



Parallel Education System: A Micro-Level Study of Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India

Das Chandra Kanta

Raghnathganj High School, Raghnathganj, Murshidabad, West Bengal, INDIA

Available online at: www.isca.in

Received 23th December 2012, revised 31st December 2012, accepted 6th January 2013

Abstract

Education is the basic empowerment tool for the weaker section of society. Infrastructural development of the schools is getting maximum priority under the financial assistance from different schemes. But, the quality of education in the different Govt. aided schools is degraded. As a result of this the parallel education system like private schools and private tuitions are getting priority in the society of West Bengal. This parallel system is trying to collapse the school education system. The present research article brings the ground truth reality about the emergence of the parallel education system from the point of view of Murshidabad district in West Bengal.

Keywords: Education, quality of education, parallel education system, gross enrolment ratio and pupil teacher ratio..

Introduction

Education is the basic means to eradicate the traditional inequalities, orthodoxies and to empower the poor and marginalized sections of Indian society. As per the norms of United Nations Second Millennium Development Goal to achieve universal primary education by 2015, India has set the target for 'Universalizing' elementary education based on three broad parameters i.e. universal access, universal retention and universal achievement. In a study in 2012, Kundu stated that as it is the first stage of formal education, primary education (Class I-IV) bears the responsibility for upgrading the children with the basic knowledge of reading – writing, general mathematics and science¹. In 2003 Rana remarked that the spread of primary education helps to overcome the traditional inequalities of caste, class and gender². In another paper in 2006, Pritchett termed Poor is not only incorporated with the question about low income—it is also about vulnerability, exclusion and isolation, unaccountable institutions, and powerlessness³. The goal of empowering poor, marginalized women and men can be made true through primary education, the minimum strata of elementary education.

The central government as well as the state government has launched various programmes such as MDM (Mid Day Meal), SSM (Sarva Shiksha Mission), SSK (Sishu Shiksha Karmasuchi), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Integrated Child Development Schemes (ICDS) and act such as Right to Education Act- the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education by the Parliament on 4 August 2009, this came into force on 1 April, 2010.

In a student's school life the interim period between primary school level (class I-IV) and higher secondary level (class XI-

XII) is called secondary stage. The Secondary education (class V – X) performs as bridge between primary education and entry into the higher education. According to a study done by Gupta in 2006, the main objective of secondary education is to provoke among the pupils qualities of leadership needed in different walks of life⁴. The secondary education is very crucial in the educational hierarchy because it prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of works. Madhyamik Shiksha Kendra (MSK) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan have been introduced by the State and Central Governments respectively to facilitate the Secondary Education.

GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) is defined as the percentage of the students' enrolment in the classes to the estimated child population in those particular age groups. GER is a significant measurement to evaluate the status of the education in any regions. Basically it depends on various infrastructural facilities provided by the Government.

such as easy access to schools; better connectivity; facilities of drinking water, toilet, electricity, sufficient good class rooms in the schools. Besides, there are some socio-cultural-economical parameters that can influence the GER. Due to the implementation of above mentioned programmes and act, GER of the students in the Govt. aided primary and secondary schools in all over West Bengal get a hike. Murshidabad district has no exception in this regard. But, whenever an insight study is done about the quality of education in the Govt. aided primary and secondary schools in Murshidabad district, it depicts a blackish picture.

The planners have given emphasis on the GER. But, the importance of quality of education should not be ignored. Without ensuring the quality of education, the figure of GER is

meaningless. If the student in primary level does not possess the basic educational skills, the education will become a nightmare to the student. Later it will create lots of drop-out cases in Upper-primary and Secondary levels and the so called educated generations will become the undesirable dependant of the society. Whenever the quality of education will be degraded, the emergence of private investment in education will become inevitable. Parallel education system can (private schools and private tutors) bifurcate the education system into two directions – education for middle and upper classes and education for lower and lower-middle classes.

Research Methodology

Objectives: The objective of the present paper is to comparative analysis of the performance level of the primary students in Private and Govt. aided schools. It also deals with the degradation of infrastructural facilities and quality of educations in the Govt. aided schools.

Study Area: The present study area, district of West Bengal i.e. Murshidabad, lies between 23° 43' 30" and 24° 50' 20" north latitudes and 87° 49' 17" and 88° 46' east longitudes (Figure-1). It covers an area of about 5341 sq. km. Murshidabad belongs to mature deltaic part (except Kandi sub-division) of ever large Gangetic drainage system of India. Bhagirathi, the

distributaries of the Ganges flows almost in southern direction along the middle portion of district, dividing it into two almost equal but distinct portions in terms of physio-geological characteristics. The western portion of the river is locally known as Rarh while the eastern portion is named as Bagri.

The district has 26 Community Development Blocks distributed over five sub-divisions. The population density of the study area is 1101 per sq. km (Census of India, 2001). Murshidabad is one of the most underdeveloped districts in India. According to District wise Human Development Index in West Bengal, 2004 the HDI and GDI Rank of Murshidabad district were 15th and 16th respectively among the seventeen districts of then West Bengal. On the basis of Provisional Census Report of West Bengal, 2011 the male and female literacy rate of Murshidabad district are 71.02% and 63.88% respectively. The district occupies Muslim population of 63.67 percent of the total population of the district i.e. highest in the state and occupies a prominent figure in the country. Various governmental as well as non-governmental reports identify Muslim community as the most socio-economically backward minority groups in India. In 2006 Report of Sachar Committee placed Murshidabad as one of the backward district out of 604 districts in India in terms of literacy, opportunities and awareness levels of specifically Muslim Women⁵.

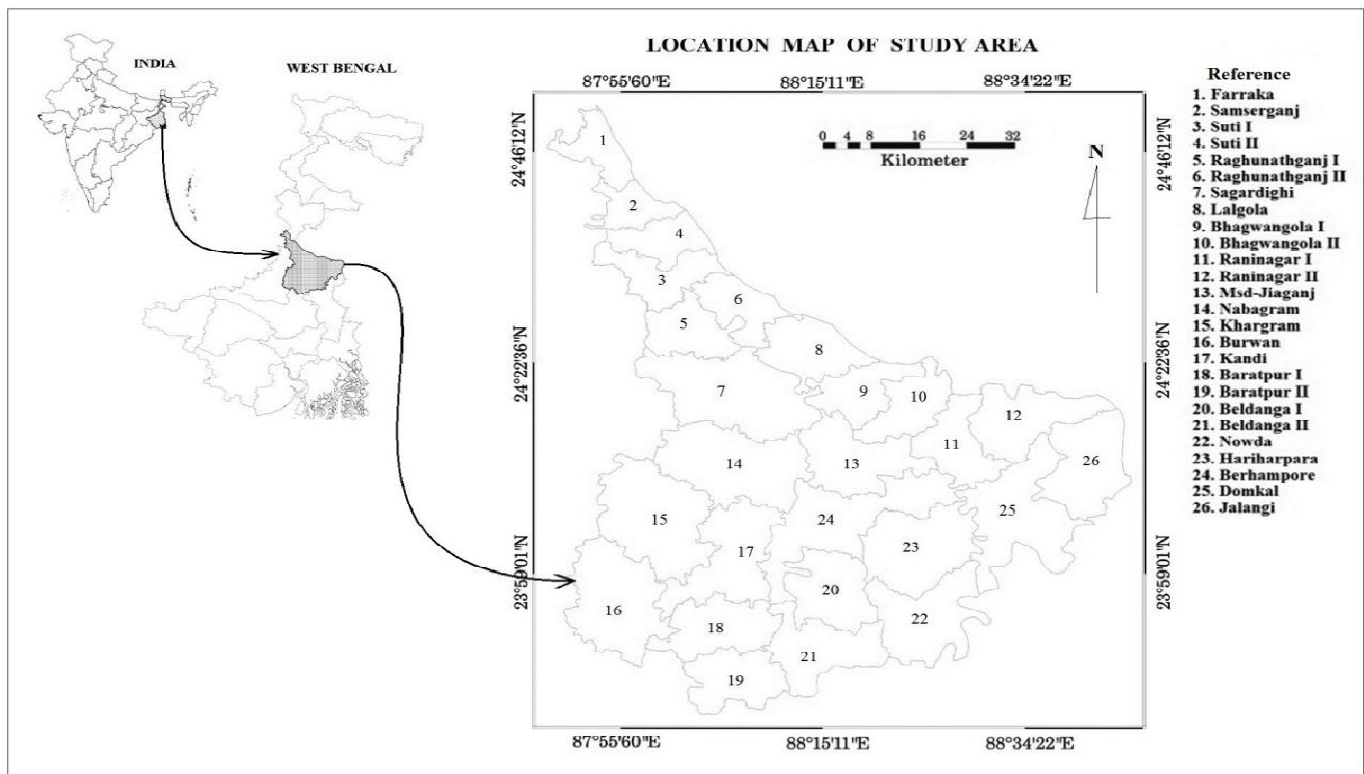


Figure - 1

Figure-1
Location Map of Murshidabad District

Database and Methodology: As it is an empirical study, all the working data and information are obtained from the offices of different Govt. aided secondary and higher secondary schools. Simple Tabulation method has applied to chalk out the present paper.

Results and Discussion

Raghunathganj high school is situated at Jangipur Municipality in Raghunathganj-1 block in the district Murshidabad, West Bengal. The students of neighboring regions want to get admission in this popular Govt. aided higher secondary school. It is one of the most successful and prestigious Govt. aided higher secondary school in Jangipur sub-division in the district. In between the students of class IV of Govt. aided and Private primary schools of the surroundings, the comparative result structure of the entrance test organized by this school to get admission in the class V, can be highlighted by the following table.

The entrance test was conducted for the academic year 2011 and the full marks were fifty. All the questions were very simple and were selected from the class IV syllabus. According to grading system of the result, below 'D' grade (25% of the total marks) means disqualification. The above table reveals that about 67% of the students from Govt. aided primary school have no eligibility to get admission in the class V. While, in the case of Private primary school the rate is only 15%. Only 0.33% of the students from the Govt. aided primary schools obtain the optimum range of marks (41-50). While, in the case of Private primary school the rate is 11%.

So, the Governmental primary education system in West Bengal is seriously damaged. The blessing of Sarva Shiksha Mission only creates material development. The quality of education is continuously down falling in West Bengal. As the population density in this district is very high, all the Govt. aided primary schools in the district are suffered from various problems such as higher Pupil Teacher Ratio, lower Teacher Institution Ratio, lower Classroom Institution Ratio and higher Student Classroom Ratio. The education system in this state is going to be privatized very rapidly. Not only the upper class families, but the middle and lower-middle class families also keep their trust on the private primary school for their children's future. For the common people the 'meaningless' or 'aimless' public education system and for the higher class the 'quality education' – the gap between these two systems is becoming wider.

Six secondary schools, one from each Nabagram and Raghunathganj-1 block and two from each Sagardighi and Suti-1 block in Murshidabad district, are taken to conduct an education survey to examine empirical situation of the pupil-teacher ratio, class section wise number of students and the rate of class room presence of class X students during the academic calendar 2011. The findings are-

Pupil-Teacher Ratio in Secondary Schools in West Bengal is lower than the National Ratio: The total number of students and teachers in those secondary schools are 11,156 and 212 respectively. Therefore, the pupil-teacher ratio is about 52 that are much higher than the national ratio of India, 31⁶. This adverse ratio is more prominent in the large and senior secondary schools.

Class Section Wise Huge Number of Students: The total number of students and class section in those schools are 11,156 and 100 respectively. Therefore, the class section wise number of students is near about 111. Each and every high school in West Bengal sets up lots of new class rooms under the financial assistance of the central government scheme Sarva Shiksha Mission. But, the availability of class rooms is low in accordance with the student pressure.

Due to the higher Pupil Teacher Ratio and higher Student Classroom Ratio, it is very difficult to maintain the minimum standard of teaching-learning process, educational atmosphere in the classroom and timely and proper accomplish of the syllabus. Therefore, maximum numbers of students have to depend upon the private tutors. Due to excessive dependence upon the private tutors, the students loss their intentness and concentration for the classroom teaching and creates disruption from the classroom teaching. They lose their eagerness for classroom teaching that causes higher incidence of classroom absence. First secondary school leaving examination that calls Madhyamik Examination in West Bengal is conducted by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) at the end of class X. It is the first most vital examination in the students' life. But, they do not hang on the school education for the preparation of the examination. On the other hands the teachers also lose their enthusiasm for classroom teaching. Rather, they also engage in private tuition for extra financial benefits. It is the most difficult situations for the meritorious but needy students who neither can achieve proper guidance from the schools nor bear the cost of sufficient private tutors.

Table-1
Comparative Result Structure of the Entrance Test

| Ranges of the Total Marks in the Entrance Test | 0 | 1-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 |
|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| The Students of Govt. aided Primary School (%) | 6.56 | 60.33 | 20.98 | 8.20 | 3.60 | 0.33 |
| The Students of Private Primary School (%) | 1.37 | 13.70 | 19.18 | 20.50 | 34.25 | 11.00 |

Source: Computed by the author

Table-2
Rate of Classroom Presence of the class X students in 2011

| Roll No. of the students in class X | % of class room presence(January-September, 2011 = 150 working days) | Roll No. of the students in class X | % of class room presence(January-September, 2011 = 150 working days) |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 01 | 66 | 60 | 24 |
| 10 | 53 | 70 | 27 |
| 20 | 39 | 80 | 33 |
| 30 | 45 | 90 | 20 |
| 40 | 32 | 100 | 20 |
| 50 | 41 | 110 | 22 |

Source: Computed by the author.

From the table-2 it is vivid that if the 60% attendance of total working days of the schools in an academic calendar is treated as mandatory, most of the students will lose the eligibility for the examination. Students with lower roll numbers have no links with their schools. All the schools act just like centers of registration and official works on behalf of the Board to conduct the examination.

Conclusion

Government can re-arrange the Teacher Pupil Ratio (PTR) more practical through launching the compulsory transfer programme for the teachers from the schools having higher PTR towards lower ones.

Socio-economic and educational development of a society are positively correlated. Except the educational development, Government should also take care about proper implementation of various developmental schemes such as MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) etc. to increase the income of the parents to a significant level. Once the income level gains a momentum, it will automatically brighten the educational opportunities for the future generations.

The fund of Sarva Shiksha Mission should properly utilize for the infrastructural development in the primary schools so that the teaching learning process becomes more comfortable. Teachers have special duty to encourage all the children about the usefulness of primary education through making the teaching-learning process more enjoyable.

It is very difficult to reduce the dependence of the students upon private tuition through prohibiting private tuition by the school teacher. Rather the school authority can increase the time span of the classes just like the private tuition so that thoroughly discussion is possible within the periphery of classrooms. The school authority can organize the teacher-guardian meeting in regular interval, so that the guardian can know their children's performances.

Government should take necessary actions to recruit more trained teachers in accordance with the number of students to bring Pupil Teacher Ratio as lower as the National level so that every student

in the classroom gets the equal care⁷. Government should take necessary actions to check the population pressure, if the government wants to ensure quality education. If the population density remains so high, any fruitful measure to ensure quality education will be collapsed in near future.

Acknowledgement

The author is very grateful to all his colleagues to gather the data and information from the offices of different secondary and higher secondary schools in Murshidabad district.

References

1. Kundu S.K., Regional Disparities of Primary Educational Facilities in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, India: Some Findings, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(8), 81-90 (2012)
2. Rana K., Das S., Sengupta S. and Rafique A., State of Primary Education in West Bengal, *Economic & Political Weekly*, May 31 (2003)
3. Pritchett L. and Pande V., Making Primary Education Work for India's Rural Poor: A Proposal for Effective Decentralization, Social Development Papers, South Asia Series, Social Development Department, *World Bank, USA*, (2006)
4. Gupta R., Factors Underlying Marks in Madhyamik Examination of West Bengal, *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 32(2), 99-10 (2006)
5. Sachar R., Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India- A Report, *Prime Minister's High Level Committee, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India* (2006)
6. Selected Educational Statistics: 2003-04, *Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India*, Obtained from Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Kolkata, 66 (2006)
7. Basumatary R., School Dropout across Indian States and UTs: An Econometric Study, *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(4), 28-35 (2012)