

TRENDS IN SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE IN INDIA

Dr. K.V. Sridevi

Assistant Professor (Education), RMSA Project Cell, NCERT, New Delhi, India

E-mail: kvridevi@gmail.com

Mohini Nagpal

Junior Project Fellow, RMSA Project Cell, NCERT, New Delhi, India

E-mail: matrix.20976@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In global perspective, it is an incontestable fact that the progress of a nation is highly dependent on the education of its citizens. Education thus plays a crucial role and has a cross cutting impact on all aspects of human life. But the increasing dropout numbers pertain to a shabby state of affairs in the education system. The main purpose of this study is thereby to analyse the trends in dropout rate, explore causes and provide suggestions to reduce dropout rate at secondary stage in India. The findings of this study are drawn from the extensive literature review of students' dropout in different states of India wherein child marriage, lack of transportation, separate toilet, safety, and security en route the school, educational profile of parents, Lack of recreation, Absence of teachers, Lack of guidance and counseling, Partiality, prejudices, affordability and Lack of interest in school are found as major causes for student dropout in India. This study also highlights some policy implications such as improving school culture, providing basic facilities in schools, organising Inservice teacher training programmes for teachers to identify and handle at risk students and conducting remedial teaching programmes for the needy students in schools in order to guide policy makers to combat this problem.

Keywords: Education, Dropout rate, Secondary stage, India

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as one of the fundamental factors of development. No country in the world can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Even Goal 4 of Sustainable development (United Nations Development

Programme UNDP) talks about Quality Education and one of the targets of this goal is to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education. But how can this goal be achieved and how much progress has already been made so far in this direction needs to be brought about in the picture.

From time to time, various policies have been brought about to improve access to education. Likewise, Universalisation of Elementary Education, further Universalisation of Secondary education led to increase in enrolments of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalized groups into the education loop but with larger numbers of children being vulnerable and availability of fewer resources per child, education systems have increasingly become difficult in retaining students through completion of the education cycle (primary, secondary & tertiary). Not only do many students leave school without acquiring basic skills but their premature departure represents a significant waste of scarce education resource. Also, despite progress in access and enrolment rates, dropout has still remained an issue in 32 countries; the same is true in India.

Moreover, dropout and retention trends are secondary effects rather than the principal outcome of our educational programs. But their numbers, gave a clear picture of the status of education in the country. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics (UIS), the overall number of out-of-school children has decreased from 115 million in 2001/02 to 71 million in 2007. Of the 56 percent of children who do enter school, a high percentage is at-risk of leaving even before completing an education cycle. Though the pattern of dropout varies by country, the result is the same: increasing numbers of under-educated and unemployable youth which adds on to the wastage and stagnation of human resource. Reducing dropout is thus the key to improve access to basic education, particularly in countries with relatively high enrolment rates where most school-age children who do not currently attend school have previously been enrolled in school.

More specifically, in India Education is a concurrent item i.e. it is within the consideration by both State and Central governments. Further, it is provided by both the public and private sectors with funding from the federal, state and local levels. It comprises of primary (grades 1-5), upper primary (grades 6-8), secondary (9-10) and higher secondary (11-12) stages. The Government of India has implemented policies from time to time like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001 with the goal of Universalisation of elementary education and Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) in 2009 wherein a child cannot be

expelled or detained until the completion of elementary education—i.e., until class VIII. But, the efforts by Government on increasing Gross enrolment ratios by providing equal opportunities to all school going children at primary level in terms of access has led to reduced focus on secondary level education. This also explains the differential trends between enrolments, dropout and transition rates across elementary and secondary levels of education. Thus, after partially achieving Universalisation of elementary education, Secondary education is increasingly becoming an area of concern with dropout being a parameter of its measurement. In order to enhance access, equity and quality of secondary education, the Government of India also launched Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA). With these efforts of the country, it is very essential to analyse the trends of dropout rate of secondary education in order to check improvement in the quality of school education in general and secondary education in specific.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study attempts to

- analyse dropout trends and conditions affecting dropout of students at secondary stage across north, south, east, west, central and north-eastern regions of India
- suggest ways and means to reduce dropout rate across Indian subcontinent

METHOD

It is a Descriptive study aiming at analysing the trends in dropout rate, finding reasons and proposing suggestions to improve the situation. For this study, a systematic review of several data sources including various ministry records, documents available at national and international level was carried out to identify and confirm the availability of the dropout trends. The data on dropout rate for the period of five years (2012 to 2017) is retrieved from the School Report Card available at (U-DISE) Unified District Information System for Education which is a database of information about schools in India. Any discrepancy in data is subjected to database from UDISE.

The data drawn includes all the schools from both rural and urban locale. Both male and female students from various categories viz., General, Scheduled Caste(SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Class(OBC) and Muslim from different types of secondary schools were included. Moreover, students belonging to schools of different managements -

Government (central, state, DOE), Madarsa, recognised and unrecognised, private aided and unaided, tribal or from social welfare departments are also included.

The data thus retrieved is tabulated in Table 1

Table 1

Average Annual Dropout Trends across States and UTs of India at Secondary Level (Source: UDISE)

	2012-13 (%)	2013-14 (%)	2014-15 (%)	2015-16 (%)	2016-17 (%)
A & N ISLANDS	5.42	5.56	7.2	9.87	7.36
ANDHRA PRADESH	15.7	12.72	52.8	15.71	50
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	-	12.93	14.49	17.11	29.93
ASSAM	-	26.77	30.43	27.06	27.6
BIHAR	-	30.14	25.33	25.9	39.73
CHHATTISGARH	-	14.86	23.41	21.26	24.23
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	-	24.41	28.59	16.77	27.96
DAMAN & DIU	-	11.52	19.86	32.27	19.52
DELHI	2.56	5.32	8.9	11.81	10.75
GOA	-	7.96	9.58	11.15	16.01
GUJARAT	-	13.55	21.61	25.04	24.08
HARYANA	-	8.98	12.51	15.89	12.16
HIMACHAL PRADESH	-	8.37	9.09	6.07	7.03
JAMMU & KASHMIR	-	17.33	15.36	17.28	24.35
JHARKHAND	-	18.5	23.15	24	36.64
KARNATAKA	39.39	39.92	27.57	26.18	48.11
KERALA	-	9.45	14.46	12.32	12.76

LAKSHADWEEP	-	7.68	8.03	6.76	5.8
MADHYA PRADESH	-	13.63	26.47	24.77	23.76
MAHARASHTRA	-	16.2	14.47	12.87	11.28
MANIPUR	-	9.75	13.81	14.38	21.05
MEGHALAYA	-	26.03	24.75	20.52	28.07
MIZORAM	-	21.42	18.7	21.88	30.67
NAGALAND	-	26.51	35.11	18.23	31.28
ODISHA	46.31	49.86	49.48	29.56	28.87
PUDUCHERRY	11.95	15.21	14.24	12.19	12.65
PUNJAB	5.76	9.8	8.83	8.86	8.6
RAJASTHAN	-	13.65	18.77	13.48	15.19
SIKKIM	-	9.23	12.89	15.89	24.15
TAMIL NADU	-	10.2	12.2	8.1	10.03
TELANGANA	-	-	-	15.53	22.49
TRIPURA	-	25.5	25.09	28.42	29.76
UTTAR PRADESH	-	-	7.3	10.22	12.71
UTTARAKHAND	-	9.68	8.7	10.4	9.09
WEST BENGAL	18.04	17.3	18.34	17.8	26.93
All States		14.54	20.14	17.06	22.13

Note - The data collected from UDISE is missing for certain states for certain period of time.

RESULTS

The analysis was conducted by identifying and examining secondary data (in percentages) from UDISE in each of the states of India to assess dropout trends. For better visualization of trends all the states & Union Territories of India are categorised into 6 regions namely- Northern, southern, eastern, western, central and north eastern regions as per the Zonal Council (Composition of zones accessed from https://mha.gov.in/zonal_council.). The categorisation is mentioned below:

1. Northern region includes Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Punjab, Delhi
2. Southern region comprises Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Puducherry, Lakshadweep
3. Eastern region includes Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands
4. Western region includes Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
5. Central region includes Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh
6. North eastern region includes Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland

The data collected is classified region wise and is represented in the Figures.

Trend analysis of dropout rate at secondary stage in the Northern part of India

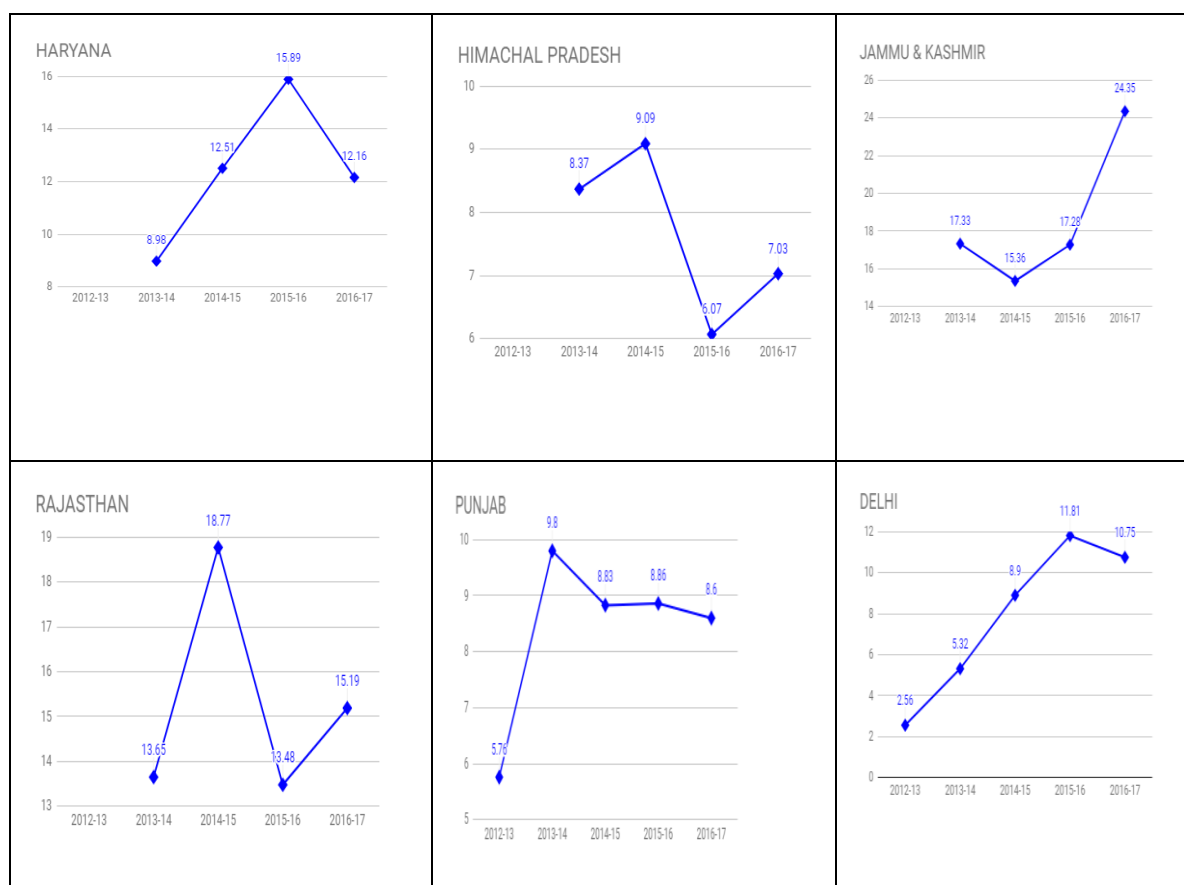


Figure 1. Trends in dropout rate in Northern region

From Figure 1, it is evident that the states in the northern part of India, show the following trend in dropout rate at secondary stage:

Haryana has witnessed a steady increase in drop-out of students of secondary stage for three consecutive years from 2013–16 followed by a dip in 2016–17. In the similar way, Delhi has seen a steady increase in drop-out from 2012–13 to 2015–16 with a minor dip being reported in 2016–17. Punjab also has shown an increase in drop-out in 2013–14 and witnessed little reduction but remained high with minor fluctuations in three consecutive years i.e. from 2014–17. Whereas Jammu & Kashmir has witnessed initially a low dropout rate in 2014–15 followed by a steady increase in the next two years from 2015–17 with maxima of about 24.35% in 2016–17. On the other hand, Himachal Pradesh has shown a fluctuating trend in drop-out rates over the years. The drop-out has increased in 2014–15 followed by a dip for next consecutive year and then again, an increase in 2016–17. Similarly, in Rajasthan also the drop-out has increased in 2014–15 followed by minima for next consecutive year and then again, an increase to 15.19% in 2016–17.

Overall in Northern region even though there is a decrease in dropout rate except in few states like Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan by 2017, the fall in dropout rate is not significant.

Trend analysis of dropout rate at secondary stage in the southern part of India



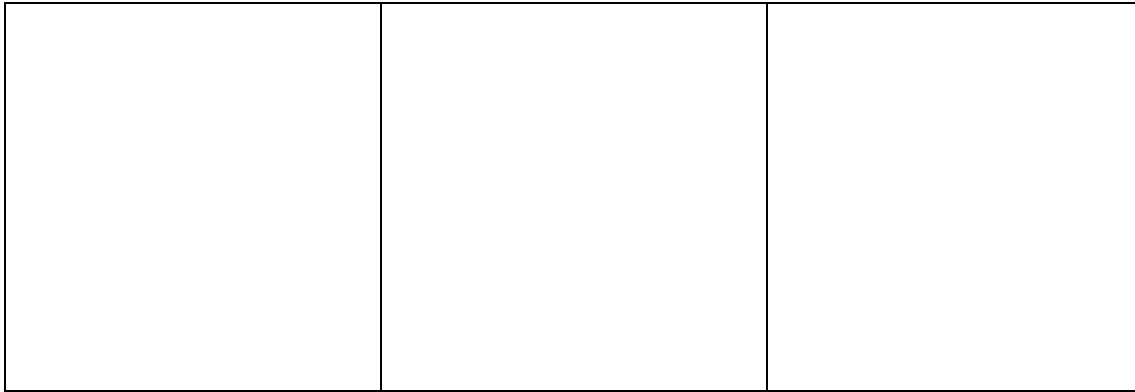


Figure 2. Trends in dropout rate in Southern region

With reference to Figure 2, Andhra Pradesh has recorded fluctuations in dropout statistics from 2012–17 with dropout of 50% recorded in 2016–17 whereas Tamil Nadu has seen fluctuations in dropout statistics from 2013–17 with drop out maintaining an average of about 10% over the years.

Karnataka dropout graph shows an increase year after year followed by a dip for the next two years i.e. 2014–15 and 2015–16 which is indicative by a valley in graph and then a steady rise to about 48.11% in 2016–17. On the other side Kerala’s dropout statistics indicate a peak in 2014–15 followed by a dip in 2015–16 and then a marginal increase in 2016–17. Likewise, Puducherry dropout graph also indicate a peak of about 15.21% in 2013–14 with a decline being recorded in 2014–15 & 2015–16 followed by a marginal increase in 2016–17. Another Union Territory, Lakshadweep has witnessed a slight increase in dropout rate in 2014–15 followed by a steady decrease in dropout trends in 2015–16 & 2016–17.

Trend analysis of dropout rate at secondary stage in the eastern part of India



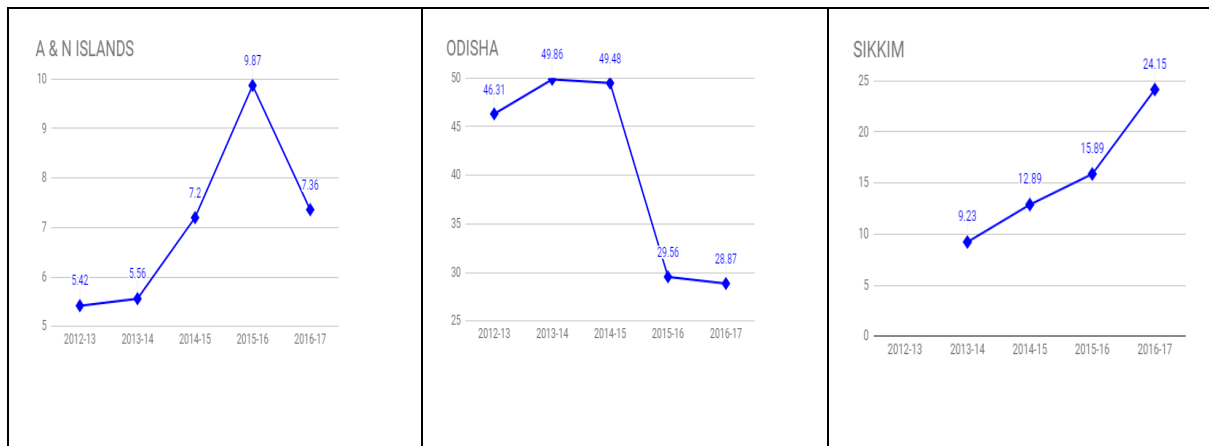


Figure 3. Trends in dropout rate in Eastern region

Bihar has witnessed a valley in drop-out trend from 2014–16 followed by a steady increase of 39.73% in 2016–17 as shown in Figure 3. But, Jharkhand & Sikkim have seen a steady increase in drop-out trends from 2013 onwards with a drop-out of 36.64% and 24.15% respectively in 2016–17 in these states. Andaman & Nicobar Islands, a Union Territory in eastern part of India has seen a growth in drop out trends from 2012–13 onwards with a peak being reported at 9.87% in 2015–16 followed by a dip to 7.36% in 2016–17. On similar lines, Odisha has seen a drop-out that remain as high as 49.48% in 2014–15 from 2012–13 onwards and recorded a dip for next two consecutive years from 2015–17 and reached to a value of 28.87% in 2016–17. On the other hand, West Bengal drop-out graph indicates fluctuations in drop-out rate from 2012–13 to 2015–16. Further, dropout rate has increased being 26.93% in 2016–17.

Lastly, out of all the states in eastern region, Bihar has recorded the highest drop-out of 39.73% in 2016–17. Except for Andaman & Nicobar Islands & Odisha, the remaining states have evinced an increase in dropout rate in 2016–17.

Trend analysis of dropout rate at secondary stage in the western part of India

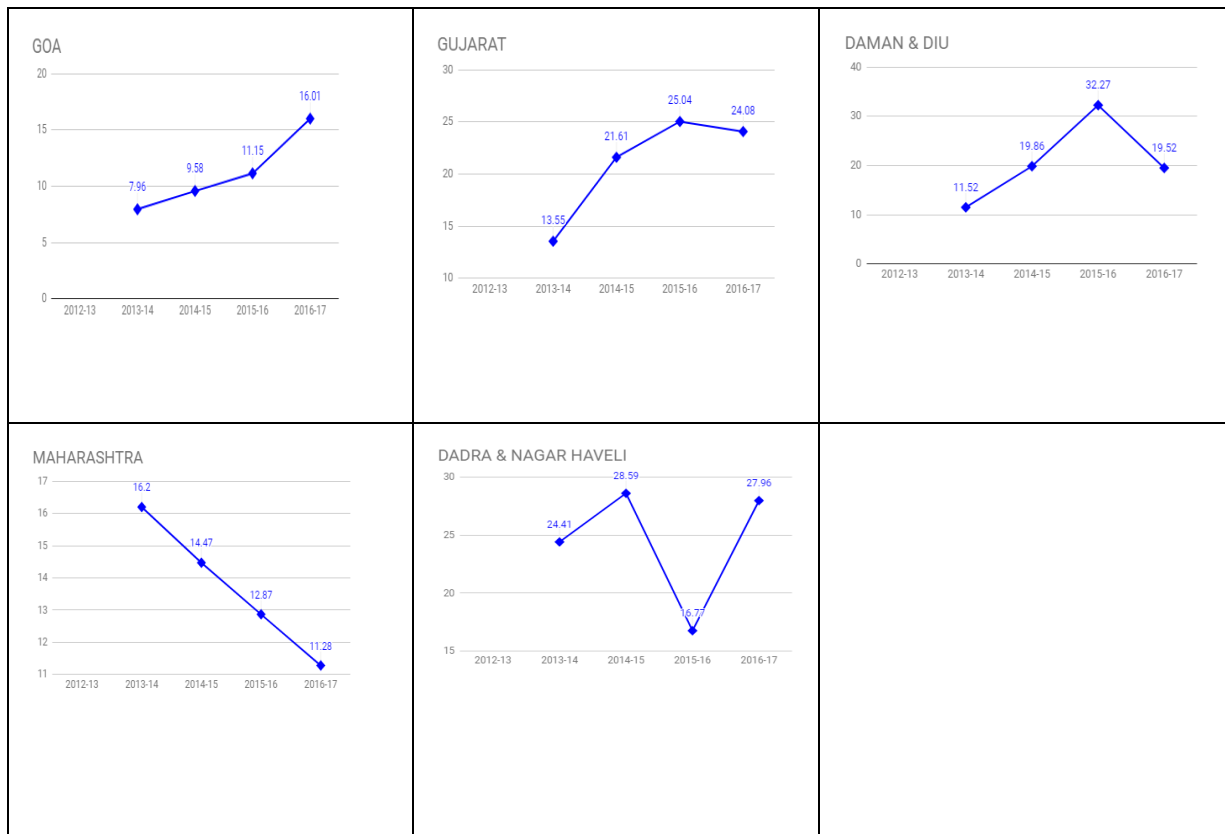


Figure 4. Trends in dropout rate in Western region

As evident from Figure 4, Maharashtra has performed quite well with steady decline in dropout trends over the years from 2013–14 to 2016–17. Whereas Goa has witnessed an increasing upward trend in drop-out from 2013–14 onwards till 2016–17. Gujarat has also witnessed an upward surge in drop-out statistics from 2013–14 with a slight dip being reported in 2016–17. Similarly, Daman & Diu has shown a steady increase from 2013–14 with a peak being recorded in 2015–16 at 32.27% with a decline to 19.52% in 2016–17. Dadra & Nagar Haveli dropout trends indicate fluctuations in dropout rate from 2013–17 with increase in 2014–15 then decrease in 2015–16 and then again, an increase to 27.96% in 2016–17.

Overall, in the western part, Dadra & Nagar Haveli has seen the highest drop-out of 27.96% in 2016–17. Except for Goa & Dadra and Nagar Haveli, all other states witnessed a dip in dropout rate. However, Maharashtra has shown a steady decrease in dropout rate.

Trend analysis of dropout rate at secondary stage in the Central part of India



Figure 5. Trends in dropout rate in Central region

In Figure 5, Uttarakhand graph shows peaks and bottoms from 2013–17 but overall the drop-out has been high at around 9%. Similarly, Chhattisgarh has seen an increase in drop-out from 2013–14 to 2016–17 with a slight dip being reported in 2015–16. But, Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a steady increase in drop-out from 2014–15 onwards to 2016–17 which is quite alarming. Also, Madhya Pradesh has seen a peak in drop-out in 2014–15 in comparison to 2013–14 followed by a slow dip but the drop-out rates have still remained high.

Out of all the states in central region, the drop-out statistics for Chhattisgarh has been high at 24.23%. Overall, in central region, except for Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, all other states witnessed a decrease in dropout rate.

Trend analysis of dropout rate at secondary stage in the Northeastern part of India



Figure 6. Trends in dropout rate in North east region

Nagaland has witnessed fluctuations in dropout trends from 2013–17 as per Figure 6. Assam has also witnessed fluctuations in dropout trends from 2013–17 with dropout varying over an average value of 28% over the years. Whereas, Mizoram has seen a slight decrease in dropout trend in 2014–15, followed by a steady increase over the next consecutive years in 2015–16 & 2016–17. On similar lines, Meghalaya dropout graph indicates a valley in 2015–16 followed by a hike in 2016–17 to 28.07%. Tripura also witnessed minimum in 2014–15 followed by a steady increase for the next two consecutive years in 2015–16 & 2016–17. But, Manipur dropout statistics indicate an increase in dropout rate from 2013–17. Arunachal

Pradesh has also seen trends of similar kinds with a steady increase in dropout from 2013–14 with a dropout of 29.93% recorded in 2016–17.

Overall, North eastern states have showed an increase in dropout rates with a highest of 31.29% being reported in Nagaland in 2016–17.

DISCUSSION

Dropout is a global issue plaguing the education system but the reasons for dropout varies from country to country and state to state depending upon the geographical conditions of that region. In this context, Rumberger and Larson (1998) found student mobility (i.e. who change their school even ones between the eighth and twelfth grades) in their study as a reason concerning to increased risk of high school dropout in United States. In another study (Cairns, Cairns & Neckerman, 1989), found high levels of aggression or low levels of academic performance, socioeconomic status, race and early parenthood as the detriments of child dropout. Moreover, four different aspects of peer influence which include, prior social acceptance and rejection, social isolation vs involvement, the negative influence of peers and the aggression and antisocial behaviour were other contributing factors to dropout as listed by Hymel, et. Al. (1996) in their study. Jomon Mathew has further highlighted frequent change of schools, bullying, delinquency, clash between family values and those at school, not getting admission, physical and other medical problems as reasons for school dropout in the report.

India itself is prone to the dropout epidemic. In India (as per PRS legislative research 2014–15 statistics available) the dropout rate peaks at the secondary level (class 9–10) at 17%, particularly in class X as compared to 4% and 2% respectively at elementary (class 1–8) and upper secondary (class 11–12) levels. This is also reflected in the transition rates where the lowest transition rate is at 69% at the secondary level (class 10 to 11). Basically, a transition rate below 100% indicates that the students are either held back or have dropped out of school. Moreover, these differential trends reported between the enrolment, dropout, and transition rates for elementary and secondary education levels can be understood with the provisions of RTE Act, under which a child cannot be detained until the completion of elementary education (i.e. till class 8).

National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data has reflected on reasons for dropping out (for the age group 5–29 years), wherein females drop out to engage in domestic activities, lack of interest in education, and marriage whereas males drop out to engage in economic activities, lack of interest in education, and financial constraints. Unfamiliar language/medium of

instruction, inadequate number of teachers, and unfriendly atmosphere at school are other contributing factors to dropout.

Northern Region

When it comes to Northern zone, the dropout rate at Jammu & Kashmir is attributed to the lack of awareness, and reservation of the parents to admit their girls in the secondary schools where co-education was being imparted. This gender stereotypic behaviour by parents is seen more in Kashmir valley as compared to Jammu region. Besides, economic backwardness is also one of the basic reasons. The data by the U-DISE suggests that south Kashmir - Anantnag district has the highest rate of dropouts with 46.61 per cent, followed by central Kashmir - Budgam district. The dropout rates for Srinagar, Pulwama and Ganderbal have been recorded to be 10.16 %, 29.02 % and 35.66 % respectively with Kashmir reporting the lowest dropout rate. Further as many as 22,876 habitations in the state were covered by secondary schooling facility within a distance of five kilometers, while 6,618 were still without such facility. Highlighting about the girl's dropout rate in the state, lack of transportation, separate toilet, safety, and security en route the school, educational profile of parents and, in Kashmir conflict since 1990 pushed girls away from schools. Where as in Mokalwas district of Haryana, maximum number of girls' dropout consisted from Muslim and Rajput communities.

Main causes of girls' dropout being traditional thinking, failure, help demanded from them in household work and labour activities, lack of education among parents, lack of interest in subjects, dislike of teachers, inferiority among poor, backward families, etc. Moreover, the dropout because of marital status is found to be high at middle level. Some families engage their girl wards as a source of income in illegal works also (Surender Singh Rana & Suman Rani, 2015).

Southern Region

In the Southern region also similar reasons could be found like illiteracy of parents, poverty, disinterest in education for drop out of girls in Karnataka (Manjunatha B.R & M R Gangadhar,2018). Added to this, doing parent jobs, early marriage, migration, and roaming for jobs or gypsy culture were some of the reasons for dropout at secondary stage.(R. Govindaraju and S. Venkatesan,2010).Secondary education study among lower caste adolescent girls (aged 13–14 years) in two districts (Bijapur and Bagalkot) of north Karnataka enlisted that school dropout was associated with economic factors (household poverty), social beliefs and practices

(girl child marriage; value of girl education), and school-related factors (poor quality of learning at school; bullying/harassing school environment). In addition, girls living in households with young siblings (<6 years old) were also more likely to have dropped out of school. (Ravi Prakash et al, 2017). Similarly, girl dropout rate is high in Andhra Pradesh in both rural and urban areas due to early marriages. A study conducted in Adilabad district of Telangana concluded that factors of socio economy (illiteracy, poverty, child labour etc.), teacher related factors (harsh attitude, corporal punishment, teacher shortage etc.), personal factors (learning issues, lack of concern, health etc.), curricula and pedagogy related factors (unpleasant surrounding of school and classes, unattractive books etc.), infrastructure related factors (lack of physical facilities like chair or school desk etc.) were major factors influencing the dropout of students from high schools (B.Laxmaiah and Gurmeet Singh Kachoor, 2016).

Central Region

When it comes to Central region migration, lack of interest in studies, engagement in household or outside works, unable to cope with studies/failure and lack of proper facilities were reasons for dropout at secondary level in Uttarakhand (Yogesh Kumar, 2018). A case study on “preventing school dropout” was undertaken in the village of Khamariam, in Mungeli district of Chhattisgarh in which it was found that most parents were forced to migrate because of a lack of livelihood opportunities in the region – there were no factories or industries for year-round employment, no regular Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA) work in the village. Among other barriers to school attendance were lack of parental encouragement to attend school regularly, family responsibilities including cooking, taking care of younger siblings or sick grandparents. When migrating families take at least one child with them, children end up working with their parents in brick kilns or other work sites leading to child labour. Added to this Ayan Hazra (2017) highlighted access to education in remotely and sparsely located areas, lack of sound infrastructure, high pupil teacher ratio, lack of local specific subjects in the curriculum like animal husbandry, agriculture and poultry farming techniques, demand for English language and computer education as the problems which creates hindrance in receiving education by tribal communities in Chhattisgarh.

On similar lines, Sabha & Gauri (2012) while studying causal factors in Indian suburbs of Uttar Pradesh found that, compared to 33.89% boys, 16.56% girls dropped out for personal reasons, 20.34% boys & 47.02% girls owed their dropout to familial factors, 8.47% boys & 5.29% girls have blamed school as reason for their dropout and compared to 37.29% boys & 31.13% girls have shifted the dropout responsibility to their socio-economic conditions. Girl

dropout rate is high in Uttar Pradesh in rural areas as parents don't allow their daughters to attend school. Further, girls have the responsibility to take care of their younger siblings. Poverty also forces teenage girls to work along with families to earn their daily bread and butter. Furthermore, there exists cases of girls' education being banned by particular religious community which also contributes to dropout in the state.

Eastern Region

Whereas, in Eastern region, the studies revealed that financial reasons were the major reasons for the increased dropout rate at secondary stage in Bihar (Rukmini Banerji & Wilima Wadhwa, 2015). Distance from school and difficulties with transport were also one of the three most common reasons mentioned for dropping out of school. Finally, it is distressing to note that in a large number of cases, both parents and children specified lack of interest or ability as a reason for dropping out of school; in fact, a substantial proportion – 14% - had repeated a grade prior to dropping out. Given the low levels of basic ability in language and math among their school going counterparts who were tested as part of this study, it is unsurprising to find children being unable to cope with the demands of the curriculum in higher grades. In West Bengal, dropout rate has increased from 2014–15 to 2015–16 among tribal students at secondary level. It is also found that the percentage of boys who had dropped out is more than that of girls among tribal students.

Major factors associated with dropout are poor economic condition, lack of conducive learning environment at home & school, attitude of parents towards schooling, lack of aspiration and attitude of non-tribal students towards tribal students. 54% tribal students dropped out because of lack of facilities at school as opined by the students. (Biswas, G. and Krishnan, D., 2017). Girls dropout rate is higher in Jharkhand at secondary and senior secondary level due to high child marriage cases. Jharkhand (38%) ranks 3rd on child marriage list followed by West Bengal which tops the national list of highest child marriages cases at 40.7% and Bihar (39.1%). Lack of higher secondary schools in the state and parents not allowing their daughters to go far off can be another reason for dropout in Jharkhand. Abhishek Jha (2015) has stressed about the high dropout rate among OBC girls in Odisha at secondary level due to implementation of RTE only for 6–14 years of age. Further the major reason for school dropouts among tribal communities' being identified as 'non-availability of books and teachers in their language.

Western Region

In Western region, for instance dropout rate in Goa has been attributed to a floating migrant population which is on rise over the years. These migrants come to Goa to work as labourers or vendors and their children leave school after completing VIII or turning 14 years to supplement the family income. Goa, being a tourist hub student leave studies to work as drivers and there are others who leave voluntarily. Dadra Nagar & Haveli, as a Union territory and being a tribal belt, rate of migration is high. Moreover, the quality of secondary education is low due to no detention policy. Further, an observational study conducted in the rural area of Vadodara district of Gujarat found Taking care of siblings and home, social restrictions e.g. menarche and marriage, more distance of school, working with parents for financial reason and unavailability of higher school nearby as reasons for dropout among girls (Bhupeshwari Patel & Dulari Gandhi ,2016)

North East Region

In case of North eastern states which houses tribal population with difficult terrain and numerous languages being spoken has registered high drop-out rate in the country. Major reasons for students dropping out of schools were lack of proper toilet facilities for girls, frequent school changes by students, lack of teachers in rural areas, along with poor family support. Most families in rural Nagaland however prefer to keep their children engaged in household chores or field work which led to drop-out. Another reason highlighted include that the divorce rates are higher in the North-Eastern states in comparison with other parts of India (Jacob and Chattopadhyay, 2016). Further, Syed Sajjad Ali (2017) has highlighted about the alarming school dropout rate in Tripura which increases during times of tribal insurgency. Scores of schools, especially in the hills, become non-functional however the education sector has seen a revamp in the last 10 years with the provision of better security.

Moreover, lack of toilets in public schools was one of the reasons for dropout among girls. RMSA initiatives such as sports and recreation programmes for students as well as teacher training workshops and counselling have brought the students back to the schools. Rajiv Konwar (2017) has highlighted about the high pupil-teacher ratio in some core subjects as a grave area of concern in Nagaland. Further to add, Low gross enrolment ratio, net enrolment ratio, retention rate, transition rate and high dropout rate are other areas of concern. Moreover, the performance was particularly low in the districts of Wokha, Mon, Tuensang, Kiphire and Longleng. Added to this studies revealed that dropouts are due to different types of violence both at school and home and their causes include Poor supervision by school authorities, Peer group influence, excessive use of mobile phones, lack of discipline in School,

domestic conflict, violent behaviour exhibited by parents, adolescence period, imitation from mass media, lack of recreation, absence of teachers, lack of guidance and counseling, tuition given by teachers, partiality, prejudices, injustice by elder people, uncongenial school environment, and Lack of interest in school. These types of violence against girls have detrimental effects thereby making them less and less visible in the school of Mizoram (Lokanath Mishra, 2017).

V Santhakumar stressed that one of the factors which work against the completion of schooling in Mizoram seems to be the societal acceptance of courtship leading to marriage because of which relationships between boys and girls especially in the age group of 15–18 years are not discouraged. The other issue highlighted is the use of drugs in school which may lead to the discontinuation of schooling. Also, boys are more likely to drop out of higher grades than girls.

Suggestions

Dropout is a complex social problem for which there is no simple solution. As rightly pointed out by Asche (1993) high incidence of dropping out poses a serious problem to the social and economic health of the country and brings further negative consequences for the individual drop out in high risk behaviours like sexual activity, early marriage & pregnancy, delinquency, crime, violence, alcohol & drug abuse etc. In order to prevent the youth of our country following the wrong track, dropout issue needs to be tackled with utmost care and as dropouts have dissimilar characteristics, therefore they need different kind of interventions. The various experiences gathered from states of our country and other nations as well can prove to be useful in this regard. Keeping this aspect in mind, the following suggestions are made to reduce dropout rate at secondary stage:

1. As the risk factors for dropouts are multifaceted including student related, community related and family related, they have to be handled comprehensively. It should be a collaborative effort between schools, family and community in preventing dropouts. School based management would be ideal in this approach. Parents' participation in school activities should be increased. Thus, a systemic approach across all grade levels including all stakeholders, through a shared vision and research-based strategies and continuous monitoring for effectiveness would be an ideally suited mechanism to deal with.
2. A focus on instructional leadership on the part of the Headmaster will enhance school climate and in turn will improve the functioning of the school or overall performance

of the school. Improving school culture and use of learner centered pedagogies might help in effective dropout prevention practices.

3. Based on the needs and abilities of the student's intensive interventions have to be provided by the teachers soliciting parental assistance. Peer tutoring and mentoring should find place in the modalities. Students interest can be enhanced by the use of various pedagogical techniques, IT enabled classrooms and learning by doing.
4. Vocationalisation of education which would not only mean introduction of vocational subjects but also providing with job-oriented skills which would persuade students to continue education wherever poverty is the main reason for increased dropout rate. Research studies have revealed that these courses help in improvement in attendance, increase skill sets and lower dropout rates.
5. The mindset of society needs to change with respect to girl education. Abolition of child marriages should not merely remain on paper but should be implemented fiercely. Moreover, self-defence training should be provided to girls so that they can commute to far off schools easily & comfortably.
6. Effective programmes to address gender concerns, substance abuse, young parenthood and physical health issues have to be conducted in the schools at regular basis and that too for all grade levels.
7. Just by providing mid-day meals and books, students' educational levels can't be enhanced. Rather, teachers have to deal with the child in a holistic manner showing genuine interest and concern. In this context, experiential learning wherein the students learn by experiencing, sharing and reflecting on the experiences gained can prove to be useful.
8. Inservice teacher training has to be provided to the teachers on identifying and handling at risk students added to upgradation of their pedagogical practices. They have to be given ongoing professional learning opportunities, support and feedback. Moreover, these training programmes need to have follow up activities to ensure that teachers make use of honed skills and enhanced attitudes in the schools.
9. Teachers have to be provided training on Multigrade teaching which is basically developing resources and strategies to be employed to engage students of different grades in the learning process. They need to be trained on non-violent methods of disciplining students in schools in general and in multigrade context in specific. Moreover, praise and encouragement can go a long way in building confidence among

students and hence help in reducing dropouts. Also, teachers need to emphasize the importance of education to not only children but also their parents.

10. Educational Technology can effectively support teaching and learning while at the same time adapting to students' learning styles. Individualized Instruction or Learning experiences which are tailor made and flexible as per the individual needs and prior experiences of the child can help in providing better learning outcomes. Graded assignments have to be given to the students as per their abilities to motivate student's participation in the class.

11. Interventions like

- "Adopt a student programme" by senior students or employment seeking youth, an effective programme followed in Atlanta, Georgia can also be tried out in India.
- Remedial instruction in its true spirit has to be taken up in the schools with counselling.
- Programmes are to be conducted for SDMC members and parents on how to help their children and also update them on the courses and their occupational prospects
- Placements after high school can be provided so that with the acquired skill sets students can be placed in any part time employment which would serve the purpose.

12. A consistent Management Information System (MIS) or record keeping system has to be in place which would help not only in providing basic data of students and but also in identifying and tracking them after their schooling.

13. Teacher student ratio need to be restricted to 35:1 as far as possible so that teachers get ample time to interact with all the students. Moreover, it would help the schools to identify, target and monitor potential dropouts.

14. Organising motivational lectures, narrating or interacting with people with success stories, allocating responsibilities of school functions, developing ownership among the students would make them responsible and also in turn improve retention rate.

15. Bal panchayat modelled on the concept of gram panchayats can be an effective medium for empowering children both boys and girls by involving them in decisions about their issues such as child marriage, education, cleanliness of villages, use of mobile phones and health facilities. Various programmes like Peace education, adolescent health education, children 's and women 's rights (gender equality), effects of harmful

traditional practices, effects of violence against/among girls and boys and on how to create harmonious and equal relationships between boys and girls must be included in the school curriculum and implemented in the schools. Also, Career guidance should be provided which can help the students in preparing for their career.

16. Adequate time should be given to sports and other recreational activities so that students' energies can be channelized in a proper direction. All students need to be nurtured in Safe Learning Environments (which includes safety and inclusion) at all grade levels. A safe learning environment should support not only all students, but also teachers, cultures, and subgroups; honors and supports diversity and social justice; treats students equitably; and recognizes the need for feedback, innovation, and second chances. Most importantly it should include a comprehensive discipline plan and violence prevention plan so that crisis management can be done effectively.
17. Mentoring/Tutoring focusing on academic support is an effective practice when addressing the specific needs of the students. It should be provided for high-risk students.
18. Alternative or non-traditional schooling and delivery model options (e.g., alternative times and environments, blended learning, virtual learning, competency-based credit opportunities) provide alternative avenues paying special attention to the student's individual needs.
19. After-School/Out-of-School Opportunities provide students with assistance and recovery as well as high-interest options for discovery and learning. These opportunities often inspire interest in arenas otherwise inaccessible and are important for at-risk students.
20. Active learning and student engagement strategies such as student voice and choice; effective feedback, peer assessment, and goal setting; cooperative learning; thinking critically, creatively, and reflectively; discussion, and two-way communication engage and involve students in meaningful ways as partners in their own learning. Moreover, teachers must provide students with tools and strategies to organize themselves and any new material while reading, writing or doing math.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The reasons for dropout are from the review of the research studies carried out and cannot be generalised for the whole state or country.
2. The dropout data is not available for 2012–13 for many of the states in UDISE.
3. The research studies pertaining to secondary level are not available separately in some of the states.

CONCLUSION

Dropout is a national issue plaguing our country and there is no single step solution to this problem and not all factors of drop out can be answered by the school itself. Rather, they can be achieved through a collaborative effort from all stakeholders - parents, teachers, administrators, community and students. Moreover, students need to be considered at the centre stage of this problem while planning out strategies for intervention.

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