

A case study on the school dropout reasons in Karbi Anglong district of Assam

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Abstract

Most of the Indian states have been successful in enrolling more children in school along with substantial increase in primary schools in the recent decades, a very large numbers of students continue to be out of school which is one of the key barriers in fulfilling the constitutional commitment to make elementary education free and universal for all. Understanding why students drop out of school is the key to addressing these major educational problems. Yet identifying the causes of dropping out is extremely difficult to do because, it is influenced by an array of proximal and distal factors related to both the individual and the student and to the family, school, and community settings in which the student lives. This paper studies the reasons of high dropout rates in the Karbi Anglong (KA) District of Assam. Dropping out of children from primary school has become a challenging issue in the education system especially for regions like KA, where right to education has been denied to an alarming number of children because of dropping out. The study also shows the extent to which higher level of school dropouts adversely affect the socio-economic outcomes of a region. There is strong evidence on the influence of different socio-economic factors such as school related, individual related or household related on school dropouts of KA region. Beside the impact of socio-economic factors dropout rate is largely affected by the environmental, geographical barriers like drought, flood, migration etc. It is very pertinent to find the reason for dropouts, not only because human resources are being unused but also dropouts cost the nation money. Dropouts are less likely to find and hold jobs that pay enough to keep them above the poverty level. Higher rates of unemployment and lower earnings cost the nation both lost of productivity and reduced tax income. Dropouts are also more likely to have health problems, engage in criminal activities, and become dependent on families, welfare and other government programmes.

Keywords: dropouts, rural regions, factors, productivity, socio-economic

Introduction

Education is the only way any society can progress and develop, and one of the major reasons for the socio-economic backwardness of Karbi Anglong District of Assam is the low standard of education and the high rate of dropouts. Dropping out of children from primary school has become challenging issues in the education system especially for Karbi Anglong District where right to education because of dropouts has denied a large number of children, along with the children who, continue to remain out of school which is one of the barriers in fulfilling the constitutional commitment to make elementary education free and universal for all. (Reddy and Sinha 2010). Variety of family background and other factors plays a role in the decision to drop out of school. Several results emerge from the study, some of the reasons cited by the students for leaving school vary widely, with women more likely to leave because of pregnancy or early marriages and men more likely to leave to go to work; family background strongly influences the propensity to drop out of school and accounts for virtually all the racial differences in dropouts rates; various other factors, including ability and aspiration, also influence this decisions.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data are collected from various Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers etc. while primary data are

collected from villagers through direct personal interview method.

Relevance of the study

The study shows the reasons of high dropout rates in Karbi Anglong District, the relation between dropouts and poor socio-economic conditions in the region and also a major concern for the growing number of unemployed youth in the region. The study tries to create awareness and try to find preventive measures to retain the enrolment of the students in schools, and hence strengthening their chances to acquire better paying jobs. This will help to raise the living standard of the families and society and nation as a whole.

Review of the Literature

1. Aloysius Xavier Lopez (2011) ^[2]: Lack of interest in school and difficulty in learning has been found to be a factor for children dropping out. A majority of the children pointed to the lack of interest in going to school as reason for dropping for dropping out, along with difficulty in learning. Some of the other reasons cited include child labour, lack of guidance and awareness, sibling care, natural calamity and the need to be an additional earning member of the family.
2. UNESCO (2001) ^[7]: Quality of education imparted at school does have impact on children. Research study conducted by UNESCO (2001) ^[7] reveals the

circumstances of children who are not in schools as a reason of quality teaching and learning in schools. It is equally important to underline that enrolment figures understate the extent of the deficit in providing a basic education of good quality. Even where the children complete a full primary circle, evidence suggests that quality of teaching and learning in the schools of many regions is of very low standard. Further the study also suggests how to make a reality of the international pledge at the World Education Forum at Dakar (2000) that no country seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources. Hence quality of teaching learning processes at school directly or indirectly forces children to remain out of school.

3. McCaul, (1989) [6]: The reasons for leaving school are reported to be different for urban, suburban, and rural areas 9McCaul, 1998) [6]. Students from urban areas withdrew from school because of poor grades or having moved to other areas, while students from suburban areas stated that they were expelled from school or simply that they did not get into the program. For those students living in rural areas, the common for them to leave school were supporting their families or getting married and pregnancy.
4. Atasi Nanda Goswami (2009) [1]: A study conducted by Atasi Nanda Goswami (2009) [1] found that the identified low/ lack of income for mothers, family related problems, love/ romantic relationships, drug addiction and peer group influence as the main reasons for dropping out, which are most important problems for the older children, The bad influence of family environment, excessive disciplining by parents and fear of teachers were the main causes for dropping out for the younger children. Mothers also expressed that environment in the school should also be improved to achieve better retention rate.

Area of the study

The Karbi Anglong district is one of the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam, constituted under the provisions of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. There is an Autonomous Council in the district which came into existence on 23rd June 1952 under the provisions laid down under para-2 of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution namely "Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)". At present Karbi Anglong district is divided between West Karbi Anglong district and East Karbi Anglong district. Hamren is the district Headquarter of West Karbi Anglong district and Diphu is the district Headquarter of East Karbi Anglong district. The district of Karbi Anglong, blended with hills and plains is situated in the central part of Assam. The district is bounded by Nagaon and Golaghat district in the North, Meghalaya State and North Cachar Hills district in the South, Golaghat district and the State of Nagaland in its East and to the West, it is bounded by the State of Meghalaya and Nagaon district. The total geographical area of the district is 10434 sq.km, which accounts for about 13.53 percent of the State total geographical area 78,438 sq.km. The district with dense tropical forest covered hills and plains is situated between 25°33' and 26°35' North Latitude and 92°10' and 93°50' East

Longitude. This hill district experiences different climate in different parts due to variation in the topography. The winter begins from October and continues till February. During summer, the atmosphere becomes sultry. The temperature in summer ranges from 230 Celsius to 320 Celsius, while in winter, it ranges from 6 degree Celsius to 12 degree Celsius. The rainfall is not uniform throughout the district.

Objective of the study

The objectives of this study are the reasons of dropouts in Karbi Anglong District of Assam. How can these causes be eliminated, preventive methods that can be used to ensure children complete their schooling.

Findings

The reason found for the high dropout rates in Karbi Anglong District are summarized below-

1. It was found that one of the major reasons for female students dropping out of schools was the lack of proper toilet facilities for them.
2. Lack of trained teachers in rural areas, also plays a major role in students dropout. The teachers are not trained to handle the students and to motivate them to continue their schooling, in some extremely rural areas teachers unwillingness to teach, indifference and high teacher absentee rates creates disinterest of the students and hence they are easily distracted and drops out of school.
3. Another finding is that frequent school changes by the students also create dropouts.
4. Karbi Anglong district has a low density population with numerous languages and a difficult terrain, all of which prove to be hurdles in the educational development of the states.
5. Lack of interest of both the parents and students and the inability to cope with failures in studies is also one of the causes of dropouts irrespective of sex. Children are going to get distracted, upset and disheartened for myriad of reasons, but if the parents, families and the society steps in and support and encourage children to continue education, these children will gain confidence, mental support to overcome obstacles and continue school and complete education.
6. Poverty is one of the biggest reasons for the high dropout rate. Majority of the population living in the remote hilly areas of this region are extremely poor. The people largely depend on rice farming which again is dependent on the whims of monsoon. To make matter worse, some of the larger populated areas are also affected by floods and drought. This creates loss in property and damaging of crops which is heavily relied upon. Hence the economic conditions are generally poor, and people are poverty stricken and ultimately education then becomes a question of luxury and accessibility rather than a need.
7. Illiterate parents are a major cause for the dropout rates. Most of the parents are illiterate or dropouts themselves, and hence are unaware of the importance of education, and the opportunities that could be availed through education. When the parents do not encourage their children to continue education the children are easily distracted by the obvious poor social standard of the

society he is living in and either get married early or start working. Illiterate parents would rather have their children help them at home with younger siblings or work for extra income, rather than go to school. Lack of initiative from the parents kills the natural curiosity of the children to learn new things and find ways to succeed in his life.

8. Lack of awareness among the people and participation of the families and educated members of the society. Illiterate parents need to be made aware of the importance of their children getting education, and the benefits that education can bring into their children's and their families standard of living. Every family and the entire society should be made aware of the facilities that are provided by the government for providing education to every child of the country, and how to avail these provisions. For example ECCE, early childhood care and education takes care of the children's preprimary education, and ICDS or integrated child development service programme takes care of the health of the children, their nutrition and even provides day care centers for children with younger siblings, so that children are not forced to stay at home and take care of their younger siblings. Navodaya Vidyalaya institute has been provided by the central and state government for the benefit of poor intelligent students from remote areas to continue higher education. This institute has hostel facilities and all the necessities are taken care free of cost. Many deserving students do not get an opportunity to enhance and utilize their potentialities to improve their life and succeed in their future endeavors. This condition can be removed simply by creating awareness, so that no such opportunities are ever lost again. Also when the educated people in the society do not take interest and participate in the awareness and find ways or to simply take small steps to try and slow the dropout rates.
9. Lack of infrastructure is also a major reason for the dropout rates. The conditions of the school buildings and the facilities provided play a vital role. Most of the schools in the Karbi Anglong District have a very poor infrastructure, like the school buildings are very old and almost inhabitable; classrooms are small and are not provided with furniture, electricity drinking water and toilets. Lack of proper communication creates another level of hurdles. Teachers are few, some has just one teacher in the entire school and are undertrained, most are unqualified and have the nasty record of high absentee.
10. Substance abuse has recently become one of the growing concerns for the dropout rates in Karbi Anglong District. Many young children have been noted to use addictive substances which create an unwillingness to complete schooling. The children instead borrow money heavily and even resort to stealing and sometimes start working for menial labor to support their addiction. This situation creates a vicious circle, which makes our youth unemployed, unhealthy, poor and hence destroys the socio-economic condition of the region.
11. Early marriage also a big factor for the dropout rates in this region. The young adults of both the sexes because of lack of interest, socio-economic background, illiterate

parents and lack of encouragement and motivation usually are seen to turn towards marriages. The youth foolishly expects their lives to take a fairytale transformation after they get married. But they find that in reality, getting married early without completing education creates a whole plethora of new challenges which they were not even aware of. Husband are not getting proper jobs that pays regularly or even one that pays decent amount of money. Young wife getting pregnant early and then the responsibility of her and the baby's health that requires enormous amount of money, becomes a huge pressure on the dropout student and the family. These and multitudes of other issues in the young lives creates a very unhappy, unsuccessful and poverty stricken family and society.

12. Lack of skill oriented education in the region of Karbi Anglong has created a disinterest in completion of education. Education if accompanied by skills would give the children of this region a positive push to complete their schooling and utilize their skill to acquire the kind of work that would make them proud to call it a career. When a large number of students who had already completed their education are seen unable to acquire or land any kind of decent jobs, then the younger generation gets demotivated, and hence starts doubting the benefits of completing their education. Various talks and group meetings held for the youth's have shown that the children of this region are more artistically inclined than academics. Therefore instead of forcing all these children to ace in academics which will only produce average results, steps should be taken to encourage children to enhance their natural artistic potentials along with regular curriculum, which has a high probability to produce excellent results.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Because dropping out is influenced by both individual and institutional factors, intervention strategies can focus on either or both sets of factors. That is, intervention strategies can focus on addressing the individual values, attitudes and behaviors that are associated with dropping out without attempting to alter the characteristics of families, schools and communities that may contribute to those individual factors. Dropout prevention programs pursue such programmatic strategies by providing would- be dropouts with additional resources and supports to help them stay in school.

In conclusion it can be said that, there are ways in which dropout rates can be reduce significantly if parents, society and the child him/her self realize the importance and benefits of completing their schooling. Also it is the duty of the educated members of the society to lead, encourage, motivate and spread awareness and facilities provided by the government. The people of the region should themselves be aware on the quality of the education provided in educational institutions, infrastructure, and required qualified teachers, basic facilities that should be provided for the students. Allowing the young children the freedom to indulge on their creative potentials along with regular curriculum could gives these children a glimpse on the kind of future that they can have where their innate skills are allowed to shine and can

carry him forward on the wings of confidence, hope and faith.

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