TRENDS AND FACTORS OF GENDER DISPARITY IN THE SCHOOLS OF ASSAM

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Chapter 7

Findings, Conclusion and Policy Implication

7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings of all the chapters and provides policy implications thereby. The chapter is divided into three parts; the first part provides a brief but comprehensive background of the study. The second part gives a summary of the findings both from the secondary sources as well as primary sources. The third part concentrates on the conclusion and policy implication from the research work.

7.2 Background of the Study

Education is considered as an important component of development. Educational development resulting in higher level of literacy helps people to achieve greater awareness and also to acquire knowledge and new skill. The knowledge and skill acquired through education will open up new opportunities and choices which otherwise would not be available. India has shown phenomenal progress in accessibility and enrolment in elementary education in the last few decades for both boys as well as girls. The gender gap in literacy has been narrowed to 17% point in the 2011 census compared to 22% point gap in the previous census. However one of the most fundamental problems faced by developing countries is the gender disparity in schooling. School enrolments of girls are lower than the boys indicating that girls

are disadvantaged in access to education. According to UNESCO (1995), the gap between male and female literacy rates is not just about men and women and the educational opportunities provided for them, but it is also a statement about society's development, and its capacity and willingness to provide such opportunities. Though various data shows considerable improvement in the general literacy rate, yet a considerable gap exist between male and female literacy rate in India. Compared to three quarters of literate males, half of the female population remains illiterate.

7.2.1 Statement of the Problem

A poor household's decision as whether to send the child to school or not is influenced by two major forces or factors: demand factors and supply factors. The demand factor involves the cost of schooling which includes both direct cost and indirect cost and also expectations about the future and is unequal access to the labour market. The supply factors include: availability of schools, the gender of its staff, distance of the school from residence etc. Removing supply side constraint by expansion of educational networks to provide universal access to primary schooling has been the main strategy adopted by many developing country including India in the last four- five decades. But India has almost one third of the of the world's non literate population aged 15 years and above. Therefore the goal of universal education even after six decades remained a distant dream. Assam has made considerable achievement in literacy rate for both males and females; the percentage has increased from 43% female literacy in 1991 to 66.3% in two decades. In the same period the percentage of male literacy has increased from 61.9% to 77.9% However in the context of Assam, a wide inter district variation is observed in the literacy rate. The difference between highest (Kamrup Metro 89%) and lowest (Dhubri 59%) is a

staggering 30 points difference in literacy achievements. Analysis of the secondary data shows that the problem which Right to Education wishes to address are not only found in aggregate data but also in the diverse performance of the various districts with in the same state. Because of these problems the present work tends to analyse the difference in the enrolment and dropout in Assam and the causes behind the schooling decision of the children in the age group 6-14 years.

7.2.2 Objectives of the Study

The present research work has been based on following objectives:

1. To study the trend of enrolment and dropout in elementary schooling in India and in Assam.
2. To identify the main factors that contributes to gender disparity at elementary schooling.
3. To identify the gender stereotype attitude and belief of the teachers in the class room activity.
4. To make a critical analysis of the government schemes implemented to reduce gender disparity in primary/elementary schooling.

7.2.3 Hypothesis

In the context of the present study, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

1. Greater availability of household resources is likely to have positive effect on girls' schooling.
2. Education level of parents have positive impact on children schooling.
3. Presence of siblings is expected to increase the chance of the elder girl to dropout from school.

4. Distance of the school acts as a barrier towards retention in school education.

7.2.4 Methodology

The study have been conducted covering three districts of Assam taking into consideration the female literacy rate according to 2011 census. Kamrup (Metro) with highest female literacy rate of 85.07% and the gender gap in literacy that is 5.4% has been selected. Baksa with female literacy rate of 62.2% and gender gap in literacy 16.3% has been selected for the study. The third district selected is Barpeta with female literacy rate 59% and gender gap in literacy is 11.7%. From each district 2 blocks have been selected at random and from each block 2 villages have been selected. On the basis of total population of the districts, 400 samples have been selected in such a way that the household have children in the age group 6-14 years.

To achieve the objective of the study and to analyse the hypothesis both qualitative and quantitative approach have been applied. In dept personal interview have been conducted to make the qualitative analysis. Quantitative data from the selected samples have been collected through proper questionnaire and statistical tool like SPSS (Statistical Package of social sciences) version 16 have been used for analysis of the data. Field surveys have been conducted during the year July 2017 – July 2019.

To study the household factors that affect gender disparity in elementary schooling, various household factors that results in disparity between male and female children with regard to their schooling decision have been studied. Quantitative data for each of the household factors like Occupation, household income, parental education, number of siblings as well as distance to school have been investigated. However to

study the supply side constraints with regard to access to schooling, school infrastructure, providing noon meal etc has been studied on the basis of secondary data on a qualitative basis. Similarly one important challenge that has been addressed is gender stereotype attitude of the teacher in the class room and to study this particular issue primary data have been collected from in service teachers particularly from the upper primary level. A likert-type scale has been prepared on the basis of probable stereotype belief of the respondent with five responses for each statement to arrive at the conclusion whether or not gender stereotype attitude exist in the class room teaching.

7.3 Summary of Principal Findings

7.3.1 Findings from the Secondary Data

An overview of the secondary data shows that Assam has made considerable improvement at each level of education for both boys and girls. According to 2011 census, the state has ranked 23rd in terms of female literacy rate and 29th rank in terms of male literacy rate among 35 states and union territories. Though DISE data shows decreasing trends in the number of dropouts in the elementary schooling, however the situation is alarming, and 70,000 children have dropped out in the first quarter of 2009. There is a mismatch between the ratio of lower and upper primary schools. There are 30,000 lower primary schools and not even a half in the upper primary sections. In Assam flood poses a serious threat to community infrastructure and affects wellbeing of the children with respect to access to food, health, school attendance, clean water and sanitation etc. In 2019, floods in Assam affected 8.7 lakhs people in districts like Dhemaji, Darrang, Baksa, Barpeta, Chirang etc. Flood causes

loss of learning hours and therefore poses a threat to Sustainable Development Goals of achieving universal primary education.

DPEP one of the most ambitious programme of the Government of India was introduced in Assam in 1993 with an objective to attain universal access and retention and also to ensure quality improvement in the primary education structure. The implementation of the programme led to improvement in enrolment status. Assam has the greatest percentage increase in enrolment (26.3%) compared to other states where the programme was introduced in the first phase and this increase in enrolment was considered significant as the district selected for the programme were educationally backward districts. However sustaining such programme require huge investment of 20-30 million rupees per district, therefore without financial contribution from the centre the programme could not continue and the second phase of the programme came to an end by 2002.

With DPEP coming to an end, the state government introduced SSA in the state in the year 2001 along with the central government with an objective to improve the educational system, status of enrolment and dropout rates, status of education of girls from SC/ST communities and disadvantaged groups, monitoring and evaluation of the present structure of elementary education. Reforms were undertaken both by the central and the state governments to improve the elementary education system in the states. However the actual expenditure allotted for universalisation of elementary education is alarmingly low in many states including Assam. For Assam the requirement is 3.8% of the GSDP (Bose, et al. 2019). Even after almost two decade of the implementation of the programme of SSA, the objective of universal retention by 2007, and also to complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010, remains a

distant dream. Apart from increase in budgetary allocation towards educational development, various policies and programmes should be undertaken to tackle issues that results in gender gap in elementary schooling.

With an objective to remove class room hunger which remains the dominant factor for high dropouts, lower level of retention and lower girls' enrolment, the state government introduced MDMS in the year 2004. The scheme was expected to reduce the class inequalities and overcome the gender based difference in access to primary schooling. However the basic question that still remains is that why there is large dropout at the lower level. The answer lies in the quality of education and not in the quantity. With nutritional support programme such as MDMs, there is no doubt that students' enrolments have increased but without quality enhancement in the education system the future of the students is gloomy. However in the context of elementary schooling supply side constraints is not the only factor that restricts the attainment of the goal of universalisation, there are number of demand side constraint that dampens the effort of the government towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The various household factors that affect the schooling decisions of boys and girls are: occupation of the household, income, parental education and number of siblings. This factors need to be studied for proper assessment of policy suggestions towards elementary schooling.

7.3.2 Findings from Primary Data

The economic conditions of the sample household and various other related factors that exert influence on the schooling decision of the children in the age group 6-14 years have been studied. Keeping in view the objective of the study the economic background of the house hold in terms of occupation and income have been

investigated. Similarly other factors that may influence schooling decision of the children like parental education, number of siblings, and distance of the school from home also have been studied through primary household survey. The findings from the primary data are summarised below.

Part –A: Profile of Sample Household:

➢ The majority of the respondents (head of the household) i.e. 42.2% belong to the age group 41-50 years; followed by 33.2% in the age group 31-40 years. 17% and 3% of the respondents are in the age group 51-60 years and above 60 years respectively. The number of respondent in the young age group i.e. 25-30 years is 4.5%. Samples of 400 households were selected with 174 household from Barpeta districts, 97 from Baksa districts and 129 from Kamrup (M). The total number of respondents from different districts was selected on the basis of the total population of the respective district.

➢ The education status of the father was not satisfactory. Majority of the respondents i.e. 25.2% are illiterate followed by 24.2% high school pass. Both primary and middle school pass consist of 19.8%. Higher Secondary pass is 6.5%, whereas male respondents with graduate and higher education consist the lowest category with only 4.5%.

➢ Similarly the educational status of the mother is far from being satisfactory. Majority of the female respondents are illiterate, i.e. 34% fall in the illiterate category. 22.5% of the female respondents have passed primary level of education, followed by 10.8% who have passed middle school. 24.0% have passed high school level followed by 6.5% who have passed higher secondary. Female literates with graduation and higher level of education are only 2.2%.

- With respect to the occupation of the household, highest percentage i.e.45.8% are agriculturists who either cultivate in their own land or as a tenant, it is followed by wage labourer with 19.0% of the household associated with it. Self employed consist of 13.2% and household associated with private organisation consist of 4.2%. Business class which include petty business and vendors consist of 10.8%. Service holders consist of 5.5% and single mother who are house wife consist only 1.5% of the sample household.

- There are total 1051 children in the sample household of which 556 are boys and 495 are girls. Of these the number of children in the age group 6-14 years is 501. In this age group 249 are male and 252 are female. Out of the total male and female, 24 male (46.2%) and 28 female (53.8%) are dropout. That is the total number of dropout from the sample household is 52.

- The relationship of dropout and enrolment with occupation of the household shows that there are 216 children associated with the household with agriculture as the main occupation. Out of these children, the percentage of enrolment and dropout is 87.5% and 12.5% respectively. Similarly, the percentage of children enrolled and dropout associated with wage labour as main occupation of the household is 89.7% and 10.3% respectively. With 100% enrolment, no dropout is found in the household associated with service and where the head of the family is women who are as well housewife.

- An exception is observed with regard to dropout of the children related to the household where mode of occupation is the business. In this category, the dropout of the children is15.4% which is higher compared to other mode of occupation except service and when the head of the household is a female.

Interview with most of the head of the household in this mode of occupation revealed the fact that as people in petty business and vendors need to devote a lot of time in business and therefore attention toward children education in the house is almost nil. In most cases, the children also have to look into the business which results in loss of the learning hours in school which eventually results in dropout.

➢ The chi-square test which represent the association of the occupation mode of the sample household and schooling status of the children reflect that the occupation and children schooling status is not significantly associated. However the regression analysis with dropout as dependent variables and associated independent variables shows that occupation of the household have significant impact (sig.0.043) on the dropout of the children in the age group 6-14 years.

Part B: Hypothesis 1- Greater availability of household resources is likely to have positive effect on girls schooling.

➢ The average annual income of the household is not only calculated from the main occupation of the head of the household but also from the other related sources such as from livestock rearing as well as from weaving, working in the agricultural field at the time of sowing and harvesting as well from children who are associated with remunerative job.

➢ With an annual household income above Rs 1, 50000, it is seen that there is no dropout and enrolment is 100%. Highest dropout of the children in the elementary age group is evident in the household with annual income up to Rs 25000 where dropout is 28.6% and enrolment is also as low as 71.4%.

> Annual income in the range Rs 1, 25001 –Rs 1, 50000 however shows the reverse trends. In this category of income the enrolment is only 61.9% and the dropout is as high as 38.1%. The business class especially the petty business and vendors' falls in this income range and since the children also have to devote their time in business, therefore, there is more dropout of the school going children associated with this level of income. However with other income range (50,001-75,001/ 75,001-1, 00000 and   1, 00001-1, 25,000) the dropout is lower.

> The Chi-Square test indicates the association between income of the household and schooling decision of the children. The association is highly significant (since P=0.000, significant at < 1% level). The regression analysis with dropout as dependent variable with other associated independent variables shows that household incomes have significant impact on the dropout of children in the age group 6-14 years.

Answer to the First Hypothesis

With regard to the dropout of girls the model summary that depicts the relationship of independent variables with the dependent variable (dropout) shows, R=0.819 which reflects that the correlation of the variables to the constant is strongly correlated at 81%. Again, F=7.147 and P=0.000 depicts that the variation of independent variables are significant at < 1% level. The regression analysis with dropout as dependent variables indicate that income of the household has significant impact on the dropout of the girl in the age group 6-14 years of age.

Thus we accept the hypothesis that 'greater availability of household resources is likely to have positive effect on girls schooling'. The availability of household resources implies income from main occupation of the household as well as from various related sources.

Hypothesis 2- Education level of the parents has positive impact on child schooling.

- ➤ Out of 400 households selected from the three districts, the illiteracy rate among fathers is highest in Barpeta where 39.7% are illiterate, followed by 19.4% and 7.2% illiterate father in Kamrup (M) and Baksa respectively. Among the father's graduation and higher level of education is found in Baksa (7.2%) followed by Barpeta (5.7%) and Kamrup (0.8%) respectively.

- ➤ With regard to the education level of mothers, illiterate mothers is also found to be highest in Barpeta (52.3%), followed by Kamrup (32.6%) and Baksa (3.1%) respectively. From the sample household, there is no mother with graduation or higher degree in Kamrup (M). However in Baksa and Barpeta among the sample household, mothers with graduation and higher degree is found to be 5.2% and 2.3% respectively.

- ➤ The dropout status of the children related with education level of the father indicates the highest dropout (15.3%) with illiterate father. Similarly, enrolment of 100% is related with education level of the father who has graduation and higher educational degree. 12.5% and 8.0% dropout is related with education level of the father who has completed their primary and middle school.

- Enrolment of the children is 90.5% and 97.4% with father who have completed their high school and higher secondary respectively and the dropout associated with the same level of education is 9.5% and 2.6% respectively.

- The dropout status of the children related with education level of the mothers indicates the highest dropout (15.5%) in case of illiterate mothers. Similarly, enrolment of 100% is associated with education level of the mother who has graduation and higher educational degree. 9.1% and 6.2% dropout is associated with education level of the mothers who has completed their primary and middle school.

- Enrolment of the children is 90.7% and 94.9% with mothers who have completed their high school and higher secondary level of education respectively and the dropout associated with the same level of education is 9.3% and 5.1% respectively.

Answer to the Second Hypothesis

Chi-Square test with regard to the education level of the parents (both father and mother) and its association with the schooling status of the children in the age group 6-14 years indicate that the association is not significant (since P>.5%). Similarly the regression shows that education level of the parents does not have significant impact on the dropout status of the school going children in the age group 6-14 years. Thus the study rejects the second hypothesis 'education levels of parents have positive impact on children schooling'.

Hypothesis 3: Presence of siblings is expected to increase the chance of the girl child to dropout from school

➢ In the sample household, the total enrolment of children having siblings is 83.7% and dropout associated with having younger siblings is 16.3%. Similarly total enrolment of children with no siblings is 91.5% and dropout is 8.5%. The percentages indicate that enrolment is low and dropout is high in household having younger of siblings and enrolment is high and dropout is low in household with no siblings.

➢ Total children enrolled having siblings are 103 and without siblings the enrolment is 346. Similarly children dropout associated with no siblings is 32 and with siblings the dropout is 20. Therefore out of 501 total children in the age group 6-14 years, the total enrolled is 449 and dropout is 52.

Answer to the Third Hypothesis

The Chi-square test of the association between schooling status of the children with having siblings shows that the association is significant at 1% level and the regression analysis also verify the fact that having siblings have a significant impact on the dropout of the children in the sample household. Thus we accept the hypothesis 'presence of siblings is expected to increase the chance of the girl to dropout from school'.

Hypothesis 4: Distance of the school act as a barrier towards retention in school education.

➢ Of the total 229 children having school within 1km distance, 228 are enrolled and 1 is dropout taking the percentage of enrolment to 99.6% and dropout is

only 0.4%. Children enrolled in school within 1-2kms is 94 i.e. 88.7% and dropout 11.3%. Similarly as the distance of the school from home goes on increasing, the enrolment percentage goes on decreasing and dropout continues to increase.

➢ The chi-square test with regard to the association between distance of the school and schooling status of the children indicate that the association is highly significant at P=0.000.

➢ The regression analysis shows that distance to school is significant with regard to the dropout of the boys but it is not so in case of girls. An interesting finding that can explain this association is that while reaching to the upper primary level, the boys have to go to another school and therefore distance of the school plays a significant role. However, this is not so in case of girls, as in the context of sample households the dropout of most of the girl occurred before reaching the upper primary stage and therefore the dropout is more prominent at the lower level. So in the context of girl schooling distance of the school does not play a significant role.

Answer to the Fourth Hypothesis

The study shows that 'distance of the school act as a barrier towards the retention in school education'. The overall regression analysis with regard to the dropout of the 52 children in the age group reveals the fact. The regression analysis with dropout as dependent variables and other associated independent variables shows that the association between dropout and distance of the school is significant (sig.0.185). Thus we accept the fourth hypothesis that distance of the school act as a barrier towards the retention in school education.

7.4 Conclusion

The findings of the study prove that girl's school participation has achieved impressive gains, however most important issue is continuing their studies. For a poor household the decision to send their daughters to school as well as continuation of their study depend on several factors. The study reveals that in case of girls schooling decision, household income, occupation of the family and presence of siblings are the most significant factors. The findings also proves that parents education does not have significant impact on the schooling status of the children because parents with low literacy level also wants the chid to get educated to avail the benefit of future labour market. However for educated parents, they do not see the benefit of sending the child to government schools. The interview with the parents reveals that with poor quality of education in the government school their children will not acquire the required skill and knowledge to strive in the present competitive world. Therefore, parents who can effort will send their children to the private school- both vernacular and English medium schools. However, education provided through the commercialization of schooling have to be understood better and addressed in a proper manner which is beyond the scope of the study. Apart from various household and institutional factors, the study also reveals that teacher's stereotype behaviour and attitude in the class room teaching remain one of the important challenges towards achieving gender equality in elementary schooling.

7.5 Policy Implications

On the basis of various findings, the study comes up with the following policy implications.

- It has been found that larger educational inequalities exist in districts which are economically backward. Generally, the districts have lacked an integrated effort to elementary education and variations in communities in the districts have contributed to the current state of elementary education in Assam. Therefore grass root level plans and programmes must be introduced on the basis of the need of a particular district. On account of the diverse population and ethnic groups of different districts, the delivery of education may require different strategy and attitude.

- The study reveals that there is an urgent need to address to the poor economic conditions of the household to improve the elementary schooling status of the girls. Economic incentives through tax concession, scholarships etc must be provided to bring positive change in the attainment of educational equality in the context of universalisation of elementary education. Government's poverty alleviation programme must be more effective and functional and there must be specific identification criteria to identify the target group. Thus mitigating financial constraints for lower income class remains one of the major policy implication for achieving universal enrolment, retention and completion of elementary schooling.

- As financial constraint shows significant impact of the dropout of girls in the elementary schooling, therefore, income generating activities and programme must be introduced in the upper primary level of schooling. Activities such as weaving, craft making etc should be introduced as a short term measures. Training in various sports and physical education as well as cultural talents like performing arts must also be given emphasis and taught in the upper

primary level as a long tern measures towards removing financial constraints of the household as well as achieving gender parity.

➢ Presence of younger siblings remains one of the important reasons for dropout in the study area, therefore government policies to the small family norm must be followed effectively. Particularly special workshops, talks can be organised for the mothers in the rural areas to explain them the benefits of various schemes introduced by government towards adhering to small family norm. Crèche facilities for taking care of the younger siblings can be introduced and must be made functional at the earliest possible.

➢ Since flooding is an important area of concern particularly in some districts, improving access to schools, constructing all weather roads could go a long way in bringing children to school. The PTR remains significantly unsatisfactory particularly in the backward rural areas. Therefore more teachers should be appointed to provide better learning environment in the government schools.

➢ Though the improvement in educational system has contributed towards improving girls' access to education, however one important constraint that restricts girls in attaining their full potentiality is gender stereotype behaviour and attitude in the class room teaching. Gender stereotype in school is not only reflected in textbook and learning materials but also in the differential attitude of the teacher towards a boy and a girl. Therefore government need to play a very crucial role in promoting gender equity not only in the classroom teaching but also make the parents aware of the gender issue. Gender as a

subject must be introduced at all levels of education. Training of teachers on gender issues should be made compulsory.

➢ Despite government effort through implementing programs like SSA, MDMS the dropout rate is still high. With nutritional support such as MDMS, there is no doubt that enrolment has increased but without quality enhancement in the education system the future of the student is gloomy. To enjoy the fruit of economic development, the entire process of education must be revamped and therefore along with access; quality, equity and affordability criteria should gain priority in the education policy of the state.

7.6 Scope for Future Research

The present research work has made an in-depth study on various issues of elementary education in Assam. However there are some areas which could not be covered due to scarcity of time and resources. Following are the areas on which further work can be carried out.

- Future studies can be undertaken to analyse the impact of various policy with regard to differently able students in the elementary level.
- Studies may be undertaken to investigate into the rational allocation of fund to various district with regard to fulfil the objectives of universalisation of elementary schooling.
- Studies may be undertaken to understand the role of various cultural and social factors towards gender discrimination in elementary schooling.