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## **A Critical Analysis on Out-Migration and Dropout Students in School Education: Causes and Consequences with Special Reference to Murshidabad, West Bengal**

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### **ABSTRACT**

School education is extremely important for a country as it creates different types of specialised persons in different fields. As India gears towards becoming a knowledge society, School education would be one of the main propellers of this transformation. In an increasingly knowledge-centric society, institutions of School education need to constantly adapt, evolve and innovate. The vastly significant role that School education plays is not just for the lives of individuals but also towards the process of national development which is now being accepted and acknowledged. Dropout problem is a glaring concern in the arena of school education of the Murshidabad district, West Bengal. Therefore revisions and reorientation of policies are required to control the situations. Students-Class Room rationeeds to be reduced which in turn raises the quality of education and thus the problem of dropout can be taken care of. The disadvantaged sections like Scheduled Caste students are more prone to dropout and therefore the remedial measures for the disadvantaged sections needs to be strengthened. Their apathy towards education should be removed by providing motivational learning. A new breakthrough is required in Teaching-Learning Method. Process of learning should be more joyful and attractive. Being habitat of SC dominated areas they may not be able to reap the benefit of reservation policy in large extent or may face much competition. This may act as a demoralizing factor in taking up education.

**Keyword:** *Dropout, problem, school education.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

India is a developing country and education is important for the development, since it boosts up the economy of a nation. One of the stumbling blocks that pull back India to be a developed nation is its lagging Indian education system. Indian education is suffocated with the facts like poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities, poor quality of teachers and lack of financial resources (Government of India, 2015). Adding to these facts the most important issue that India faces today in the field of education is the caste-based inequality, economic status and cultural characteristics. The attempts to enhance

the development of education in India are on one hand hampered by the pernicious effect of caste and social stratification, while on the other hand attempts to protect these students from these influences eventually bring down the quality of education.

Recent days

Indian economic growth has created hopefulness in its socio-economic development, ironically it still lags behind in comparison with other countries in the field of secondary education and youth literacy. Since the purpose of education is not only development of intellectual skill and knowledge but also for the effective growth and development of Indian economy. So there is urgency for improving the Indian education system. These setbacks of the Indian education system are manifold and encompass political, societal and infrastructural aspects as mentioned above.

India has a great legacy of knowledge and wisdom (Murty 2013; Premendra 2014), but the access to education was limited to selected (higher-class strata) of the society. The Constitution of India in 1950 officially prohibited caste-by-birth based inequality, yet it still exists and it denies the education for the marginalized groups (MHRD, 2008). To uplift these disadvantaged groups the Government of India has grouped the traditional caste system into three namely General Classes, Other Backward Class (OBC) and Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) based on socio-economic status. But, it still represents basically the traditional caste system. As a result Indian society is greatly influenced by the adverse effect of the caste system, especially, as mentioned above the Indian education is being choked by the negative impact of the caste system.

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### **REASONS FOR DROPOUT STUDENTS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION**

In public schools, dropout rates are a measure of how many students stop attending. Many social networks have investigated the reasons for dropping out due to the fact that it has become a common problem. As described by Weber (1989) and Rumberger (2001), there are three main causes for pupils leaving

school: (Personal); (Educational); and (Other). Personal reasons can also be a motivating factor. Socioeconomic status, membership in marginalized groups, parental education, and single-parent households are some concerns about families. Students' attendance, grades, academic performance, enthusiasm for learning, and workload play a major role in the quality of education. In addition to discipline problems and marital issues, there may also be other mitigating factors that influence the outcome. The primary reasons for child abandonment in rural areas between the ages of 5 and 14 are (i) a lack of interest in school (37.2%), (ii) inability to cope (16.4%), (iii) a lack of parental engagement (12.5%), and (iv) financial difficulties (11.2%) based on Jayachandran's analysis of the NSS 52 Round data. In addition, working for a salary and wages (2.5%) and doing household chores (3.7%) are less significant factors to consider. According to Ramachandran and Saijee (2002), factors like caste, wealth, and parents' work and educational status still influence a child's ability to attend school. The most significant predictor of dropouts according to Choudhury (2006) is doing well in school. Based on Choudhury (2006)'s research, indifferent students were 7.7 times more likely to quit than motivated students. Students' attitudes toward learning are the only factors that determine whether or not they will drop out.

National Sample Survey Organization (2010) has found some reasons of dropout.

- 1) **Poor Economic Condition:** The 2011 census report shows that 35.17% of Scheduled Caste students are engaged as an agricultural laborer and 17% as a cultivator. It is clear that more than 50% of the population is engaged with traditional and menial work. As a result, most households have low family income. After meeting all the daily livelihood expenses, they have nothing to spend on their children's education. An educational expense is burdensome to some parents (Ghara, 2020)<sup>6</sup>. Due to this poor economic condition, the majority of Scheduled Caste students drop out in the midst of their study.
- 2) **Have to work to Help Families:** During the secondary and higher secondary when most of the students are capable of working, they drop out to help their families. Apart from that, parents discourage to continue the study who are poor in study.
- 3) **Parent's Attitude:** It is found from the census 2011 that the literacy rate among the Scheduled Caste students is 69.43% in West Bengal. Among the literate Scheduled Caste, 62.37% are literate up to primary education, only 3.55% literate with graduation and above. As most of the parents are not well educated, they are not aware of the impact of education and they are unable to motivate their children to continue higher education.
- 4) **Poor in the Study:** RTE Act (2009) has legalized free and compulsory education till class VIII but after that school takes test according to their norms and most of the students fail to clear that test and the failed students lost the encouragement to continue their study.
- 5) **Child Marriage:** Child marriage is very much prevalent among the rural Scheduled Caste (Rana, 2009)<sup>12</sup>. The lack of consciousness about child marriage among the Scheduled Caste parents leads to a high dropout rate among the girls at the secondary and higher secondary level.
- 6) **Poor Infrastructural Facilities at the School:** It is observed that still in many schools, there is no separate toilet for the boys and girls. As a result, girls feel shy to attend school.
- 7) **Location of the School:** Sometimes the remote and distance of the school act as impediments to the girl's child attending the school. Due to the distance, parents are reluctant to send their children to school.

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## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES & CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL EDUCATION RESULTING TO DROP-OUTS

The overall literacy rate (among the aged 7 and above) is 75.9% in 2008. School attendance rate at the primary level is comparable to national average (based on 1991 and 1998 data as furnished by UNICEF (2011)). A recent study based on a sample of schools drawn from six districts also confirms that the dropout rate is fairly low (below 10%), though there is considerable variation between districts (Jalan, 2010). In the overall population of West Bengal, according to 2008 data, only 15.3% of males and 10.1% of females have education of 11 or more years. The percentage of males having less than 5 years of schooling is 42.4% and the same for females is 47.5% (UNICEF, 2011). So it is quite likely that there is a significant drop out taking place at the high school stage. Some of the major components discussed below:

- **The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) consists of the following components:**

An important indicator of quality education is the pupil-teacher ratio, which contributes to the reduction of dropouts and the enhancement of quality parameters. According to 2009-2010 district statistics, the average pupil-to-teacher ratio is 68.28, which is higher than the national average of 40.

- **Student-to-Classroom Ratio (SCR):**

To guarantee quality education, infrastructure development is a pre-requisite. The desired classroom ratio for primary education in the district is 30:1, but the average student-to-teacher ratio is 42.45.

- **Repetition rate (REPTR):**

Until they drop out or complete their primary education, repeaters remain in the same system. There are always a lot of potential dropouts in schools with a lot of repeaters. The situation can, however, be reversed if remedial classes are effective. Then the percentage of repeaters and dropouts could be inversely related. In all above places, the dropout rate is significantly lower than the average.

- **The percentage of students from SC & ST (SC, ST):**

The SC and ST sectors of the economy represent the economically disadvantaged. It would therefore be expected that the dropout rate at the school would increase as the ratio of SC and ST in the school increases.

○ **Percentage of Muslim Minorities (MUSL):**

In many parts of our country, Muslim minorities are also responsible for raising dropout rates. There are more students dropping out of school and out of school due to religious Maktab teachings in minority communities. We can, however, ask whether our data variation will confirm that relationship.

○ **Gender Parity Index (GPI):**

In our country, girls dropout at a higher rate than boys primarily because there are no separate schools for girls and no female teachers. In this way, Gender Parity Index may play a critical role in preventing dropouts.

In the present context the number of schools in West Bengal are inadequate but apart from a few exceptions the quality of education offered by them is very low. There are various dimensions of quality in education including content, mode of delivery, infrastructure and facilities etc. Ensuring quality in school education is among the foremost challenges being faced in West Bengal today. Quality of teaching affects the quality of entire school education system and therefore may also be considered as a fundamental reason for dropouts as well. The state needs uniformity and standardization in the process and methods of teaching, irrespective of any other variable differentiating the one institution from the other. We confront multiple crises that relate to the input, the process and the output.

The quality of infrastructure cannot be ignored either. Lack of physical facilities and academic inputs also affect the overall quality of academic atmosphere. School education institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. Shortage of teachers, vacant faculty positions and failures to fill in time, has added another challenge to school education in school education. In many universities, particularly those funded by state governments, budgetary shortfalls lead to faculty positions deliberately being kept vacant.

Today challenges for teacher preparation are numerous, such as bridging the gaps between expected and practiced teacher competencies, development of techno-pedagogical skills, integration of life skills, gaps between teaching styles and learning styles, preparation for inclusive education. The latest Teacher Education Curriculum framework (2009) expects Humane and Professional Teachers. There has been a veritable explosion of knowledge in diverse fields and our courses cannot afford to remain stagnant. School education has been finding it difficult to meet the challenges of knowledge explosion; burgeoning educated unemployment, unplanned expansion, uneven growth, financial crisis, student unrest, teacher burnout and a number of other collateral problems. A consequence of the failure to meet these challenges is deterioration in standards, which is a serious threat to a developing country like ours.

## REASONS FOR OUT-MIGRATION OF STUDENTS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

- **Poor education facilities, poor quality and teacher absenteeism:** A growing volume of research has been documenting how poor schooling infrastructure and teacher absenteeism are discouraging parents to sustain schooling. See for instance Chaudhury et al, 2006. Banerji (1997, 2000) based on her study of Delhi and Mumbai slum children argued that often the conditions of the school and quality of teaching play a bigger role than household's economic circumstances in determining the chance of a child's school completion. Jalan (2010) studied quality of primary schooling and student achievements in West Bengal; also see Pratiche Education Report (2009) for its finding on West Bengal.
- **Low returns to middle years of secondary schooling:** A completely different argument is that the problem lies in the labour market, which tends to reward very little to secondary schooling. This argument is based on the findings of the rate of returns studies, which show that the rate of return to education falls sharply after primary schooling, and then rises back only at the college level (Saha and Sarkar, 1999; Duraisamy, 2002). Therefore, incentive to complete secondary schooling is largely diminished when households are not able to sustain education that long.
- **Child labour :** This is, however, not a cause of drop out, rather it is a consequence. So examination of the causes of child labour is helpful to understand the causes of dropout. Following the pioneering work on Indian child labour by Weiner (1991) and Burra (1995) and the theoretical contributions of Basu and Van (1998) and Basu (1999) there is now a large literature on child labour for India and elsewhere.

## VARIOUS GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES TO DECREASE THE DROPOUT RATE:

It is true that dropout is a problem in achieving Universal Elementary Education. Dropout are observed in the various states of India, but the dropout rate is relatively very high among the rural Scheduled Caste students. The Central and State Government has taken various initiatives to decrease the dropout rate at different educational levels.

1) **Mid Day Meal:** Central Government has introduced the Mid Day Meal scheme in 1995 for students upto class VIII. The survey of Pratiche Trust<sup>11</sup> (2013) found that Mid Day Meal scheme has lowered the dropout rate and increased the enrolment rate. The rural Scheduled Caste students mainly come to school to take food during mid day.

2) **Distribution of Educational Materials:**

a) **Book Distribution:** The government of West Bengal has launched free book distribution to all the students. The students who study in classes I to VIII will get all the text books free of cost. Some books were also distributed among the classes IX to XII free of cost. Apart from that, the student also gets free exercise books.

b) **Dress Distribution:** Government also provides Rs 600 to each of the students to buy dress up to class VIII.

### 3) Scholarship Schemes:

a) **Sikhashree:** The Backward Class Welfare Department of the Government of West Bengal provides each of the Scheduled Caste students who studying from class V to VIII with Rs 800, so that they can buy their educational materials.

b) **Pre-matric Scholarship for the SC Students Studying in class IX-X:** Pre-Matric scholarship scheme for the SC student studying in class IX-X was initiated by the Backward Class Welfare Department of the West Bengal. This scheme provides financial assistance as 150 for days scholars and 750 for hosteller per month for ten months, besides that there is the provision of an additional 750 and 1000 per annum for days scholar and hosteller as a book and ad hoc grant.

c) **Merit Scholarship Scheme for Students Reading in Class V-X and IX-XII:** Merit scholarship for the class V-X is purely for the SC girls' students. The rate of scholarship is different for the different classes such as V-VI-100 per month, VII-VIII-125 per month and IX-X-150 per month and Class XI-XII is RS 400 per month as financial assistance through this scheme.

d) **Ashram Hostel:** The ashram hostels are set up by the Backward Class Welfare Department both for the Scheduled Caste boys and girls. These hostels are for the students reading in class I-X. Financial assistance is provided for Rs 750 per month as maintenance cost and besides this cot, bedrolls, garments soap are given to each SC student.

4) **Kanyashree Prakalpa:** Under this scheme, the students of classes VIII to XII will get Rs 1000 per annum. After passing the class XII Exam, unmarried female students are entitled to get Rs 25000 at a time. This scheme is very popular among the Scheduled Caste female students. This scheme has an impact on reducing the dropout rate and increasing the enrolment of female students.

5) **Role of Parateacher:** The government has assigned the duty to each of the parateachers of the government school to visit the house of the dropout students every Saturday and encourage their parents to send their children to the school.

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## STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING QUALITY TO IMPROVE DROP-OUTS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

Quality is a continuous journey. Quality means doing the right things rightly. Doing things right is efficiency and doing right things is effectiveness. Quality in school education means the education system that ensures students to achieve their goals and thereby satisfy the needs of society and helps

innational development. It has been observed that over the period of time, quality assurance organisations contributed substantially in improving the overall capability of the education systems in India and helped in sustaining the competitive advantage. Quality higher education is the key of development for any nation.

Academic reforms are necessary for imparting best quality of education that is oriented towards creativity, employability and innovation. The four core factors that are crucial to any institution of school education and which should form inescapable elements in reviewing the performance of any institution are;

- Quality of teaching
- Quality of courses
- Quality of examination process
- Quality of staff development for increased teaching effectiveness.

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## CONCLUSION

Our estimates are preliminary and many more regressions need to be run. For example, parental occupation is important in this context. We need to model that. The agricultural family's tenancy status is another issue we cannot ignore. It is also the case that within the same village households may have common shocks arising from going to the same school or participating in the same labour market. We need to run a fixed effect model to address this issue.

Policies must be altered and reoriented in order to regulate the environment. Student-to-class ratios need to be reduced for academic standards to be raised and dropout to be reduced. In these areas, remedial efforts are needed to stem the tide of dropouts among disadvantaged students, particularly those from Scheduled Castes. Educating them in an engaging way is the key to overcoming their lack of interest in learning. For teaching-learning to be effective, it is necessary to come up with new ideas. It would be nice if the educational process was more fun and interesting. Since they are largely SC habit zones, they cannot fully benefit from the conservation regime, which puts them at a competitive disadvantage. This may make maintaining your knowledge difficult. It is possible, however, that the dropout rate could be drastically reduced if more Muslim students enroll. The improvement of society requires numerous social changes. Traditional education or madrasah should replace Maktab education.

Despite these limitations, it appears at this stage that households' decision to sustain their children's schooling is subject to the interplay of various factors. Parental education is a strongly favourable factor, and so is family's wealth such as land. But the way land exerts positive influence on education is

obviated by counteracting factors such as alternative income opportunities available in the local labour market or through migration. Southern states present greater such opportunities and therefore they enjoy the dubious distinction of greater dropouts.

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