

Status of Elementary Education among the Mising Girls in Dhemaji and Jorhat Districts of Assam

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Abstract

Education of women is an important aspect for boosting the social and economic development of the country. Promotion of Girls Education particularly at Elementary Level is to bring certain benefits for the Society in the form of social development and reconstruction. The National commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the 6- 14 years age group is now a Fundamental Right of every child in India after the passing of the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act in December, 2002. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, or 'Education for All' programme recognizes that ensuring girl's education requires changes not only in the education system but also in societal norms and attitudes. The present paper is an attempt to study the present status of elementary education of the girls of Mising tribes of Dhemaji and Jorhat district of Assam in regards to enrolment, retention, dropout and gender disparity. Mising is the second largest Tribal community of Assam after the Bodo. They are mostly found in the eight districts of upper Assam, namely, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Sonitpur. It is one of the most backward tribes of Assam; especially women of their community are backward to a great extent. Mising tribe is in poor and low position in the field of education. Gender gap in literacy among Mising has been recorded to be the highest. Due to high illiteracy rate among the girls of the Mising community women empowerment is yet to be achieved in the proportional way. Therefore, the investigator has decided to undertake a study on the Misings of Assam specially of Jorhat and Dhemaji district, with a view to focusing on the issues of woman empowerment and socio-economic position of the women of the Mising tribes therein.

Keywords: Scheduled tribe, Mising Tribe, Elementary Education Lower Primary and Upper Primary school.

1. Introduction

The endeavour of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in India is a constitutional directive under the article 45. The Constitution of free India proposed to achieve the target of universalization within a period of ten years (i.e., by 1960). Although many such targets passed, the universalisation of Elementary education has been still a distant dream. The Education Commission (1964-66), the National Policy of Education (1968) and the National Policy of Education (NPE, 1986) and its Programme of Action (POA, 1992) have all emphasised the need to implement the programme of UEE at the earliest. There have been a number of educational initiatives from the central and the state governments to achieve the goals of UEE. Some of these initiatives are Operation Blackboard (1986) Non formal Education (1986), Mid-Day Meal Scheme (1995), District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) and District Lower Primary Education Programme (DPEP, 2004) and the SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA, 2001) etc. The Constitution

(86th amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of 6-14 years as a Fundamental Right. In August 2009, Parliament passed the historic Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Article 21-A and the RTE Act came into effect on 1 April 2010.

Being situated on the North Eastern corner of India; blended with hills and plains, Assam presents a unique panorama with as many as 23 scheduled tribe communities.¹ Among these divergent Tribal communities, Mising is the second largest Tribal community of Assam after the Bodo (40.9%). As per 2001 census their total population is 587,310 which constituted around 17.8% of the total tribal population of the state. They are mostly found in the eight districts of upper Assam namely Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Sonitpur. Keeping this in mind the investigator made an attempt to study the

¹ As per The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976

present status of Elementary education among the Mising girls of Dhemaji and Jorhat District of Assam.

Objectives of the Present Study

In this paper the primary concern is with the present status of elementary education of among the Mising girls of Jorhat and Dhemaji district of Assam. An analysis of the status of primary education of the North Eastern States is done on the basis of several parameters like enrollment, retention, dropouts and gender disparity, access, rate, dropout rate, number of teachers working in primary schools, teacher pupil ratio in school and other infrastructure facilities.

Operational Definition

(i) Status of Elementary Education: Status of Elementary Education refers to the enrollment, gender disparity, retention, and dropouts in the Elementary level of education.

(ii) Elementary Education: It refers to the first formal stage of education from class I-VIII or the age group of 6-14. As per Right to Education Act 2009 "Elementary education means the education from first class to eighth class"².

(iii) Lower Primary School: Lower Primary School refers all schools imparting Elementary education from class I to V.

(iv) Upper Primary School: Upper Primary School refers all schools imparting Elementary education from class VI to VIII.

(v) Misings: The Misings, an Indo-Mongoloid group of people, living in the eastern region of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, India. The Misings were known to the outside world earlier as *MIRI* and included as such in the list of Scheduled Tribes (Plains) of Assam, vide Constitution Order, 1950³

(vii) Mising Girls: The Girl child belonging to the Mising tribes who are studying in class I-VIII

Review of related literature

Devi, K.G. (1983) studied the "Problems of Dropout in Lower Primary Schools of Manipur with special reference to Imphal Town" and found that at the Lower Primary course girls dropout more than the boys. Ekka, E.M (1990) in his studies found that the tribes, in general, had not been able to enjoy fully the benefits derived from the economic schemes because of their educational backwardness. Majaw, S. J. N. (1991) in her study found that more boys than girls had been enrolled in both rural and urban schools though the number of girls enrolled at

higher levels kept increasing in the rural areas. Chauhan, S.C (1993) examined the extent of geographical locale and its influence on the educational achievement of tribal children in Bastar District of the then Madhya Pradesh. He found that there was no significant difference in the educational facilities in the schools of Northern, Middle and Southern parts of Bastar District. Suera, Govindbhai S. (1994) studied contribution of the "tribal sub-plan" in the education of Adivasi of Sabarkantha District. The study focused on the problems of Lower Primary education and effectiveness of the tribal sub-plan in all round development of the Adivasis. Anand, G. (1995) examined wastage in Lower Primary education among tribal children. He found that the absenteeism rate was the highest in class I pupils, decreased in classes II to V. Marang (Doley), Baby's (2002) study on "Role of Women in the socio economic life of a tribal community: A case study of the Mising of Assam" reveals that on social status Women's position is quite inferior to that of men. Mising women are socially and economically depressed souls of the community. Deka, R.M. (2007) studied the educational problems of Mising girls in secondary stage of education in Assam with special reference to Lakhimpur district. She found that frequent flood, lack of awareness of the parents, social customs and beliefs are some common problems in regards to the education of the Missing girls.

Rationale of the Study

Education is a major factor for the development of a country. Unfortunately, traditional tribal societies in India have failed miserably in harnessing the true power of education in bringing about the desired changes in them. The study is significant from the point of view of nation's goal of equity and to diminish the disparity among the unreached. These unreached and deprived groups of people are to be paid attention in education. It is quite often stated that scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and some other socially disadvantaged groups of Indian society are lagging behind in the sphere of enrollment, retention and achievement as well. An in-depth study of the problem of Elementary education among the children of Mising communities is essential to find out exactly the reasons of the problems of universalisation of Elementary education with remedial measures.

Methodology

The study is purely based on field survey. So, descriptive study method is used to collect data.

Population

The population of the present study comprises of all the government and provincialised schools of Dhemaji and Jorhat district of Assam. Moreover, the girl students of Mising tribes studying at Elementary level of Dhemaji and

² 'The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009', page no 2

³ As per The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976

Jorhat district, the teachers, heads of the institutions and guardians of the Mising girls are also included in the population. In Dhemaji district there are three educational blocks, namely Bordoloni, Dhemaji and Murkongselek, with 1136 numbers of Lower Primary and 268 numbers of Upper Lower Primary schools (total 1304).⁴ In Jorhat district, there are six educational blocks, namely, Central Jorhat, East Jorhat, Jorhat, North West Jorhat, Majuli and Titabor with 1631 numbers of Lower Primary and 322 numbers of Upper Primary schools (total 1953).⁵

From the total number of government and provincialised schools in both the districts, only those Elementary schools are considered as population where minimum 70 percent are Mising students. In Dhemaji district there are 373 numbers of schools out of 1304, where 70 percent students are Mising. On the other hand, in Jorhat district there are 252 numbers of Elementary schools out of 1953, where 70 percent students are Mising.⁶

Table No: 1 Population of the study

Name of Districts	Name of Educational Blocks	Total no of School	Total no of Mising School
DHEMAJI	Dhemaji	741	158
	Bordoloni	243	90
	Murkongselek	320	125
	Total	1304	373
JORHAT	Central Jorhat	264	35
	East Jorhat	281	8
	Jorhat	323	7
	Majuli	547	160
	North West Jorhat	252	28
	Titabar	286	14
	Total	1953	252

Sample

Regarding the selection of sample size the purposive sampling method is used. The researcher selects a sample of 10% of Mising Elementary schools i.e. 37 schools from Dhemaji and 10% of Mising Elementary schools i.e. 25 schools from Jorhat district, where more than 70% students are Mising. Moreover from the selected schools the researcher has selected all the heads of the institutions as the sample for the study.

⁴ Source: office of the District SarbaSikshaAbhijan Mission, Jorhat (2012-13)

⁵ Source: office of the District SarbaSikshaAbhijan Mission, Dhemaji (2012-13)

⁶ Source: office of the Mising Autonomous Council, Gogamukh, Dhemaji (2012-13)

Table No: 2 Sample of the Study

Serial No	Name of Districts	No of Mising Schools	No of Head of the institution
1	Dhemaji	37	37
2	Jorhat	25	25
Total		62	62

Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

For the study an information schedule for District Elementary Education Office, an information schedule for District SarvaShikshaAbhiyan Mission Office and an information schedule for Office of the Head of the institution to elicit the information regarding present status of Elementary education.

Procedures used in data collection

Data for the study are both Lower Primary and secondary. The secondary data is mainly the available studies, reports, government orders and notifications, newspaper reports, etc. It covers both national and state level RTE related details. Primary data are collected from 62 sampled schools and from by interviewing the 62 Head of the institution in the month of June, August and September, 2014. School environment of each school was observed by the investigator at various situations. Data are also collected from office of the District Mission Coordinator (DMC) & District Elementary Education Officer (DEEO) in both the district. The investigator met the respondents and established a good relationship with them. Data used in the study are both quantitative and qualitative.

Analysis and interpretation of data

To analyse the data regarding status of Elementary education among the Mising girls of Jorhat and Dhemaji district, both quantitative and qualitative method is being used. A brief account of it is given below.

Enrollment: The enrollment rate is considered as an indicator of access of Elementary education. Enrolment of Girls is an important aspect for the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) and Education for All (EFA) as well.

There is no appreciable improvement in enrolment of Mising girls at Lower Primary level. Similar is the situation at upper primary level as well. This reflects that in spite of various measures undertaken at both national and state levels, the situation with regard to education of girls still need a lot of improvement

Dropout Rate: The dropout rate of students at the Elementary level is an important indicator of the efficiency of the education system.

Table No: 3 Overall Dropout rates of Mising students at Elementary level of Dhemaji and Jorhat District

District	School	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total (%)
Dhemaji	Lower Primary	17.83	12.81	15.70
	Upper Primary	12.86	8.99	10.8
	Elementary level	15.34	10.9	13.25
Jorhat	Lower Primary	23.67	19.5	23.19
	Upper Primary	15.74	13	14.42
	Elementary level	19.70	16.25	18.80

Table shows that the dropout rate of the Mising Lower Primary schools in Dhemaji district is 15.70% where girl's dropout rate (12.81%) is less than the boy's dropout rate (17.83%). Table shows that dropout is still present in the Mising Upper Lower Primary level in Dhemaji which is 10.8 %. Here also girl's dropout (8.99%) is less than boy's dropout (12.16%). Table shows the dropout rate of Lower Primary level in Jorhat district is 23.19% where boy's dropout (23.67%) is more than girl's dropout (19.05). Table 10 shows that dropout is still present in the Upper Lower Primary level in Jorhat which is 14.42 %. Here also girl's dropout (13%) is less than boy's dropout (15.74)

The overall dropout in Elementary level of Dhemaji is 13.25% where girl's dropout is 10.9% and boys drop out is 15.34%. On the other hand the overall dropout in Elementary level of Jorhat is 19.70% where girl's dropout is 16.25% and boys drop out is 18.80%. In both the cases the status of Mising students is far from reality, the dropout is more than double in both the cases. Interestingly though the girl's dropout is less than boy's dropout in both the district but the girl's dropout is more than state and national level as per DISE 2013-14.

Retention: Universal enrollment alone cannot ensure education for all. The enrolled children must complete the full cycle of Elementary education. This study attempts at knowing the situation of participation of the Mising children in Elementary education. The enrollment and flow of students from grade I to V and VI to VIII, is shown in the table 12. Retention rate is the percentage of the students that completed the five year circle (Grade-I-V) of Lower Primary and 3 years cycle of Upper Lower Primary stage (from the children enrolled in grade VI and VIII).

Table No: 4 Overall Retention rates of Mising students in Elementary level of Dhemaji and Jorhat District

District	School	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total (%)
Dhemaji	Lower Primary	84.78	89.66	86.84
	Upper Primary	87.83	91.08	89.2
	Elementary level (Overall)	86.30	90.37	88.02
Jorhat	Lower Primary	77.33	79.36	78.26
	Upper Primary	86.11	90	87.98
	Elementary level (Overall)	81.72	84.68	83.12

The table 16 shows that at the Elementary level of Dhemaji overall retention rate is 88.02% where girl's retention rate (90.37%) is more than boy's retention rate (86.30%) while in Jorhat overall retention rate at the Elementary level is (83.12%). Here also girl's retention rate (84.68%) is more than boy's (81.72%)

Gender Disparity of Mising students in Enrollment: Girl's enrollment to total enrollment is an important indicator of gender equality in school education. The problem of gender disparity is a huge problem in India; we have a long way to go reach gender equality in education system.

Table No: 5 Gender Disparity in Mising student's Enrollment in Elementary level of Dhemaji and Jorhat District

District	School	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Dhemaji	Lower Primary	49.97	50.03
	Upper Primary	54.3	45.7
Jorhat	Elementary level (Overall)	52.13	47.87
	Lower Primary	56.03	43.97
	Upper Primary	55.17	44.83
	Elementary level (Overall)	55.6	44.4

From the above Table 21, it is revealed that at Elementary level of Dhemaji overall boys enrolment is 52.13% and girls enrollment is 47.87%, while in Jorhat overall boys enrollment is 55.6% and for girls it is 44.4%. In both the district girls' enrollment is lower than boy's enrollment. On the other hand, in Jorhat the gap between boys and girls is quite more than Dhemaji

Pupil Teacher Ratio: Teacher is a major component of school education determining the quality of education. Numbers of teachers per school, the Pupil Teacher Ratio, qualification, percentage of female teachers are some crucial information that speaks about the quality of school situation.

Table No: 6 Pupil Teacher Ratio of Dhemaji and Jorhat in the year 2014

Level	Dhemaji	Jorhat	Assam	India
Lower Primary	22:1	18:1	27:1	28:1
Upper Primary	11:1	10:1	15:1	27:1
Elementary level (Overall)	16:1	13:1	16:1	30:1

At the Lower Primary stage, in Dhemaji and Jorhat District the Pupil Teacher Ratio is 22:1 and 18:1 respectively (table 22). In Upper Primary stage the Pupil Teacher Ratio in Dhemaji is 11:1 and in Jorhat 15:1. Overall pupil teacher ratio at Elementary level in Dhemaji is 16:1 and in Jorhat it is 13:1 against the state ratio of 16:1 and national ratio of 30:1. In both the district pupil teacher ratio is reasonably good in comparison to state and national ratio.

*Percentage of Female teacher***Table No: 7** Percentage of Female Teacher in Dhemaji and Jorhat in the year 2014

Level	Dhemaji	Jorhat	Assam	India
Lower Primary	45.59%	35.29%	36.5%	46.7%
Upper Primary	13.98%	15.52%	24.4%	32.3%
Elementary level (Overall)	27.33%	22.83%	41.2%	48.9%

Table 23 shows that in Dhemaji and Jorhat the female teachers occupy only 45.59% and 35.29% respectively in Lower Primary stage against the state percentage of 36.5% and national percentage of 46.7%. While in Upper Primary stage the female teacher in Dhemaji is 13.98% and in Jorhat 15.52% (Table -23) which is below the state (24.4%) and national average (32.3%). Overall female teacher at elementary level in Dhemaji is 27.33% and in Jorhat are 22.83%. In both the district the female teacher is less than male teacher as compared to the state (41.22%) and national (48.9%)

*Single Teacher school***Table No: 8** Percentage of Single Teacher school

Level	Dhemaji	Jorhat	Assam	India
Lower Primary	4.17%	6.67%	10.6%	11.5%
Upper Primary	0	0	0.1%	11.9%
Elementary level (Overall)	2.70%	4%	1.1%	1.2%

The data presented in the above table 24 shows that in Dhemaji district 4.17% of total schools are single teacher school as well as in Jorhat it is 6.67% against the state 10.6% and nationwide 11.5%. However, in Upper Primary stage there is no provision for single teacher school in both the district against the state average of 5.2% and national average of 1.8% (table- 26). Overall single teacher school at Elementary level of Dhemaji is 2.70% and in Jorhat is 4%.

Discussion

India introduced Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE) to ensure that every child, in the age group 6-14, gets free and compulsory education. Some RTE highlights include permanent classrooms, separate toilets for boys and girls, electricity, drinking water, library, playground, a teacher per 30 students in Elementary level, and every teacher to be professionally qualified. A deadline set by India's Supreme Court for all states to meet the Right to Education (RTE) Act goals by March 31, 2013 is expiring now.⁷ In this study it is found

that quality education has not been in place in Dhemaji and Jorhat districts of Assam as per various academic indicators of quality of Elementary education.

Reducing dropout has been one of the targets of RTE Act 2009, but still there is big gap between enrollment and retention. In order to achieve the goal of universalisation of Elementary education, not only all the children must be enrolled in the schools, they should not dropout from any class before completing the full cycle of Elementary education. In this study, it has been found that dropout is still present in Elementary schools of Dhemaji and Jorhat district of Assam and the dropout rate is more than state and national figure. Interestingly though the girl's dropout is less than the boy's dropout in both the district but the girl's dropout is more than state and national level. Many girls leave schools even without completing elementary education. There are many sociocultural, economic and educational barriers, which hinder their participation in education.

Educationists and social scientists tend to believe that the persistent gender bias is rooted in India's failed education system. Therefore it is increasingly stressed that to bring in gender parity one should begin by access to education for all.

Right of children to free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 recognises the importance of providing adequate number of teachers and lays down that the prescribed Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) must be maintained for each school. In Dhemaji and Jorhat District the Pupil Teacher Ratio is reasonably good both in the Lower Primary and Upper Primary stage in comparison to state and national average. In the sampled schools the Teacher Pupil ratio is comparatively less and as such quite satisfactory as per 'RTE act 2009' guideline. After the introduction of the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) for recruitment of teachers since 2012 in Assam, there has been a gradual increase in the number of teachers in the Elementary schools of Dhemaji and Jorhat District of Assam. However, the female teacher ratio is not yet satisfactory though it is felt that students at Elementary level are better looked after by female teachers. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) recommended the need for having a female teacher in every primary school. It is to promote girls towards education by raising the sense of security and providing them a role model. If female teacher is not present in school, girls may not go to school, especially at upper primary level. Progress of a nation thus depends on the quality in education of the women who need to be empowered through effective and innovative strategies.

Conclusion

For any country to grow, it is imperative that it has in place a strong Elementary school driven education system. The Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 came into force on 1 April 2010. It laid down a number of deadlines

⁷ Status of Implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009: Year (2013) A Draft Report by RTE Forum, P 15

for implementation that come to an end on 31st March 2013. While it is undeniable that efforts have been made over the last four years, the reality on the ground is that a radical transformation in the ground has not happened and India's schools remain far from attaining even the minimum norms laid down by the Act. SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) one of the flagship programmes of the Government is being used as the carrier to implement the RTE Act ensuring the basic infrastructure and other requirements. As a result, the enrolment rate has gone up and it has reached near universal access. But there is gap between enrollment and dropout. Reducing dropout has been one of the targets of RTE Act 2009, but still there is a big gap between enrollment and retention and in some cases this gap goes up to 24%. Infrastructure development is the key driver for providing universal Elementary education to the children. Despite tremendous efforts being made on infrastructure development, some of the significant shortages in the provision of infrastructure facilities are still present in both of the districts to meet RTE norms.

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