

Status of Dropout Rates in the Present Perspectives of Elementary Education with Special Reference to NEP 2020

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Abstract

One of the primary goals set in the recently approved National Education Policy, or NEP 2020 is to ensure that children are attending schools. Despite different government initiatives, including the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education Act that increased enrolment of students in elementary classes, India has seen a significant increase in dropout rates after Grade 5. NEP 2020 has recommended that the government must first provide ‘effective and sufficient’ infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education at all levels. The policy calls for an appropriate mechanism for “carefully tracking” students, as well as their learning levels, to ensure that they are enrolled in and attending school, and have “suitable opportunities” to catch up and re-enter school in case they have fallen behind or dropped out. The policy recommends strengthening of existing schemes and policies which are targeted for such socio-economically disadvantaged groups (for instance, schemes for free bicycles for girls or scholarships) to tackle dropouts. Further, it recommends setting up special education zones in areas with significant proportion of such disadvantaged groups. “Alternate and innovative education Centre’s will be put in place in co-operation with civil society to ensure that children of migrant laborers, and other children who are dropping out of school due to various circumstances are brought back into mainstream education.” The government-backed nationwide outreach programme to find the dropouts and bring them back into the education system must be launched. This will require the participation of all stakeholders, including teachers and parents. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 already has a mechanism to track out-of-school students and their learning levels and make it both possible and easier for them to re-enter the school.

Keywords: *Elementary Education, Status of Dropout rates, NEP 2020*

Introduction

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. It is the process of acquiring the body of knowledge and skills that people are expected to have in the society. It also encourages intellectual curiosity, which will lead to lifelong learning. Elementary education is typically the first stage of formal education, after pre-school and before secondary education. It provides students with a basic understanding of various subjects as well as the skills they will use throughout their lives. Elementary education is the initial stage of education and has as its basic aim to create, establish and offer opportunities to all children, regardless of age, gender or

country of origin, to achieve a balanced cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development. In India, elementary schools provide education from class 1 to 8. The children in these classes are generally aged between 6 and 15 years. Even though India has achieved almost universal enrollment in elementary education. Dropping out of school is a cumulative process that begins in the primary grades. When students enter school, they begin to establish academic and behavioral performance patterns and form ideas about themselves in relation to school. One in three children does not complete his or her schooling in India. In other words, one third of our population turns out to be not adequately educated and skilled to realize their true potential. As reported by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), out of an initial enrolment of 100 students, on an average, only about 70 finish schools in India. While the number of students in the elementary education level is high, many dropout during their way to the secondary level.

According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018, “No more than 2.8 percent of children are out of school in India. Data put out by the MHRD (2017-18) reveals that the dropout rate in Assam was the highest at the primary level (10.1%), followed by Arunachal Pradesh (8.1%), Mizoram (8%), Uttar Pradesh (8%) and Tamil Nadu (5.9%). But the question is how far these reports are true on grounds? There is no such thing as a national picture when it comes to school dropouts. If we create a national picture by mathematical aggregation, that picture is meaningless since regional variations are far too big. The numbers we get may be the result of schemes like Right to Education, Mid-Day Meal, etc., but the hard fact is that these numbers are only on papers, not of true learners in schools. National Education Policy (NEP 2020) is a forward looking document and in particular focuses on dropouts and out-of-school children. 75th household survey by NSSO in 2017-18 reports that there are 3.22 crore children, in the age group of 6 to 17 years, are out of school. It should be our top priority to bring these children back into the fold of education as early as possible, and to prevent any further drop outs. NEP2020 sets out a goal to achieve 100 percent gross enrolment ratio from preschool to secondary level by 2030. To ensure universal access to education and that no student drops out of school, the NEP 2020 also proposes to improve the infrastructure so that each student, from pre-primary to class 12, receives safe and engaging school education. The Policy proposes to re-establish and enhance credibility of Government schools by upgrading and enlarging the existing schools that already exist, and by building additional quality schools in areas where they do not exist, and providing safe and practical conveyances and hostels, especially for the girl children. Apart from infrastructure and participation, NEP2020 also proposes to ensure quality education so that students, especially girls, from socio-economically disadvantaged groups do not lose interest in attending school. With the NEP 2020, the government aims to ensure that all students are enrolled in, and are attending schools, in order to achieve universal participation in school. This, according to the NEP document, will be achieved by “carefully tracing” students and their learning levels, while ensuring that they get the opportunity to “catch up and re-enter school.” It is encouraging to have a remarkable and forward-looking policy in the form of NEP2020, after 34 years. This signals the possibility of driving the much-needed change in our education system, provided all actors and stakeholders take up their tasks with utmost urgency and seriousness. Sustainable Development Goal 4 is also pushing all nations to achieve quality education for all at all levels. For a new India, to mark its superior presence in the global arena, education is the key. It is the key which can open the door for our ‘young nation’ to forge ahead as an economic super power and global leader.

Objectives of the study

- a. To determine and analyze the dropout rates of students in elementary education.
- b. To ascertain the dropout policy of NEP2020.
- c. To provide suggestions for improvement.

Scope of the study

The study exhibits the new structure introduced in the Education Sector i.e. the NEP2020, and also it attempts to narrate the status of dropout rates of students in the elementary education level. The study is concluded with recommendations for effective implementation considering the status of elementary education in the present perspectives.

Limitations of the study

Though the study has a vivid outlook on the NEP2020, status of dropout in elementary education and provides feasible solutions were taken in the consideration keeping in mind the following:

- a. The study covers a wider view on the NEP2020 and its objectives and criteria.
- b. The analysis is done based on secondary data available on various sources. It lacks primary data.
- c. The solutions are derived largely based on the public view and conclusion of other researchers.

Methodology of the study

The study output is the outcome of an overview of studies and articles conducted on the National Education Policy 2020 and the status of dropout students in Elementary education. This is basically a qualitative study and follows secondary data for its analysis.

Results and Discussion

Every year, a large number of students drop out of school worldwide. This hinders their economic and social well-being as well as reduces the literacy rate of the country and creates a non-innovative environment. The issue of dropout in India is of particular importance and interest. Setting retention of students across all levels as one of its primary goals, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recommended that the government must first provide “effective and sufficient” infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education at all levels, from pre-primary school to class 12. “Besides providing regular trained teachers at each stage, special care shall be taken to ensure that no school remains deficient on infrastructure support,” it stipulates.

The credibility of the government schools “shall be” re-established and this will be attained by upgrading and enlarging the schools that already exist, building additional quality schools in areas where they do not exist, and providing safe and practical conveyances and/or hostels, especially for female students. “Alternative and innovative education centres will be put in place in co-operation with civil society to ensure that children of migrant laborers, and other children who are dropping out of school due to various circumstances are brought back into mainstream education,” the policy provides.

The policy calls for an appropriate mechanism for “carefully tracking” students, as well as their learning levels, to ensure that they are enrolled in an attending school, and have “suitable opportunities” to catch up and re-enter school in case they have fallen behind or dropped out. Counsellors or well-trained social

workers connected to schools and teachers will continuously work with the students and their parents and engage with the communities to ensure that all school-age children are attending and learning in school.

A recent survey by National Statistical Office (NSO) has revealed that around 12.6% of students' dropout of school in India, 19.8% discontinued education at the secondary level, while 17.5% dropped out at the upper primary level. As per the survey, a dropout is an "ever-enrolled person" who does not complete the level of education for which the student has enrolled and is currently not attending any educational institution. The Government's Right to Education Act and National Policy on Education may have been motivating to provide education to all but it is equally important to analyze the sustainability and efficiency of the education system. Dropout rates are considered to be a great wastage in the education system, not only do many students leave school without acquiring basic skills, but their premature departure represents a significant waste of scarce education resources. Help in domestic work, economic condition, and lack of interest were found to be the topmost cause of discontinuing education. About 30.2% of the girls gave domestic work as the reason for discontinuing education and about 36.90% of boys left studies because they had to support their families. It becomes especially difficult for girls to continue studying because of concerns of their safety. They face sanitary problems due to poor school facilities ultimately forcing them to stay back at home. Considered to be a liability, many girls are imposed to stay back at home, or are forced to get married at an early age (13.2%).

Many children believe that there is no point in studying if they have to do the same job as their parents, thus they leave school at primary level itself. More than 30% of children involved in the survey showed a lack of interest in studies; they preferred to drop out because whatever was being taught in schools barely intrigued them. India is also dealing the problems of inclusion and equality, children from the marginalized sections of the population, or with physical disability/health issues have to leave schools when they face hostile behavior from their peers.

Suggestions and Conclusion

- Provide effective and sufficient infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education at all levels from pre-primary school to Grade 12.
- Special care shall be taken to ensure that no school remains deficient on infrastructure support.
- Building additional quality schools in areas where they do not exist, and providing safe and practical conveyances and/or hostels, especially for the girl children.
- Alternative and innovative education centres will be put in place in co-operation with civil society for children of migrant laborers etc.
- Carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels.
- Counsellors or well-trained social workers will continuously work with students and their parents.
- Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programmes offered by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools will be expanded and strengthened for meeting the learning needs of young people in India who are not able to attend a physical school. Both government as well as non-governmental philanthropic organizations interested to build schools will be encouraged to consider local variations like culture, geography, and demographics.

It is recommended that the government conducts awareness camps in cities, towns, and villages to expose the hazards of illiteracy and unemployment. National Education Policy 2020 has mentioned two

initiatives that will be undertaken to curb the problem. The first is to provide efficient and sufficient infrastructure to all students and the second is to set up alternative and innovative education centers for the children of migrant laborers. These are vital steps to ensure that children have access to safe and engaging school education as well as bring back the ones out of school. A dropout early warning system enables schools to identify students who are at risk of dropping out of school, and to focus on individuals who struggle to perform well. Schools should practice innovative teaching methods to draw students towards education and spark interest in them. “Overall, the NEP is a game changer and the careful implementation of the ideas presented in the NEP can transform school education in India,” According to the previous discussion it can be said that most of the people reacted positively towards different proposals of National Education Policy 2020, few people reacted neutrally towards it and a few number of people reacted negatively towards it. One probable reason for this NEP is completely new to the people of India. That’s why they are unaware of the benefits of this policy. It can be said that NEP 2020 will bring a positive effect towards our society as education is related to all classes of people of our society. It can be possible by applying new labor laws; the goals of NEP can be fulfilled.

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