

## Status of Drop out in Elementary Education: A Micro Level Study

ANGSHUMITA CHAKRABORTY

Assistant Professor in Geography  
Mahishadal Girls' College  
Purba Medinipur District  
West Bengal

### Abstract:

*In the pre-independence and post-independence period, the Government of India laid emphasis on Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). But compulsory and free education legislation has not brought equality in enrolment and completion at primary as well as upper primary level. Because many students drop out before the completion of the elementary stage due to poor economic condition. The constitution of India (1950) laid down under the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 45), that "the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of their Constitution for the free and compulsory education of all children until they complete the age of 14 years." But in reality achieving universal elementary education has become a myth as drop out problem is causing the wastage of time, money and effort. The majority of students who enrolled in class-I leave school after some time without completing eight years of schooling and called as Drop outs. One of the important drawbacks of the school education system is the existence of a very large number of out of school children in the country because according to different official records 30% children dropout at an early stage without completing the first five years of schooling and 50% children drop out during the period of eight years of compulsory schooling. This paper is an attempt to exhibit the status of dropout in selected households in Krishnadaspur village (within Pathar Pratima block) of South Twenty Four Parganas District of West Bengal.*

**Key words:** Universalisation, elementary education, drop out, wastage, free and compulsory education

## **Introduction:**

In the pre-independence and post-independence period, the Government of India laid emphasis on Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). But compulsory and free education legislation has not brought equality in enrolment and completion at primary as well as upper primary level. Because many students drop out before the completion of the elementary stage due to poor economic condition. The constitution of India (1950) laid down under the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 45), that “the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of their Constitution for the free and compulsory education of all children until they complete the age of 14 years.” But in reality achieving universal elementary education has become a myth as drop out problem is causing the wastage of time, money and effort.

The majority of students who enrolled in class-I leave school after some time without completing eight years of schooling. This phenomenon is also called ‘Drop out’. Those who drop out include two categories of children 1.Those who are forced to leave the school due to socio-economic constraints of the family and may be called ‘pull-outs; and 2.Those who leave the school because they do not find school environment joyful and satisfying, and may be called ‘push outs’. One of the important drawbacks of the school education system is the existence of a very large number of out of school children in the country. If we consider the age group 6-17 years, close to one-fifth of the children have either never attended school or have attended school in the past but are currently not attending. In simple terms, these children can be considered as out of school children. Though the proportion of out of school children has come down from 29 percent in 1999-2000 to one –fifth in 2007-

8, it poses a serious challenge to the success of SSA, which has Universalization of elementary education as an important objective (India Human Development Report, 2011). As per the official records, 30% children dropout at an early stage without completing the first five years of schooling and 50% children drop out during the period of eight years of compulsory schooling (Reddy and Sinha, 2008). Mehta (1977) has blamed on poverty, poor economic condition, failure in the examination, parental and children apathy towards education as causes of wastage and stagnation. He also pointed out that socio-economic condition of students always interacts with the educational factors resulting into the wastage and stagnation. Not frequently the parents in India employ “children in some form of labour as soon as they are old enough to be employed. Sometimes the employment is outside the family; but in a large majority of cases, the employment is in the family itself and the child is asked to do some work that will save the employment of outside labour (e.g., cattle- tending) or is asked to do some work (e.g., taking care of a younger child) which will enable the parents themselves to go out for work” (Chickermane, 1962; cited in Sharma and Shapra, 1967). According to Sattar (1984) economic and social condition of the family is the single most crucial variable affecting drop-out and drop-out is greatest, of children from poor and deprived sections of society.

### **Objectives and Study Area:**

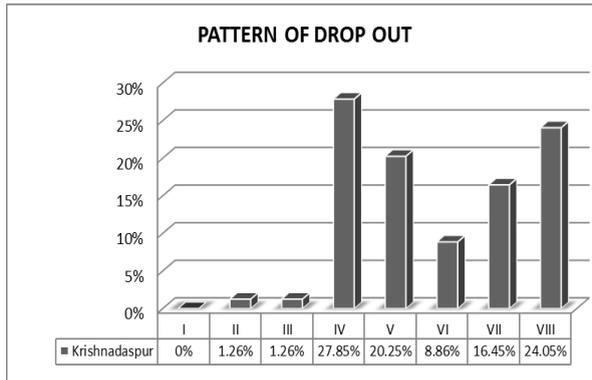
This paper is an attempt to exhibit the pattern and causes of dropout in selected households in Krishnadaspur village (within Pathar Pratima block) of South Twenty Four Parganas District of West Bengal. The study is totally based on household survey of 100 households on the basis of purposive random sampling.

## **Discussion:**

### **Drop Out Pattern:**

Bhatty (1998) reported that labour driven drop out rates are more likely to be low in the early grades and to increase significantly with increasing ages when children become more productive. Human Development Report of South Twenty Four Parganas District (2009) reveals that a Cohort study has been done on 97061 upper primary students of 751 upper primary schools in the different blocks and municipalities of South 24 Parganas district which exposed that though drop out is a severe problem at both the primary and upper primary level but it increases with higher stages of education.

From the Human Development Report of South Twenty Four Parganas District (2009), it is clear that most of the students of the district drop out from upper primary level than primary for joining the workforce, and thus earn income for the household. Generally, students of primary level are too small to join the labour force but with the increase in age after becoming a child labour they drop out from classes of upper primary level. Because Poor parents are compelled to withdraw their children from school due to adverse circumstances. After summing the conditions of drop out students of surveyed household, it is found (Fig 1) that total dropping out is occurring at highest rate from class IV (28%) and class VIII (24%). Mostly the upper primary students are dropping out from schools. The proportion of drop out is less in class I, II and III but it is higher in rest of the classes. Drop out is causing from an early age and with the increase in age the demand of child as labour increases resulting into the incidence of dropout. In this village boys of upper primary drop out from school for migrating to Andhara Pradesh (for Blasting work of ONGC), Kolkata (Building Construction), South India (Gold Shop) to earn money.



**Fig 1: Data Source: Primary Survey**

### **Reasons of Drop Out:**

Human Development Report of South Twenty Four Parganas District (2009) also reported that it is a severe problem at every stage of education and there are so many factors responsible for drop out in the district like unfavourable education infrastructure, non-adaptability to the teaching learning process and consequent alienation from the education system, detention in the same class and more importantly pressure to join workforce as a child labour. This report also stressed that use of child labour or use of children as domestic help are the main reasons behind drop out and poor parents don't have any option rather to treat their child as an income earning asset. According to Weber (1989) and Rumberger (2001), the reasons for discontinuing school can be classified into three broad categories (i) Family related reasons, (ii) School related reasons, (iii) Personal reasons. Family related reasons involve socio-economic status, disadvantaged groups, parental education and single parent families. School related reasons include attendance, grades, academic achievement, interest in school and school work. Personal reasons consist of disciplinary problems, other extenuating circumstances like marriage etc. (cited in Roy, 2011). But the causes of drop out came out from the house hold survey (Fig 2) can be categorized into two

factors; external and internal though external factors are dominating in that area.

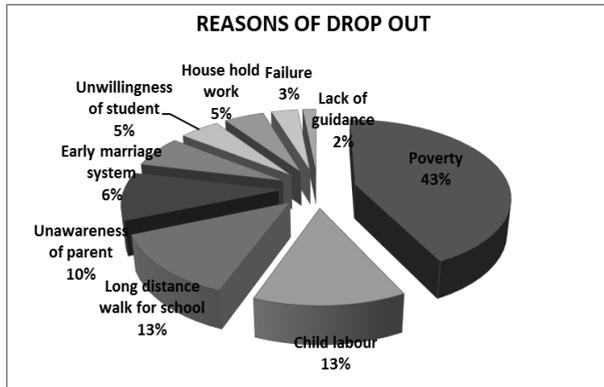


Fig 2: Data Source: Primary Survey

### External Causes

1. **Poverty:** Poor economic condition of the parent act as major reason (43% respondent) behind drop out. Though some of the parents can send their children to school but when they get chances to get extra incoming opportunity they just engage their children either in work or household work.
2. **Earning:** Some students have been found as child labour (13% respondent). They work as agricultural laborer in agricultural field or outside; fish or crab collector from estuaries and creeks etc.; and even as jari worker, jewellery worker as paid labour.
3. **Transport Problem:** The remote location of this village and long distance walk to upper primary school has also been found as a reason behind drop out. Student has to wait for long time to cross rivers, creeks due to insufficient ferry services and the situation becomes hazardous during bad weather. Apart from that most of the roads are partially metalled or fully unmetalled which also act as negative factor for enrolment during rainy season.

4. **Illiteracy of Parents:** Most of the parents of the students are illiterate. Though some of them want their child to be educated. But others do not find any logic to send their children to school as it will not bring about any meaningful changes to their life. On the otherhand the child of the first learner family do not get any help from their parents for study which again tends to grow their disinterest in study and turns them into drop out. In the view of Govinda et al (2008) improving retention rates and the learning progress of these children is critical to breaking the inter-generational cycle of illiteracy and poverty.
5. **Social Custom:** Low level of education of parents, tradition of early marriage of girls (especially greater in case of minority people than others) create obstacle towards the education of girl child. Some parents even don't want to send their girl child to co-educational school. All these result into event of early drop out.
6. **House Hold Work:** Some of the students especially girls are being engaged in various household core like cooking, sibling care, cattle management, bringing water, washing utensils etc. and stop going to school when their parents become engaged in different ways for earning.

### **Internal Causes**

1. **Poor Infrastructure:** An encouraging learning atmosphere is essential for effective education to happen and the state of educational infrastructure is one sure indicator of the learning atmosphere in place (Das, 2007). The environment of every school is not suitable for the overall development of a child. Some of the infrastructural facilities like separate toilet for boys and girls, sufficient classroom, playground etc. are not available in all the schools. Pupil teacher ratio, pupil classroom ratio cannot be maintained as per the RTE act

due to lack of classroom, sufficient teacher. As a result some classrooms become overcrowded and classes run even in the school verandah. There is dearth of proper sitting arrangement also. Students sit on the bare floor and even in some schools teacher does not have any table or chair. It has also been found that some of the classes do not have any blackboard.

2. **Ineffective Method of Teaching:** The teaching learning process cannot become successful due to the prevalent defective teaching method. Pressure of more students on one teacher, lack of teaching learning material, teaching aids, lack of in-service training to untrained teachers make the method of teaching unfruitful.
3. **Recruitment of Teachers:** Qualified no doubt but unwilling teachers are appointed in this noble profession. As a result absenteeism, indifference of the teachers hampers the teaching process. Sometimes the distance between home and school becomes troublesome. On the other hand the inhospitable condition compels the teacher to have daily journey from home to school and school to home. Some of the teachers come to school after scheduled time and leave school before exact time. Absenteeism as well as reduction in school hours hampers the teaching learning process.
4. **School Vacations:** In many cases the schools do not adjust the vacation time to meet the local need like vacation in rainy season for agricultural activity. Students especially boys mostly help their parents in agricultural field or work as agricultural worker for earning and girls look after the household chores for helping their parents drop out from school.

## **Conclusion:**

People of this studied village suffer to meet their basic demand for sustainable living. Their sufferings are being aggravated through the attack of different natural hazard due to climate change. In this situation having no other alternatives they are compelled to withdraw their offspring from school for grabbing the extra earning opportunity. Alternative income generating activities should be introduced so that the helpless parents can be engaged in other occupation in time of crisis and don't have to seek help from their children to sustain their family. Self help group can increase the female work participation rate and reduce the economic insecurity of any family. More stipends or scholarships have to be given to needy as well as meritorious students. On the one hand Remedial coaching should be introduced to provide guidance to child of first learner family and on the other hand Informal schooling should be initiated for returning back of the dropped out to continue their study again especially who are in the age group of 6-14 years. School infrastructure has to be improved to provide sufficient room, girls' toilet, teachers' toilet, teachers' accommodation etc. so that proper pupil teacher ratio can be maintained and teachers coming from cities can stay near school. Parent teacher meeting is needed at regular interval to discuss the real problems behind drop out. School vacations should be adjusted to the local need to check the child labour issue. Last but not the least is the adoption of demand based strategies along with different measures like institutional, pedagogical etc. to combat the drop out problem.

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