

## Education, growth and development : The nature, extent and the impact of school dropouts in India

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### **ABSTRACT**

Provision of education is unquestionably the paramount important factor to attain higher social and economic development. However, rate of dropout is not consistent among the different sections of the society. This paper analyses the nature, extent and also the reasons for dropout among different categories of the population with the help of official data. This study shows that the percentage of those who never attended is small, while the percentage of those who dropped out is alarmingly high. There are inter-spatial variations in education not only among the states, but also between rural and urban areas. The major reasons for dropout were the high schooling costs, lack of interest in studies and children being withdrawn in order to contribute to the household income. These problems need to be addressed immediately to tackle the problem of dropout. This is particularly important from the viewpoint of the already deprived and vulnerable sections of the society like female population, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population and also the rural population.

**KEY WORDS** : School dropouts, Growth and development, Education

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The concept and phenomenon of education is of modern origin, not only in India, but also in the developing countries and the West. It is only with the emergence of the industrial revolution, that children's education based on school going received a boost in the West. In India too, contemporary education draws from Western origins. The British laid the foundation of modern education in India. Macaulay's Policy of 1835, Sir Charles Wood's Dispatch of 1854 and the Indian Education Commission were the major historical landmarks. The educational organization that emerged gradually possibly will be classified into primary, high school / secondary school and college / university education. Primary education (taught in the regional language) remained neglected while higher education (taught in English) received a fillip. The neglect of the primary education continued till it became a provincial subject. Thus, the modern education system in India, started by the British, remained the preserve of the upper castes and the urban, high and rich classes with a heavy slant on higher education. With India gaining independence, the government attempted to extend the reach of primary education to the masses, particularly in the rural areas. Thus, universalisation of elementary

education became an accepted concept and a national project. This paper analyses the nature, extent and the impact of dropout in India with the help of official data published by the Census of India, NSSO and also the NFHS survey.

### **Opportunity cost of child's time:**

According to the data from the 2001 census, of the 203 million children in the 6-14 age group, there exist about 110 million children who are considered out of school. Data on labour force participation from 2001 census puts the number of working children as 11.28 million. The number of out of school children is however far in excess of the number of working children. This is because the census recognizes only full time work with wages as labour. Researchers are now asking questions about the nearly 100 million children (of whom nearly 60% are girls) who are out of school but not counted as child labourers. (Jha and Jhingran, 2002; Caldwell *et al.*, 1985; Ramachandran, 2003). This vast majority of unaccounted children appear to be engaged in family labour assisting in domestic work at home or in the farm without wages. For such part time child workers, engaged in family labour, work may still

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