

An enquiry into some Socio-Economic aspects of School Drop Out in Bardhaman District

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ABSTRACT

In almost all developing countries, dropout is a big problem with high costs to the community and the biggest concern is that school dropouts destabilize communities through delinquent behaviour and early marriage. The perceived causes of dropout are complex and tend to vary in time, space and also with gender. However domestic chores and income-generating attraction seem to be the biggest causes of dropout for both boys and girls. Beside poverty, lack of awareness and infrastructural problem seems to play a pivotal role in dropping out. The children that have dropped out of school did not concur with the community in what caused them to dropout. Most children who have dropped out expressed interest to re-enter school and see the remedy for dropping out as depending on more parental/guardian support and making school more interesting. The community sees the remedy for dropout as a combined effort between government, local communities and parents.

1. Introduction

The *dropout* in the narrowest sense refers to enrolled students who stay away from school for more than a given number of days without migrating (Nicaise I.et al; 2000) or in other words, once enrolled students leave education before completing a given cycle. In a broader sense including those who never been enrolled. Therefore, a dropout means all children that either do not enter education, or leave it without completing education (*ibid*).

With the realization that education is the major avenue of empowering the people and hence leading to the transformation of the country the, Government launched the ELEMENTARY EDUCATION and education for all. But the endeavour was not enough. 35 million children of the age group 6-11 years in the country were out of school in 1997 though Gross Enrolment Ratio in the country at that time was 90%; and Dropout rate for secondary levels was 68% (census of India 2001).

If regional difference is taken into account, in the study area concerned the rate of dropout are disturbingly high in Raina-I, Monteswar, Purbasthali-I, Jamuria, and Kanksa for the Primary Stages, and Kanksa, Ketugram-I, Jamuria, Ausgram-II, Memari, Khandoghosh, Ausgram-I, and Kalna-II for the Junior High school level. In addition, Female dropout rates are alarmingly high in the same areas. In these areas on an average 25-35 per cent of Primary students, and 40-60 per cent of Junior High school students are leaving school before completing the stage (district human development report; 2008).

The problems were attributed partly to economic and partly to social reasons. Economic causes include poverty, migration, child labour, the low valuation of education and inadequate funding of schools. Social problems refer to drug addiction, family disruption, domestic demands of work, sibling care, and household chores, while cultural factors include the lack of role models in the local community, early marriage etc (Kotwal N. et

al 2007). The problem is a highly selective phenomenon from which weaker social groups like poor, unemployed and low-wage workers seem to have suffered most. The drop-out rate among poor households is twice as high as average (Shivakumar, 1999). Since economic crisis indeed has triggered unemployment, underemployment, inflation and a dramatic fall in real wages. Other problem relating to the well-being of children that ultimately double the number of drug-related juvenile delinquency, and a rising number of street children.

Dropout rate are higher for the girls compared to the boys though Girl children are enrolling in greater percentage compared to boys. This is in sharp contrast to state and national picture (district human development report; 2008). The girls who are denied educational opportunities as compared to boys suggest clear discrimination in household behaviour. The implications of such unequal treatment result in limiting the opportunities and choices that girl children may have both in the present and in the future. To quote Amartya Sen, "the capabilities of girls will be severely restricted by the denial of education. If freedom is the goal of development, it will be substantially restricted by the fact that illiterate girls will become illiterate women." The present study was taken up with the objective to study the various socio-economic causes of school dropouts as perceived by them, their teacher and communities.

2. Study area

The district Bardhaman of west Bengal declared as total literate district, situated in the mid western part of the state is taken for the present study. It seems that economic development lead to change in quality of life and education as the state had prosperity in industry, particularly in its western part, so what impact it had on education is of special interest.

Of the 36 bridge course centre with 736 learners currently functioning in the western part of the district comprising of CD Blocks - Andal, Barabani, Durgapur-Faridpur, Jamuria, Kanksa,

Pandabeswar, Raniganj, Salanpur to mainstream the drop out learners comprising the study area.

3. Methodology

The study had been undertaken emphasising on both quantitative and qualitative aspect. Firstly, schools(both primary and high) and bridge course centres were selected randomly. 17 bridge course centres, 13 primary school and 6 high school from these CD block has been taken into consideration. Opinion survey has been made among the students based on their academic performance and socio-economic status to make the study representative of the reality. Questioners has been prepared and surveyed among the students of bridge course centres to know about their family background and the problems faced by them while studying. Then the information had been processed and analysed using various analytical tools.

For quantitative information secondary database also made use. These include the census of India, 2001; District Human Development Report, 2008; and Report on impact of bridge course centres. They provide various causal- effect information about the problem of drop out.

4. Result discussion

The perceived causes of dropout are complex, diverse and tend to vary in time, space and also with gender. To understand the pattern considerable study has been made. More specifically, two aspects namely social and economic are seems to be more important. Besides, "parental involvement, family environment, teacher warmth, and academic performance help determine the development of internal locus of control" (Coleman and DeLeire 2003)

Economic aspect

According to Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory investments in human capital that actually transferred from parents increase the chances for economic success. Therefore, family socioeconomic class has a major impact on human capital accumulation. Families from a lower socioeconomic class not only obtain less resources but also less human capital to pass on to their children, thereby causing these children to automatically be disadvantaged. Bertrand (1962) found Low socioeconomic status directly correlates with high school dropouts.

Poverty is linked, among other things, to poor housing, nutritional and educational problems, social isolation, lower life-expectancy and large households. They also have less access to social services and infrastructure (such as education)(Nicaise I. et al; 2000). As mentioned earlier poor families getting least resource both inform of knowledge and material they have little access to knowledge, including knowledge about good nutrition, hygiene or health care, again, they have meagre resource to invest for next. So, they are in the fix of poverty cycle from which they cannot get rid of. The relation between poverty and school dropout can be observed on the macro-level. Similar relationships between income and educational participation can be observed in micro-data. If we consider the total literacy rate and the poverty index for the

western blocks there is an obvious negative correlation between them with a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.657 and the coefficient of determinant (r^2) suggest that at least 43% illiteracy is attributed to poverty. That indicate increase in literacy suppress the poverty or vice versa. So, greater the poverty greater the illiteracy. Poverty has a regional dimension; conditions are more severe in rural than in urban areas.

This tract of the district is endowed with rich mineral resource that underlies the region's economic prosperity. Several open cast and underground mines has come into the operation to explore the resources. Coal has a great demand for day to day house hold usage and also for power generation in industry. So the learners are generally lured by this opportunity to work in the mines that are often illegal and operating in the night time. Those learners who are working in this are unable to attend the school for this region. Contrary to this the learners of the eastern part of the region are working on a more secure sector like agricultural labourer or in constructing activities like road masonry etc.

In fact poor financial condition of the household and the urge of the learner to work are found to be the most important reason that push the learner to leave study and pull towards to work. either in the illegal mines or in other informal sector like hotel boy, washing plates in the tea shop or the like. In some cases the child are gathering at the turning of the road or at the rail line to pick up the coal that are dropping from the coal carrier, leaving the study, thus the potential human resources are lost forever.

Education also involves a substantial *indirect or opportunity cost* that is 'the value of the alternative use of the resources deployed' (*ibid*). Parents will prefer to send their child to school if they consider education to be the most meaningful investment since if a child goes to school, other opportunities that is working are missed. Parents consider what is most beneficial; to send their children to work or to send them to school.

Although children are poorly paid this extra wage can make a significant contribution to the family income. There are also some children who have to work in the home so that the adults can take a paid job. There are various forms of **child labour**, ranging from household chores (caring for siblings, collecting wood and water, cooking, craft work etc.) to household production (caring for animals, sowing etc.) or paid work (day labour in the fields, working in factories & mines etc.). Although girls are more often engaged in household work than boys. 27 per cent have dropped out due to Financial problems, and another 19 per cent due to working, only about 3 per cent cite Poor performance in the formal schools as their main problem.

Social aspect

Most first generation learner when entering the school found an uneasy and alien social environment they even their peers have never been encountered with (Ghosh S et al 2010). In fact, they found themselves on the margin of two cultures one their own and other they going to receive. Among the social aspect most important are

Parent literacy & family literacy along with poverty this is the most important factor that discourage the learner. Being first generation learners, they find it very difficult in convincing their parents about the necessity or utility of continuing formal education. Since parents have control over their children, parental perceptions are an important factor in determining whether or not their children will attend school. Parents who are educated themselves tend to understand the importance of education. In addition to the lack of family support & encouragement, they do not have the privilege of being tutored by their parents. This explains the poor performance of the learner of this family.

No of other school goes child in family or in locality sometimes encourage learners to attain school.

Large family size added responsibilities on learners in the form of household work, looking after their siblings, or in simpler forms, leaving school early to work and add to the family income. Obviously, these children are more likely to drop out from formal schools, either to earn or attain home as elders can earn. Therefore, it is difficult for them to continue. And it is found that almost 85% learners belong to family that have more than 4 members.

Migrants constitute a particular problem, although migrating families are not necessarily to be identified as poor. The main economic activities involving large numbers of migrants are seasonal work in the brick field areas and agricultural fields. Most of the families working in the brickfields area actually migrate from the few districts of Jharkhand. As children mostly migrate with their families their school career is interrupted. Since they are staying sometime in their native place and other time in brick fields for earn a living the children can attain neither the formal school of their natives nor the place of work. So still they are willing to learn can never attain formal school and remain deprived of education. In some cases, children are left behind in the village, relying on themselves, on older siblings or the extended family.

On both the supplying and receiving side of education there are cultural factors (specific cultural traditions and the

school culture) that hinder some group of people to enter into the school and make learners less interested about education which ultimately influence school attendance

One problem is that the school system only uses the common(sometime dominant) *language*. This is an obvious handicap for groups who do not speak that language. This is the problem for the Santhals and the Hindi speaking people. This part of the district received multi linguistic group from several state on account of industrial and mining activities, besides the forest patches affected by tribal group specifically Santhal. They are mostly first generation learner commonly using native language in their formal conversation finding it difficult to continue in learning via Bengali, since the culture and language mismatches with their own.

5. Conclusion

When digging into the causes of non-enrolment and dropout, child *poverty* appears clearly as the common root of many related problems: *physical deprivation* (lack of food and clothing) that undermines children's energy and self-esteem, which are preconditions for participation that triggers *migration* to other rural and urban areas, each time interrupting the school careers, and forces to be labour to substitute parents or as a source of income for family. Finally, in some cases, it paves the way to *delinquency* and *drugs addiction*, dragging the children away from school, destroying their families and spoiling their lives.

Dropout prevention interventions almost always include multiple components. Identification of key components of each intervention, therefore, necessary. Foremost important is to create and utilize data systems about dropout. So that pockets of problem area can be identified and management can be brought about accordingly as problems are not the same areas wise. After all the school will be attractive to students – and thus prevent dropout to the extent that in the one hand it responds to their immediate needs and aspirations by offering services of sufficient quality, and on the other it provides an education that improves their later well-being.

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Table: 1 literacy rate and poverty index

Blocks	Literacy Male	Literacy Female	Poverty index
Durgapur-FP	77.9	55.1	0.255
Andal	80.9	61.4	0.172
Pandabeswar	73.6	51.7	0.243
Kanksa	78.2	57	0.351
Salanpur	87.1	68.2	0.174
Barabani	76	49.9	0.301
Raniganj	76.6	53	0.409
Jamuria	79.1	53.9	0.258

Source: Census of India 2001 and DHDR Bardhaman 2008