005. (ii) Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010. (iii) Universal retention by 2010. (iv) Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education in life. The programme has special focus on educational needs of girls, SCs/STs and other children in difficult circumstances. The programme seeks to open new schools in those places which don't have schooling facilities and strengthening existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grant.

In spite of all these, we are yet to provide effective enrolment facilities in class I to VIII to nearly half of our school going-age population.

