

Title

Educational Inequalities in India: A study of School Enrolment in the states by gender, religion and social groups

Abstract:

School enrolment in India has been showing steady increase since the last decade, however still majority of the poor children, girls in rural areas, scheduled caste and tribes children are deprived of the basic education. There is a striking inequality in terms of gender, caste, tribes across region, so it was felt that a detailed study of school enrolment has to be made across various regions of the states in terms of gender, caste and tribes. Preliminary analysis revealed that there is a wider disparity in school enrolment; like the proportion of scheduled caste girls to all scheduled caste children in school is 36 percent whereas the corresponding figure for forward caste is 48 percent. The aim of this paper is to examine the inequalities in terms of school enrolment rate, and provide policy maker with necessary input and provide suggestion to impart implementation of quality education among the depressed section of the society.

Research Problem

Literacy rate in India raised quite substantially from 52 per cent in 1991 to 65 percent in 2001 with an increase of 13 per cent a highest absolute increase in any decade since 1881. School enrolment in India is reflected by a variety of social, economic and cultural factor, but more importantly by government policy in providing school infrastructure. The situation in the educational front is still disappointing in a country that spends less than 3 percent of its GDP on education, instead of a minimum 6 percent. Of late the focus of planners have shifted from quantity (enrolment) to the quality aspect of the education, progression to higher level of education with more focus on decentralized planning and disaggregated target setting. In the present scenario even though the enrolment rate have shown an increase in enrolment rate, but still the enrolment rate vary considerably among various social groups, gender and across different regions of India. It is necessary to assess these social inequalities to provide an insight into policy information for quality education to address.

The Real Issue:

Provision of free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 is a directive principle of the state policy incorporated in the constitution. Despite five decades of effort of social and economic development since independence a more than one third of people continued to remain deprived of education. Universal enrolment of children and their subsequent retention cannot be ensured unless education of a satisfactory quality is imparted and more importantly keeping in view of the background of

children like their economic, social status and moreover the cordial environment in the school. Although formal education is now viewed as both as human rights and as a means of bringing a transformation towards a more human and enlightened society, there persist wider gaps in school enrolment between the deprived sections and elitist of the society, with tremendous inequalities across regions, religion, and gender and among various social groups. The important question is “ as a fundamental right, if education is not enjoyed by all and most people do not have quality and value education, how can education be used as the key for promotion of other human right? Because it is not only a one-line injection but also a continuous labor-intensive process.

Education as an important tool:

Education has the potential to build up an individual's personality in accordance with the societal value structure reflected in the knowledge content. It thereby equips and trains a person to think analytically in forming attitudes and to perform his roles adequately in specific as well as in varied situation .It is necessary to stress the educational growth more among the socially deprived section of the society, hence in the present context it became necessary to make a detailed enquiry into the trend existing among various social groups, gender and across regions and what will be the future trends and its implication in the society.

Why the existing inequality?

In the present context privatization of education appears to have widen the gap between the elitist and the depressed class of the society for e.g. privatization proves to be beneficial to those who can afford education irrespective of the urban – rural difference, for e.g. a poor migrant staying in urban slum is forced to send their children in a dysfunctional public school. In some regions educational institution are increasingly being influenced by casteism, communalism, if such environment is experienced by a poor child belonging to a depressed section having a low status in a society may prove to be a disaster in the child's future development and their might arise a feeling of guilt and insecure in his mind and may lead to his poor performance and thus is an obstacle to the child's continuation of education so it becomes necessary to lay a special emphasis on struggle against this phenomenon.

Like although the enrolment rate has increased in general among all the sections of society, what is the differential growth of rate among various sections of the society, For a society each and every individual is of utmost important to the state and the opportunity lost for an individual will be a loss to the society itself, hence priority should be in paying attention from the foundation itself with the availability of a formal quality education which is not only accessible, but also provides a healthy environment for the development of the

individual and maintaining continuous growth in education. For reliable planning, future information on number of variables in the education is required but the most important being the enrolment rate and its implication in the longer run.

Objective Of the study:

In the given situation the study specifically aims to:

- i. Assess inequalities in school enrolment at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels among various social groups, gender at various states.
- ii. Address the issue of quantity quality trade off, demand- supply interaction and government policy and infrastructure provision.

Data Source and methodology:

Data from National Health Survey-1 (1992-93) and National Health Survey- II (1998-99) and Census of India (2001) will be used in the analysis.

Enrolment rates and discontinuation rates at primary and secondary level will be generated and compared by gender, social groups and across regions. If necessary statistical model will be used to examine issues related to quantity-quality trade off, demand-supply and government interventions.

Gini coefficient of growth will be used to assess education enrolment inequalities.

Preliminary Investigation:

Current figures

According to 1991 census there are 109 million children enrolled in the primary grades class 1-5, 39 million in class 6-8, 27 million in class 9-12 and close to 6 million in institution of higher learning. According to National Health family Survey-2 Male-female gap has narrowed; female literacy has improved by 11 percent compared to 9 percent increase in the male's school enrolment rate during the period 1991-97. Female literacy has been close to around 50 percent but still sharply lower than male literacy of 73 percent. Girls form 43 percent who are enrolled at primary level, 40 percent at middle level, 37 percent at secondary stage. The pattern continues to be marked by sharp regional and gender disparities. Between NFHS-I and NFHS-II rural literacy has progressed faster than urban literacy and the gap has narrowed, with rural literacy of 44 percent and urban literacy of 73 percent in 1997, the rate of growth 11 percent is as twice as much as growth of 6 percent of urban.

However the goals of universal education continue to be elusive, largely on account of the inability of the system to enroll and retain girls and children from disadvantaged groups. There exist wide disparities in terms of school enrolment between rural and urban areas, and also among general population, Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes, other backward class.

Gender Disparities:

The share of girls to total enrolment varied from 37 percent in Bihar to 50 percent in Meghalaya at primary stage, from 31 percent in Bihar to 53 percent in Daman and Diu at middle school stage, from 25 percent in Bihar to 38 percent in Daman and Diu at higher secondary stage and 19 percent in Bihar to 59 percent in Kerala in higher education. Regional disparities are still remarkable with respect to gender disparities the high female literacy states (50 percent and above) have almost universalized the primary enrolment in education. Drop out rates are also comparatively lower in these states. In Kerala the dropout rate is –1 percent for girls and –3 percent for boys at the primary level, whereas the national average is 49 percent for girls and 46 percent for boys. In Uttar Pradesh however the gross enrolment ratio at the primary level is for girls and boys is 30:50 other states with low female literacy and comparatively higher dropout rates are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. These four states account for almost 40 percent of the country's population. Gender differences are striking in states like Jammu with enrolment rate of 80 percent for male and 35 percent for female. Rajasthan is another state where enrolment in the secondary level for male is 74 percent and female is 34 percent.

Disparities among various social groups:

However disaggregated figures by caste shows that, among female proportion of school enrolment is 39 percent for other caste, 34 percent for Scheduled caste and other backward Class is 22 percent. Across the state the enrolment for Scheduled Caste is lower as compared to others. For example in Andhra Pradesh enrolment rate among Scheduled Caste male is 45 percent and 22 percent for female, among others enrolment rate is 57 percent for male and 48 percent for female. Despite the special focus on enrolment rate for the scheduled tribes of India as evident, the enrolment rate is less than 50 percent in almost all the states, for Scheduled tribes. Even in state like Kerala where the literacy is almost 90 percent the enrolment rate for scheduled tribes male is 75 percent for male and for female it is 50 percent. In states like Orissa the enrolment for Scheduled tribes male is 37 percent and female is 26 percent.

Analysis in Progress....