

Educational Scenario of Children in India- An Analytical Study:

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Abstract: The Education system of a country does not function in isolation from the society of which it is a part. Hierarchies of castes, economic status, gender relations and cultural diversities as well as uneven economic development also deeply influence issues relating to access and equity in education. Though India was widely acclaimed as a land of knowledge and wisdom during ancient times yet access to education was limited to select strata of the society.

The biggest change in education in the last five years is the focus on "Learners" in a pro-active manner. This being so, learners are central to attempts to improve the quality of education. While this may appear obvious as logic, it needs to be consciously reflected in practice. Education, to be inclusive needs to be responsive to the diverse needs and circumstances of learners and to give appropriate weight to the abilities, skills and knowledge they bring to the teaching and learning process.

India has made progress in terms of increasing the primary education attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately three-quarters of the population in the 7-100 age group, by 2011. India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to the economic rise of India. Much of the progress, especially in higher education and scientific research, has been credited to various public institutions. At primary through high school level, as well as certain higher level technical schools, India has a combination of government run public and private schools system. About 60% of the students go to public schools and 40% to private.

Key Words: Children, Role of Education, Data Analysis, Conclusion.

I. Introduction

If we have to teach real peace in this world and if we have to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.- Mahatma Gandhi

For life to go on—change is inevitable. Change is never easy especially when it involves a large number of individuals and an established system. Yet change is necessary when innovative practices demonstrate greater effectiveness than past services.

The goal defined by United Nations of universal primary education emphasizes the importance with the target to ensure that all children complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015. Education in India is provided by the public sector as well as the private sector, with control and funding coming from three levels: central, state and local.

Education is a powerful instrument of social change, and often initiates upward movement in the social structure. Thereby, helping to bridge the gap between the different sections of society. The educational scene in the country has undergone major change over the years, resulting in better provision of education and better educational practices.

There's an urgent need to improve children's knowledge of concepts rather than rote learning. For that to happen, teaching systems at the primary level must be overhauled. However it is very important to **observe the the changing Educational scenario of the children in India**. The following data reveals the children of different states and their enrolment in the different level of educational system in India.

Top 5 State-wise Gross Enrolment Ratio for Primary Education (Classes I-V) (%)

The UNICEF Millennium Development Goals (MDG) target for 2015 asks that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling. Considering that is now a year away, the target seems like a cruel dream, particularly for the millions of young boys and girls who could have been in schools but are not.

India has had a poor record in getting children into schools in the past. That's changed with Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at the primary & upper primary level rising sharply over the years. Outcome is, of course, an issue but we will come to that shortly. But more interestingly, it is now evident that larger numbers of children are staying back in school at the 'upper primary level'. Put simply, more children in primary grades are sticking to their classrooms and not abandoning them as they were wont to in the past.

The numbers are actually quite high. Between 2006 and 2012, while the absolute enrollment at the primary level grew by 2.2%, the upper primary level grew a sharp 36.7%.

Before we come to the how and why, let's break down the numbers some more.

Notably, both Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) throw up a similar picture. Although the GER at the primary level is higher than the upper primary level, GER grew at a much faster rate in the upper primary grades than primary level.

Definition: Gross enrollment ratio (GER) is the total enrollment in primary/upper primary level divided by the total population of children in the corresponding age group while NER considers only enrollment of children who are eligible for a particular level.

In 2012-13, GER at the primary level was 105.9% and NER was 90.8% while the GER for upper primary was 82.5% and NER was 64.2%.

Let's now pose two questions to try and establish how this is happening:

- How many children are continuing their education after grade IV/V (Transition rate from primary to upper primary) and;
- On an average, how many children are stopping education in primary grades (Average drop-out rates at the primary level).

An increase in the first and reduction in the second can explain growing enrollments. Now, let us look at some basic enrollment numbers.

In the 1.4 million schools covered in 2012-13 by District Information System of Education (DISE), a research division of the Ministry of Education, some 137.4 million children were enrolled in grades I-V and 64.9 million children were enrolled in grades VI-VIII.

Primary level (classes I-V)

GER at the primary level increased from 110% in 2006-07 to 119% in 2010-11 but declined to 105% in 2012-13. (DISE has not published data for 2011-12, so the comparison with the last available year). The decline in GER was mainly due to the change in population data used for the calculations.

The north-eastern states had the highest GER at the primary level for 2012-13 with Manipur recording a GER of 150%. Mizoram, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya are the other states with high GERs. The bottom 5 states in terms of GER for the primary level are Kerala D&N Haveli, Bihar, Daman & Diu and Jammu & Kashmir. Kerala is a peculiar case here: the state has the highest literacy rate in the country but low GER. As per DISE, data coverage in Kerala is not complete and hence the recording of low GER.

**Top 5 State-wise Gross Enrolment Ratio for Primary Education
(Classes I-V) (%)**

Table-1

Manipur	150.23
Mizoram	149.82
Sikkim	149.32
Arunachal Pradesh	138.14
Meghalaya	129.5
All States	105.98

Bottom 5 State-wise Gross Enrolment Ratio for Primary Education (Classes I-V) (%)

Table-2

Kerala	97.45
D&N Haveli	97.18
Bihar	91.36
Daman & Diu	90.41
Jammu and Kashmir	83.9
All States	105.98

*2006 – 2010 GER Computed based upon population projections provided by the RGI office
#2012-13 GER computed based on population projections from Census 2011.

Upper Primary Level (Classes VI-VII/VIII)

Like we said earlier, upper primary level enrollments have grown at a much quicker rate compared to primary level between 2006 and 2012, growing 27.5%.

Sikkim had the highest upper primary GER in 2012-13 at 114.8% followed by Lakshadweep, Goa, Chandigarh and Delhi. The bottom five states in terms of GER in 2012-13 are Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. However, almost all the states have shown improved enrollments since 2006 at this level.

Top 5 State-wise Gross Enrolment Ratio for Upper Primary Level (Classes VI-VIII) (%)

Table-3

Sikkim	114.84
Lakshadweep	111.47
Goa	110.75
Chandigarh	110.27
Delhi	109.99
All States	82.5

Bottom 5 State-wise Gross Enrolment Ratio for Upper Primary Level (Classes VI-VIII) (%)

Table-4

Andhra Pradesh	80.42
Rajasthan	79.33
Jammu and Kashmir	75.47
Uttar Pradesh	68.35
Bihar	60.53
All States	82.5

*2006 – 2010 GER Computed based upon population projections provided by the RGI office
#2012-13 GER computed based on population projections from Census 2011.

States with the Worst Transition Rates from Primary to Upper Primary Levels 2006-2010 (%)

Table-5

Manipur	85.82
West Bengal	84.19
Jharkhand	78.69
Uttar Pradesh	74.03
Bihar	71.7
All States	86.74

* States that recorded above 100% transition rate have not been reported.

II. Summary/Conclusion;

- Like we mentioned earlier, average drop-out rates at the primary level have come down considerably from around 9% in 2008 to a low of 5.8% in 2011-12.
- The drop-out rate is the number of student dropping out from a particular grade calculated as a percentage of the total number of students in that grade.
- The state with the lowest average drop-out rate at the primary level was Tripura with 0.8%. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry also have low drop-out rates.
- States with high drop-out rates are Arunachal Pradesh with 18.7% and Bihar. It would be worth examining the reasons for the high drop-outs in these states.
- Traditionally, there has been a huge gap between enrollments at the primary and upper primary levels in India. But the numbers of elementary schools are increasing steadily, and this is reflecting on the enrollments at the elementary level.
- Reasons for the higher retention at the upper primary level (and attraction to primary school too) could be Government schemes like the SarvaShikshaAbhiyan, the Government of India's flagship programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) and the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme, the world's largest school meal programme reaching out to about 120 million children across the country every day. Though we've not studied the reasons for the purpose of this article.
- Parth J Shah, Founder & President, Centre for Civil Society, a non-profit organisation in the field of education, says the Government has done well in terms of increasing the number of schools and the capacity of schools in the last 15-20 years. "Moreover, enrollment has been incentivised by providing schemes like the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) and providing uniforms and textbooks," he says.

- The larger issue now is outcome. Says Dr. Banerji: “Enrollment in India has been above 90% for some time now. As per ASER 2012, overall enrollment was over 96% for children in the ages 6- 14 years. But enrollment, per se, does not ensure quality learning outcomes or regular attendance in schools.”
- Similarly, in states such as UP, attendance is only around 50%. “Given that enrollment is close to universal, it is time we shift focus to learning. For this, we need to ensure that children attend school regularly and have realistic learning goals in terms of what we expect children to be able to do at the end of each class,”

“Improving quality of education is the next frontier in education in India.”

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