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Identifying Factors Responsible for Children Dropping out of the Elementary School System: Case Study of Urban Areas of the District of Dehradun

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Abstract: Education is a basic human need and essential for socio-economic development of the people. Elementary education is the foundation on which the development of learning begins. The question is, whether this basic amenity is available to all the children of school going age. In India the ideal of universalization of education has been enshrined in Article 45 of the constitution in a Directive Principle under which 'provision for free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen years, within ten years of promulgation of the Constitution' was to be achieved. There are certain problems in realizing this dream and the chief problems has been the school drop- out phenomenon at the elementary education level. The Third and Fourth All India Educational Surveys observed that out of every 100 students enrolled in class – I, more than half leave schools by Class IV, only 32 pupils reach class V and only 26 reach class VIII. The survey found that poverty, lack of motivation, harsh school environment, and lack of basic infrastructure were the chief reasons for school drop outs. The problem becomes more serious in hilly states with difficult terrains. Uttarakhand with 60% of its geographical area falling under the hilly terrain and hugely diverse demographic structure, divided among the SC, ST and OBC groups; each displaying different socio-economic traits, is also showing the phenomenon of school drop outs at the elementary level of schooling. The district of Dehradun which is also the capital of Uttarakhand state has comparatively more advantage in terms of development indicators like per capita income and literacy rate, but the problem of school drop- out in elementary is also visible here.

This paper investigates the reasons for the school drop- out, at the elementary school level in the district of Dehradun and suggests measures to eliminate this problem.

Research Methodology: The area of survey was selected from 6 urban areas of blocks of Dehradun; the capital of Uttarakhand state, namely Raipur block, Sahaspur block, Doiwala block, Vikasnagar block, Kalsi block and Chakrata blocks. 200 drop out children were selected, whom the researcher met at the road crossings, railway stations, begging, rag picking, cleaning the cars or working at the motor garages and at tea stalls in Dehradun, and data was collected on the basis of pre designed questionnaire. The researcher also visited 48 elementary schools in urban areas of six blocks of Dehradun, having classes from std. I-VIII. The Schools visited for the data collection included, 10 Schools in the urban areas of, Dehradun city, 7 schools in Sahaspur Block, 10 Schools in urban areas of Raipur Block, 6 Schools in Doiwala Block and 6 Schools in Vikas Nagar block. Although Kalsi and Chakratta block falls in rural Dehradun study was conducted in 6 schools in Kalsi and 7 schools in Chakrata Block over a period of 6 months. A pre-designed and pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect information on socio demographic variables and to evaluate the reasons for school dropout.

Research Findings: Children between the ages of 10- 13 years had high percentage of dropping out of the school system. 10% of students in this age group drop out of schools because of family, social and work pressures. Poverty remains the chief contributing factor of school drop- out rate. Some parents are not interested in education and do not support their children. Social problems are also a contributing factor. Furthermore, jobs such as errand boys, domestic help, helpers at the grocery shops and in small scale manufacturing units are available, which do not require any education.

Objective of the study: To elicit reasons of school drop-out in age group between 10-14 years from students and teachers and suggest remedies.

Keywords: Dehradun, Elementary Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, School dropouts, Urban. Dehradun, Right to Education, ASER Report, Transition.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the perennial concern of India. The constitution of the country enshrines the vision of education in article 45 of the Indian Constitution. This constitutional provision directs the states to pursue the goal of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, till elementary school. Elementary school system in India provides education from Class 1 to Class VIII, and the children in these classes are generally aged between 6 and 14 years. With the passing of the Right to Education Act in 2010, it has become imperative upon the state to improve the literacy situation. The tendency among the school children to drop out of the school system at the primary level is biggest obstacle in improving the literacy and transition rate. How to improve the transition rate of students from one primary school to upper primary school and to retain them in the school system, especially the students belonging to low income groups, is proving to be a daunting task for education policy makers.

A dropouts child is classified as dropouts if she/he discontinued her/his studies in past or was absent for more than 45 working days from school. The problem of school dropout is not related only to education system in India. According to research conducted by Priyadarshini Chigari¹, Mubashir Angolkar, Mrinal Sharma, Waita Faith, and B R Ashok kumar.ⁱ There is 42% of school drop-out rate in Sub Saharan Africa, in South and West Asia, out of every 100 children 33 drop out before completing primary school, Latin America and Caribbean there is 17% drop out rate in primary school. In South Asian 54 million children drop out of school before completing primary education. In Bangladesh, India and Pakistan the total number of children between the ages of 5-13 years who have dropped out of the school system are nearly 27 million. India has 17.8 million out-of-school-children, both types of children; ones who never entered the school system and the second who dropped out of the school system (OOSC) and Pakistan has 6.5 million.ⁱⁱ

A survey was commissioned by Educational Consultants India Limited under the sponsorship of the MHRD to assess the number of out-of-school children across the country, in 2014. The survey was conducted by SRI – IMRB International. The survey had a sample size of 99,929 household in urban and rural wards. The sampling frame was the census data of 2011. All the 640 districts as per census of 2011 were covered in this survey. The survey gave the following findings:

- The estimated number of children in the age group of 6-13 years is 20.41 crores, in the country. Around 60.41 lakhs (2.97%) are out of school (OOSC).
- The highest proportion of OOSC within 6-13 years is in Odisha (4.02%) and the lowest within South (0.97%).
- At a national level 3.23 % females are out of school in comparison with 2.77% male.
- In rural areas the OOSC rate is 3.13% and in urban areas it is 2.54%.
- 4.43% OOSC belong to Muslim community.

- Among the ST there are 4.36% OOSC children.
- IMRB survey also revealed that the maximum dropouts in this age group are after class II.
- Poverty/economic reason was the main reason given by the majority of the respondents for having an out of school child and dropping out of the school system.
- Child not interested in studies was another factor frequently cited as a reason for dropping out of school.
- Disability / poor health was also a reason given by many households for keeping their children out of the school system.
- Dropouts children who have attended school before but are not doing it were estimated to be 36.97% (22.42 Lakhs) of the total out of school children. The survey found in North India 68.88% of out of school children were school dropouts

1.1. School Drop -out Status in Uttarakhand

According to the annual survey conducted by Pratham, an NGO, under its ASERⁱⁱⁱ (the Annual School Education Report) on Uttarakhand, has observed that out of school rate of children in the age group of 6-13 years in 2014 was 1.5 % as against 3.3% of all India rate. There was a fall in the OOSC rate over the previous year by a meager .4%.

Out of School Children in India & Uttarakhand Data from 2006-2014:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Boys India</u>	<u>Boys Uttarakhand</u>	<u>Girls India</u>	<u>Girls Uttarakhand</u>	<u>Total OOSC India</u>	<u>Total OOSC Uttarakhand</u>
2006	5.8	2.2	7.5	2.6	6.6	2.4
2007	3.8	2.0	4.6	2.6	4.2	2.2
2008	3.8	0.7	4.8	1.3	4.3	1.0
2009	3.6	1.2	4.5	1.6	4.0	1.4
2010	3.2	1.3	3.8	2.2	3.4	1.7
2011	3.1	1.3	3.6	0.9	3.3	1.1
2012	3.1	1.4	3.9	2.2	3.5	1.8
2013	3.1	1.6	3.5	2.3	3.3	1.9
2014	2.9	1.5	3.7	1.5	3.3	1.5

Source : ASER Report 2015

The Joint Review Mission Report on Srva Shiksha Abhiyan has also put the OOSC number in Uttarakhand at 4000 in 2014-15 as per the state government's report. This number is far lower than the 86800 reported by IMRB survey.

According to the National Survey on Estimation of Out of School Children, 2014 – SRI- IMRB:

Estimated Percentage of children among dropouts according to class completed before dropping out - 2014 (Urban):

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6
20.57%	12.77 %	12.77%	0	53.90%	

Estimated Percentage of children among dropouts according to class completed before dropping out - 2014 (All: Rural + Urban) :

Class 1	Class 2	Class3	Class 4	Class 5
8.75%	5.4%	22.91%	0%	62.91%

Estimated Number of dropouts according to gender and class completed before dropping out - 2014 (Urban):

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
M:0 F: 3077	M: 1910 F: 0	M: 1910 F: 0	M:0 F:0	M:3077 F:4987

**Total Number of drop outs in the age group of 6-13 years in Uttarakhand ;
(According to the SRI-IMRB Survey -2014)**

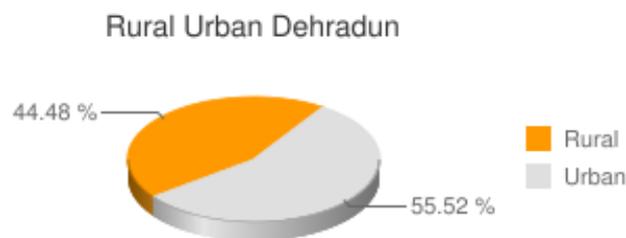
Rural			Urban			State total
M	F	T	M	F	T	
14052	6143	20196	6897	8064	14961	35156

From the data collected by the National Survey on Estimation of drop outs we can see that the drop – out rate in the rural areas of Uttarakhand is highest i.e. 62.92% against the 40.51% in the urban areas. Secondly the data given above also indicates that more children drop out of the school system after completing class 5. The all India school drop outs number after completing class 5 in urban areas was estimated to be 119215 children, after completing class 4, the number was 59, 438.

2.1. Identification of Factors for School Drop Outs in Urban Areas of Dehradun District in Elementary Education:

According to census report of 2011 Dehradun has population of 1,696,694 of which male and female were 892,199 and 804,495 respectively and literacy rate of 84.25% for males and 78.98% for females

Rural- Urban Population in Dehradun



<http://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/578-dehradun.html>

According to By Roberta Furger^{iv} “ For some students dropping out is the culmination of years of academic hurdles, missteps, and wrong turns. For others, the decision to drop out is a response to conflicting life pressures -- the need to help support their family financially or the demands of caring for siblings” Today around 90% children in the age group of 06-14 years are enrolled in different levels of schools at the elementary level in Dehradun district. Children drop out of schools because of family, social and work pressures. Most students who do not complete school do so because of poverty, this is the most important factor for both early school drop- out and Out of the School Children (OOSC). Some parents are not interested in education and do not support their children in studying. Social problems are also a contributing factor. Jobs such as errand boys, domestic help, and domestic helpers at the shops and in small scale industries are available even if students do not have a good education. The third reason is work pressure. Some families are poor and need their children to work in order to increase the income.

The researcher had built her hypothesis that the phenomenon of dropping out of the school system before completing the elementary education, was commonly found among the children hailing from low income earning families, hence she picked up her study samples from amongst the poor households. During this study the researcher interviewed 200 children over a period of six months, whom she mostly found at the road crossings, railway stations, rag picking, begging, cleaning the cars or working at the motor garages and at tea stalls in Dehradun. 65% of these children(130 children interviewed) had dropped out of school system before completing their elementary education, help to supplement the low income of their family responsible 72% ((93 children) of these children had studied up to class 5 in government run schools . Due to the financial constraints faced by their parents they were forced to give up their education and get enrolled as apprentice to electricians, motor repairing workshops,

helpers at the restaurants and tea shops. Those children who did not get jobs are forced to either beg in the streets or work at the construction sites. When this researcher asked them if they would like to go back to the school 50% students answered in affirmative and around 30% students had lost interest. They seemed to be satisfied with Rs.50 – Rs.80, they were earning per day. Hence poverty is the prime cause of the children dropping out of the school system before completing their primary education, this fact has also been proved through empirical evidence.^v

The desire to complete school level education appeared very high among the girls who had withdrawn from the school system, to attend to the household chore and look after their younger siblings. These girls showed a keen desire to acquire some skills which would enable them to have some reasonable income. Out of 100 girls interviewed 65 girls responded that they wanted to resume their school education if they had some financial support from their family.

In rural Dehradun, after gaining the status of a state, many outsiders began to look towards Dehradun to invest in realty market; the big estate agents began to use the young boys to act as guides to these outsiders for surveying the land they wanted to buy. In return they were paid Rs.200/- per day. This lure of earning easy money also resulted in some of the boys withdrawing from the school. Around 5% such boys were interviewed by this researcher. They are between the age of 13 – 15 years and had dropped out of the school when their local estate agents involved them in land surveys. These young boys did not appear regretful at having given up their education; they were earning Rs. 200-300 hundred per day.

Another reason that has led to early withdrawal from school system is the lack of motivation from home. Around 38% children that this researcher spoke to portrayed a very bleak picture of domestic violence, a drunkard father and overworked mother and many siblings. 5 of these children had run away from their homes after the repeated beatings. The humiliation suffered in school due to poor performance was the reason for 12 boys, for dropping out. They recounted incidents of violence suffered at the hands of the teachers. Around 6% children had dropped out of the school due to low grades. Out of this 10% children are working at ration shops, at tea stalls and as domestic helpers. The 40 girls who had dropped out of the school before completing class, 6 gave various reasons for not continuing the education. The most important out of that was related to school infrastructure especially the absence of separate toilets for menstruating girls, absence of female teachers at upper primary level in their schools. 5 respondent girls were married soon after reaching the age of 14, 10 girls went out with their mother to the neighboring upper middle class homes to work as domestic helpers. 3 girls were working in a girls' hostel. The rest of the girls' were looking after their younger siblings at home and attending to household work.

The percentage of early school leavers (200 students between the age of 6-13 years), gave the following reasons for dropping out of the school system.

Reasons for Withdrawal	Percentage of Children
Poverty	65% (130 children)
Lack of Motivation/not interested in studies	10% (20 children)
Poor Performance in school/fear of punishment	6% (12 children)
Parental Attitude/no family support (mostly girls)	19% (38 children)

The 200 dropout students who participated in the interaction session with the researcher gave multiple responses to the following questions:

1. I would have stayed at school if :

- If I was allowed to study as part time so that I could also work – 80 children ticked this choice
- If I were given the choice of subjects excluding mathematics and Science – 40 children ticked this choice
- If the teacher did not beat/humiliate me – 28 children ticked this choice
- If I received parental support for studies – 25 children ticked this choice

- e. If the school infrastructure like drinking water facility, separate toilet for boys and girls, fans in the classrooms, good teachers, play ground was better – 20 children ticked this choice.
- f. 07 children did not respond.

The inferences drawn from this are that the 40% dropout students would like to return to the school system if it was made flexible so that they could study for few hours and also work and supplement the meager income of their family. Most of them understood the value of education as bringing better income earning opportunities in future. But the financial constraints of the family did not permit them to do so. 20% children found the school curriculum specially some of the subjects difficult to cope with which prompted them to leave the school. Such students demonstrated strong leaning towards artisan skills like wood carving, candle making, painting, banner writing. They were not interested in adhering to a school routine, for them sitting in a classroom listening to one sided teaching was monotonous. These children are artistically inclined and with formal skill training in their choice areas, they can become good income earners

14% of the children had developed fear of the teachers' beating/humiliation. In the inclusive education system this is seen as the biggest drawback that the students with low learning traits are made to learn along with the students with higher learning abilities. The teachers have not been sensitized to understand these variations hence they expect all students to perform equally well. This has led to the weak students feeling segregated from the rest of the class. A number of students are withdrawing from the school system because of this. During this researcher's visit to number of 5 government schools she observed the same problem when she tested their learning abilities while some students were very quick on the uptake, others did not respond despite speaking to them individually (this was done by their teacher). These children suffer from low self-esteem and if the teacher is not sensitive to their learning disabilities, it can lead to withdrawal from the school system. This is an area of a serious research.

12.5% children did not receive parental support to continue their education. Most of these are female children. The lower middle class still nurses the gender discrimination against the girl child. A large number of households believe that a girl should be able to run the home efficiently and get married as soon as she reaches puberty. These female children had been forced to give up the school because the father did not want to spend money on their education, the mothers wanted them to help in the household work or in the lower middle class families the girls were sent out to work as domestic helpers. Behind the parental indifference towards the child education is the financial reason. After dropping out the children were involved in helping their parents in household work, occupation work, working to earn money and a lot of students were also sitting idle and doing nothing (%). More or less the students after dropping out from upper primary classes were helping the parents in earning the money, either by getting them involved in the agriculture and allied activities or directly by doing work to earn money

As an empirical evidence to support her hypothesis the researcher also made review of the study was conducted by Maithly and Vartika Saxena, Department of Community Medicine, Rural Development Institute, Himalyan Institute Hospital Trust, Dehradun, in three districts of the state; Dehradun, Nainital, and Udham Singh^{vi}. These researchers had interviewed 3980 adolescents, in the age group of 14-19 in these three districts. They observed that 34% respondents had dropped from school, amongst them 41% were girls and 27% were boys. The 31% male respondents and 28% female respondents stated financial difficulties as reason for dropping out of the school systems. 31% boys and 13% girls reported that they were not interested in studies. A total of 28% girls said that their family and relatives did not approve their further continuation of the studies. A total of 9% girls and 1% boys reported, lack of education facility in the nearby village as the reason for dropping out. Lack of quality education, imposition of parents choices upon adolescents, lack of privacy, and toilet facilities for girls in school and security reasons were few other reasons cited by respondents for dropping out. Out of 1,372 respondents who dropped their studies, 73% expressed their wish for continuation of studies. Out of this, 46.2% were the girls and 26.4% were the boys. The dropout rates even at primary level are more for the girls than the boys. The related study gave poverty as one of the reasons for school drop-out, second was the parental attitude towards their education; girls responded more to this point than the boys. Other reasons

cited were; child labour that brings extra income to the family, the burden of sibling care, domestic work, physical and sexual insecurity and parental education level. Most of these respondents were first generation learners.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The biggest challenge in education is to sustain and deepen the envisaged reforms in the elementary education. In the era of increasing administrative and political decentralization there is an urgent need to resolve the educational challenges by three pronged attack (a) improving the school education (b) Expanding its ambit to reach the inaccessible sections of the society (c) Manage the education system with sharp focus on retention of students by offering incentives like free books, monetary incentive to parents from low income groups for keeping their children in school system and rewarding the children for maintaining high attendance rate.
- Schools must build resources to meet the complex emotional and academic needs of the children
- The education policy makers must undertake an independent third party verification to ensure that all out-of school children are tracked to provide universal education. The school staff must track the attendance of 'at the risk of dropping out students' regularly, to make sure they participate in class. Such children should be involved in activities which require self expression and physical work. The school staff can also make scheduled regular home visits to meet with their parents as part of the tracking and counsel them about the importance of their children attending the school.
- The government of Uttarakhand has introduced the program of 'Sapno ki Udaan', a community mobilization drive for bringing children to school with 2 mobile schools/vans for bringing out-of-school children in to the school systems. So far it has been implemented in the districts of Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar, where it is proving fruitful and its overreach can be expanded to other districts of the state also. By providing mobile school facility the children can be given education in their own vicinity, they don't have to traverse the difficult terrain to reach the schools. This will arrest the school drop- out rate as the mobile teachers would keep track of the enrolled students.
- The school conditions for girl students need to be made more girl-friendly, like appointment of more female teachers, provision of separate toilet for them, and prevention of the physical punishment.
- Make education more relevant to the experiences of the young children. Boredom and lack of interest are strong reasons for students dropping out of school.
- The school syllabus must provide for extra- curricular activities that will inculcate self- esteem, self- development and interest in attending the school.
- Adopt School Dropout Prevention Pilot Program. This program is funded by US. It designs, implements and assesses interventions for school drop outs in four countries, including India. Bihar, which has a school drop -out rate of 26 percent at elementary education level, launched this program after conducting extensive research into the factors responsible for students losing interest and dropping out from the school system, An After-School Enrichment Program was developed to prevent the school dropout. The teachers were trained to identify and support student at the risk of dropout. Such students were involved in after-school activities like learning skills and games and other recreational activities. This motivated a numbers of 'at the risk of dropping out of school' students and retained them in the schools. This program can be started in Uttarakhand schools also to prevent early school drop outs.

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