

Development of the school education in Islampur sub-division of West Bengal, India

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ABSTRACT

Education is the crucial one of the inputs for human development of individual as well as the country. The present paper attempts to focus on the impressive growth and development and the present scenario of the educational attainment of various blocks in Islampur Sub-division. Although the district Uttar Dinajpur has the lowest rank in the state and the literacy rate of the above sub-division is very much lower than the state average. There has been considerable growth in the student enrolment strength in various level of school education from class V to XII. It is also notable that there has been considerable variation in the progress made in education in the context of gender and social groups across the blocks. Again in spite of some obstacles such as poverty, distance of school from the home, child marriage, maladjustment with the language etc. to pursue education the growth has been largely caused by the massive growth in upper primary school, up gradation either from Junior to secondary or secondary to Higher Secondary, no. of teachers and the implementation of various Govt. schemes like Kanyasree and Sikshashree Prakalpa (for scholarship), Sabuj Sathi (for bi-cycle distribution), free book and dress distribution etc.

Key Words : Educational attainment, Enrolment strength, Social groups, Child marriage

INTRODUCTION

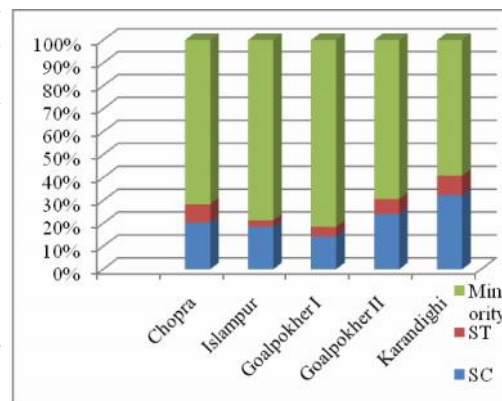
Literacy and educational attainment are the two crucial factors affecting the demographic characteristics as well as the regional development of an area. The United Nations has defined Literacy as the ability of a person to read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his everyday life whereas the educational attainment is generally measured by the percentage distribution of the literate population in various levels of education (Kanitkar and Bhende, 2008). Formal education in a school is not essential for a person to be considered as literate. The present paper is an attempt to focus on the impressive growth and development and the present scenario of the educational attainment of various blocks in Islampur Subdivision. The district Uttar Dinajpur occupied the lowest rank among the districts of West Bengal in term of literacy rates during the period from 2001 to 2011. The Census 2011 also reveals that the district ranked at 494th position out of 595 Indian districts in term of literacy rate. The literacy rate of the Islampur Subdivision (Study Area) has also been very much lower than the state average since the last two censuses. Like the

entire Uttar Dinajpur district, the study area too has a sizeable concentration of SCs, STs and Muslims within its population. According to the census 2011 the proportion of Muslims, SCs, and STs in the sub divisional total population amounted to 66.25% , 21.60% and 5.64 % , respectively. Locational disadvantages, poor infrastructural facilities, lack of awareness, lack of proper attention on behalf of the Govt., nature of economic activities, very low rate of urbanization, social aspiration/ attitude, lower social status of the women and some other causes have compelled the subdivision to remain at the bottom most layer in term of literacy and educational level within the state since the last Three consecutive decades.

Table 1 : SC, ST and Minority population in % (2011)

Name of the Blocks	SC	ST	Minority
Chopra	18.24	7.19	64.01
Islampur	16.99	2.6	72.13
Goalpokher I	13.57	3.93	77.26
Goalpokher II	22.28	6.06	64.14
Karandighi	29.3	7.81	53.71

Source : Census of India-2011



Study area :

History says that on 15th August, 1947 when India got freedom the district West Dinajpur was created as a part of West Bengal and West Dinajpur was further divided on 1st April, 1992 when Uttar Dinajpur came into existence (District Human Development Report, 2010). In the district there are two subdivisions out of which my study area is Islampur Subdivision that consists of five community development blocks namely Chopra, Islampur, Goalpokher – I, Goalpokher-II, and Karandighi, two municipalities *i.e.* Islampur and Dalkhola and two census towns namely Chopra and Haskunda. There are 59 Gram Panchayats covering 744 villages as per census-2011. It is surrounded by Bangladesh on the east, Bihar on the west, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri on the north and Raiganj on the south. The region has an area of 184774 hectares.

Objectives:

- (i) To analyze and highlight the regional imbalances in the growth and development of literacy and educational levels block wise,
- (ii) To explain the disparity of literacy rate and educational attainment among the women and socially disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBC and Minorities.

METHODOLOGY

The present paper is based on the primary as well as secondary data. For primary data collection at least two Higher Secondary School and two Jr. High Schools from each of 5 blocks were selected as samples from which the number of students from the class V to XII during the session 2012 and 2015 have been collected class and category wise *i.e.* general, SC, ST, OBC and Minority. The data collected about enrolled students has been analysed by computing the raw data into growth rate and percentage. Secondary data has been collected through;

- The census-2011,
- District Statistical Handbook of Uttar Dinajpur (2011)
- Uttar Dinajpur District Human Development Report 2010 and various websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islampur subdivision is placed among the least developed subdivisions in West Bengal as well as in India with high level of illiteracy, gender gap in literacy, rural-urban disparity, and disparity by community in literacy level and educational development. The range of rural urban literacy rate (*i.e.* 38.88) in the subdivision is very high which is very worst and unexpected for the region.

Name of the Blocks/ Municipalities(MC)	Rural Literacy Rate (%)			Urban Literacy Rate (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Chopra	59.71	67.24	51.62	68.64	73.9	62.92
Islampur	53.53	61.13	45.41	-	-	-
Goalpokher I	41.82	48.39	34.62	64.85	71.01	58.39
Goalpokher II	46.07	52.46	39.24	-	-	-
Karandighi	53.42	60.43	46.08	-	-	-
Islampur MC	-	-	-	80.7	85.62	75.37
Dalkhola MC	-	-	-	67.67	73.49	61.31

Source : Census of India-2011.

With varying population composition high variability in term of illiteracy rate exists between the rural and urban areas. According to census 2011, 51% people of the total population in the rural areas of Islampur subdivision is literate where the urban literacy rate for the same is 70.5%. Only the Islampur Municipality has the literacy rate (80.7%) more than the state average *i.e.* 76.26 % and the literacy rate is very less in rest blocks and municipalities. The current census also reveals that the literacy rate is lowest in GoalpokherI block where almost 3/4th population belongs to the Muslim community. Again in the light of rural urban framework the lowest male and female literacy rates (*i.e.* 48.39% for male and 34.62% for female) are also found in the rural areas of Goalpokher I. This figure is highest in the urban area of Islampur MC.

If the educational attainment as per field investigation is considered then it is very clear that the percentage of enrolled students in Muslim community is highest in Islampur block (Table 6) due to high literacy rate, high urbanization, and accessibility to the social services in comparison to the other blocks.

Gender Gap :

A major challenge facing the subdivision today is related with the improvement of education and literacy status of women and other disadvantaged groups like Muslims, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. The reason behind the backwardness in this region is mainly due to predominance of weaker sections like Muslims, SCs and STc and partially due to its administrative history (when 5 blocks of Islampur subdivision were transferred from the state Bihar in 1959). Another cause of its backwardness is cultural and linguistic distinctiveness.

There is a marked difference in literacy rate between the male and female population (Table 3). While the male literacy rate in the subdivision as per 2011 census is 58.04 %, same for the female is 43.53 % which are very much lagged behind the state average (*i.e.* 81.69 % for male and

Table 3 : Literacy Rate in the year 2001 and 2011 by sex								
Name of the Blocks/District	2001				2011			
	Total	Male	Female	Gender gap	Total	Male	Female	Gender gap
Chopra	43.3	55.9	29.7	26.2	59.9	67.38	51.85	15.53
Islampur	38.4	50.3	25.7	24.6	53.53	61.13	45.41	15.72
Goalpokher I	31.6	42.6	19.8	22.9	42.26	48.8	35.08	13.72
Goalpokher II	34.1	44	23.6	20.5	46.07	52.46	39.24	13.22
Karandighi	37.6	48.9	25.5	23.3	53.42	60.43	46.08	14.35
Uttar Dinajpur	47.9	58.5	36.5	22	59.07	65.52	52.17	13.35

Source : Census of India 2001 & 2011.

70.54 % for female). From inter block level study it is clear that all the blocks except Goalpokher II have the gender gap more than the district average (*i.e.* 13.35 %). The gender gap is highest in rural areas of Islampur followed by Chopra and Karandighi. Again among the rural areas only Chopra C. D. block has the male literacy rate (67.38 %) more than the district average (62.82 %) and for the urban areas it is higher only in Islampur MC (85.62 %) than the district average (83.91 %).

Table 4 : Literacy Rate of SC and ST by sex (2011)								
Name of the Blocks/District	SC				ST			
	Total	Male	Female	Gender gap	Total	Male	Female	Gender gap
Chopra	67.28	76.02	57.95	18.07	45.03	53.24	36.59	16.65
Islampur	68.3	76.99	58.68	18.31	41.67	50.44	32.82	17.62
Goalpokher I	59.94	67.28	51.75	15.53	28.94	35.66	21.95	13.71
Goalpokher II	55.59	63.34	47.06	16.28	33.7	40.48	26.81	13.67
Karandighi	58.52	68.2	48.14	20.06	42.15	51.38	32.85	18.53
Uttar Dinajpur	61.45	70.2	52.06	18.14	43.26	51.5	34.93	16.57

Source : Census of India-2011

The gender gap regarding SC literacy rate is highest in Karandighi block (20.06 %) and for all other blocks it is less than that of district average (18.14 %) except Islampur. In the light of ST population the gender gap is lower in Goalpokher I & II blocks than the district average (16.57 %) and it is because of very low rate of literacy among both the male and female of ST population. But the good sign is that the gender gap is in reducing trend for all the blocks.

Very interesting thing as per field study is that among the enrolled students the percentage of female students is high (Table 5) compared to the boys for each and every blocks except Goalpokher II and the enrolment of female students is highest (61.47 %) in Karandighi where the proportion of Muslim population is comparatively less (53.71 %) than any other blocks of the study area.

Disparity by social groups:

There lies very strong correlation of literacy rate and level of education with the social background. According to the census 2011, the literacy rate of the district is 59.07 % while same for SCs, STs, and Minorities is 61.45 %, 43.26 % and 51.72 % (2001), respectively. It is also very interesting to note that the literacy level is more or less similar for both the Muslims and non – Muslims for the entire district in general and the subdivision in particular. If the literacy rate among

Name of the Blocks/Subdivision	Educational attainment (%) 2015			Enrolled Students by sex (%)	
	Upper primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Male	Female
Chopra	59.2	29.7	11	47.2	52.8
Islampur	62.5	23.9	13.6	48.16	51.84
Goalpokher I	54.9	32.7	12.4	44.1	55.91
Goalpokher II	53.2	28.2	18.5	52.7	47.3
Karandighi	60.3	24.3	15.3	38.53	61.47
Islampur SD	58.9	27.6	13.5	45.1	54.9

Source : Field Survey.

the SC and ST across the blocks is considered, it is found that SC literacy rate for male and female is above the district average (61.45 %) in Chopra and Islampur and same for the ST is above the district average (43.26 %) in Chopra, Islampur and Karandighi.

If we take the total enrolled students (Table 6) for each block as 100 unit, then the high level of enrolment in Upper Primary section is observed in Karandighi (60.3 %) and Islampur (62.5 %) where the percentage is higher than the subdivisional average (58.9 %). At the level of Higher Secondary section goalpokher II has the highest level of enrolments (18.5 %) and the same is lowest in Chopra block (11%). However, the proportion of enrolled students from class V to XII is highest in Upper Primary section followed by secondary and Higher Secondary section for each and every blocks.

Name of the Blocks/Subdivision	Upper primary						Secondary						Higher Secondary					
	General	SC	ST	OBC	Minority	Total	General	SC	ST	OBC	Minority	Total	General	SC	ST	OBC	Minority	Total
Chopra	4.6	32	5.6	16	43	59	3.6	34	2.7	19	41	30	9.9	55	4.7	11	19	11
Islampur	4.4	20	1.3	5.1	70	63	6.3	11	0.8	8.9	73	24	10	19	1.2	7.8	62	14
Goalpokher I	0.4	46	4.5	1.4	48	55	0.3	42	3.8	1.6	53	33	0.3	41	2.7	0.7	56	12
Goalpokher II	25	44	9.1	4.7	18	53	29	45	2.1	8.7	16	28	26	43	0.4	5.4	25	19
Karandighi	7.2	44	7.5	7.3	34	60	10	44	9.9	8.5	27	24	4.1	47	6.2	3.1	40	15
Islampur SD	5.8	35	4.9	7.4	47	59	6.7	34	3.9	9.5	46	28	8.2	40	3.3	5.4	43	14

Source : Field Survey.

Again social group wise study reveals that, the percentage of enrolled students in HS section for the Minority population is highest in Islampur (61.9 %) and same for secondary and upper primary section is also highest in Islampur where the literacy rate (census 2011) is 53.53 % and for the Islampur MC it is 80.7 %. The percentage of enrolment for Scheduled Caste is higher than the subdivisional average in Goalpokher I, Goalpokher II and Karandighi for all of Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary section.

Growth and Development :

The literacy rate of Uttar Dinajpur was very low (34.6 %) in 1991 but there has been improvements across the last two decades *i.e.* in 1991 to 2001 and 2001 to 2011 it was 47.9 % and 59.07 %, respectively. So the progress in literacy rate for the district was higher during 1991 – 2001

in comparison to 2001 – 2011 due to the division of West Dinajpur in 1992 probably. With the continuous improvement in literacy of male and female, the important development in the district is the reason for the narrowing of gender gap. The gender gap declined from 22 in 2001 to 13.35 in 2011. The maximum reduction in the gender gap has been in the Chopra block where it was 26.2 and 15.53 in 2001 and 2011, respectively. There is spatial variability in the progress of male and female literacy rate across the blocks of Islampur subdivision.

If compared between the census data of 2001 and 2011 (Table 3) regarding the male and female literacy, it is very clear that an outstanding growth in female literacy has taken place for all blocks and it is also noteworthy that growth rates for all the blocks are above the district average (*i.e.* 12 % for male and 42.93 % for female). Furthermore, the growth rate in female literacy rate is 30 % higher than that of male for the district average and the growth of female literacy rate has taken place by more than 70 % for the all blocks except Goalpokher II. Moreover, in the overall progress as far as literacy is concerned it has been highest in the block Karandighi due to notable increment in male and specially female literacy level.

There has been considerable growth in the number of various types of Institutions such as Upper primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary specially in the rural areas over the last ten years. Table 7 shows that the growth has been highest in Upper primary schools compared to the Secondary and Higher Secondary. The credit goes to the RTE-2009 Act under which the Govt. opened and upgraded numerous schools to provide the free and compulsory elementary education to the children of 0 to 14 years old. In the last ten years from 2002 to 2011 the total number of schools (Upper primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary) grew from 83 to 369 but most of the schools do not have adequate and proper infrastructural facilities.

Table 7 : No. of Institution in the year 2002 and 2011						
Name of the Blocks/Subdivision	No. Of Schools in 2002			No. Of Schools in 2011		
	Upper Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Upper Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary
Chopra	6	7	3	21	18	9
Islampur	10	3	2	41	20	10
Goalpokher I	9	3	3	41	17	11
Goalpokher II	6	7	5	53	20	16
Karandighi	8	8	3	48	24	20
Islampur SD	39	28	16	204	99	66

Source : Census of India-2011 and DHDR-2010,Uttar Dinajpur.

Table 8/A : Growth Rate in educational attainment during the period 2012 - 2015								
Name of the Blocks	Growth in Upper primary section							
	Total	Boys	Girls	General	SC	ST	OBC	Minority
Chopra	_.01	_.02	0.01	_.08	_.08	0.41	0.1	_.02
Islampur	0.07	_.03	0.2	0.54	0.29	0.34	_.38	0.05
Goalpokher I	_.04	_.12	0.04	_.52	_.06	0.51	_.09	_.04
Goalpokher II	_.1	_.05	_.14	0	_.27	0.52	_.25	0.33
Karandighi	0.05	0.06	0.04	_.50	_.03	0.02	0.24	0.57
Islampur SD	0.01	_.03	0.05	_.23	_.04	0.26	_.03	0.08

Source : Field Survey.

If we compare the enrolment pattern of the students across the blocks then the enrolments on an average has continued to increase from 2012 to 2015 for all the blocks with a slight category and gender wise variability. The average growth (-0.03) of enrolments in upper primary section for the boys is negative for all the blocks except Karandighi. But same for the girls is very positive for all blocks with exception of Goalpokher II which indicates that more girls students are being retained within the elementary education system in Islampur Subdivision. Again except Chopra and Goalpokher I all the other blocks are receiving more girls students in Higher Secondary section.

If the social groups wise enrolment pattern is taken into consideration then, the highest growth rate among the ST students can be seen compared to all other groups for all the blocks in upper primary section (Table 8/A). Again in the same section for the Minority the growth rate is highest (.57) in Karandighi. The most probable reason behind which is the highest growth rate of female literacy during the last decades.

Table 8/B : Growth Rate in educational attainment during the period 2012 - 2015

Name of the Blocks	Growth in Secondary section (2012-2015)							
	Total	Boys	Girls	General	SC	ST	OBC	Minority
Chopra	0.08	0.1	0.07	-.08	0.03	0.17	0.46	0.01
Islampur	0.05	-.05	0.15	0.21	-.40	0	0.11	0.16
Goalpokher I	0.26	0.01	0.51	-.62	0.1	0.66	0.14	0.41
Goalpokher II	0.19	0.16	0.21	0.7	-.18	0	1.21	1.42
Karandighi	0.03	-.05	0.07	-.23	-.19	0.45	0.97	0.45
Islampur SD	0.11	0.02	0.19	0.04	-.08	0.39	0.46	0.23

Source : Field Survey.

In the secondary section the major improvements are evident among the OBC for all the blocks ; among ST for Chopra (.17), Goalpokher I (.66) and Karandighi (.45) and among Minority for all the blocks in general and Goalpokher I (.41) and Goalpokher II (1.42) in particular. The enrolment pattern of Higher Secondary section reveals that the growth rate is very positive in only Islampur block for all the communities. Again, for all the blocks the growth rate among Minority students has been positive and the same among SC has been negative in Goalpokher I (-0.29) only.

Table 8/C : Growth Rate in educational attainment during the period 2012 -15

Name of the Blocks	Growth in Higher Secondary section (2012-2015)							
	Total	Boys	Girls	General	SC	ST	OBC	Minority
Chopra	0.01	0.33	-.20	0.04	0.03	-.07	-.15	0.06
Islampur	0.33	0.3	0.37	0.31	0.29	8	0.94	0.28
Goalpokher I	-.17	-.13	-.11	-.71	-.29	0.42	-.69	0.1
Goalpokher II	0.24	0.2	0.27	0.09	0.2	-.9	0.06	1
Karandighi	0.02	-.03	0.05	-.81	0.19	-.45	-.39	1.12
Islampur SD	0.06	0.11	0.03	-.35	0.02	-.27	-.03	0.36

Source : Field Survey.

Key factors for the impressive growth:

The above growth in term of literacy rate and educational attainment with spatial disparity has been caused mainly by the initiation and implementation of various educational schemes over the last decade on behalf of the Govt. like,

- Backward Classes Welfare Department (BCWD) of Uttar Dinajpur has implemented

various educational schemes for both Pre Matric and Post Matric stage for the benefit of SC, ST, OBC and Minority students. A new educational scheme under pre Matric stage namely “Sikshashree” has been started from the financial year 2013-2014 for giving the benefits through the savings bank account to the Sc and St Students.

- West Bengal Govt. has also launched a new educational scheme namely “Kanyashree Prakalpa” on October 1, 2013 to provide scholarship to girls from economically backward backgrounds as well as to prevent forced child marriage. Under this scheme an annual scholarship of Rs.- 500/- to girls between 12 and 18 years (class VIII to XII) is provided and finally these girls get Rs. 25000 after attaining 18 years of age if they remain unmarried.

- In order to increase the accessibility to school another new scheme in coordination with BCWD namely “Sobuj Sathi Prakalpa” has been launched for providing bi-cycles to all school going students of class IX to XII. The govt. has plans to provide bi-cycles to the students of other lower classes in future.

- The students of class V to VIII (*i.e.* Upper primary section) are provided with all the books free of cost through the observation of Book Day on 2nd January of each academic year. Furthermore , recently the students of secondary and higher secondary are also being provided some books with free of cost.

- Again implementation of “Mid-day-meal” scheme under the Food Security Act is also very crucial in order to ensure the free and compulsory school education and prevent dropout rate among the students of upper primary section.

Obstacles:

Despite of the significance progress in literacy in the Subdivision there has also been negative growth in some blocks with reference to various social groups for the earlier said sections. The incidences of low growth are due to ;

- Large distance of the schools from the students homes,
- Poverty due to which the families that send their children to school can’t pay the minimum cost of study,
- Low student – teacher ratio and lack of teaching and Non-teaching staffs as a result of which the classes are often hampered and the students become discouraged to attend the school,
- Lack of proper utilization of Govt. aid for various causes, and
- Lack of proper infrastructural facilities such as inadequate class room, lack of laboratory, library etc. Although the present Govt. increased the focus on girls toilet construction but these are not properly maintained and unhygienic in most of the schools.

Suggestions:

In my view point the following points may be suggested for the more growth and developments in term of literacy and education in the study area:

- Effort should be made to increase the number of schools in Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary section as the dropout rate is higher in these sections than the primary section,
- Attempt should be made to increase the number of female teacher in order to reduce the dropout of girls students,
- Student-teacher ratio should be increased according to RTE Act-2009,
- Public expenditure on education should be increased and proper utilization of the grant should be ensured,

- All the infrastructural facilities and amenities should be proper maintained, and
- The families who will send their each and every children to the school up to the Higher Secondary section, may be awarded, and
- Above all, we all should be aware about the child marriage, child labour, and gender inequality,

Conclusion:

Lastly the above discussion gives the clear picture of the block level progress in literacy rate and educational attainment in Islampur subdivision. Although some problems like low student – teacher ratio, poverty, few no. of school per village, etc. persists in the area, but these are now being addressed by the implementation of various govt. educational schemes. Specially the educational attainment among the girls students of SC, ST, OBC and Muslim community has been increased very rapidly. If these attempts are being carried on, then the subdivision undoubtedly will come out from its traditional bottom layer position and will occupy at least the middle position in the near future in term of human development in general and educational development in particular. Again as the quality of education in Secondary and Higher Secondary section depends on the Upper Primary section, so without improving the quality of learning and teaching in this section the quality of Secondary and Higher Secondary section cannot be improved.

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