



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND LITERACY LEVELS AMONG CHILD WORKERS

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Abstract

Millions of children worldwide are impacted by the problem of child labor, which often denies them the chance to get a quality education. When compared to their peers who do not work, young laborers often have far lower levels of literacy and educational achievement. Economic constraints forcing children to contribute to their family's income can result in child laborers missing school entirely or attending just sometimes. They thereby lose out on the crucial advantages of formal schooling for growth, such as the acquisition of cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. Their lack of knowledge not only prevents them from growing personally, but it also reduces their chances of finding work in the future, which feeds the cycle of poverty. These kids often have difficulties in formal education in addition to having little access to non-formal learning materials, which makes their reading and numeracy deficits worse. A child worker's educational results are also greatly influenced by factors including their employment kind, socioeconomic status, and place of employment. A multifaceted approach is needed to address these issues, including policy interventions, educational reforms, and community engagement. This will guarantee that child workers have the chance to improve their literacy levels and receive a quality education, which will ultimately enable them to escape the confines of child labor and achieve better socioeconomic outcomes.

Keywords: Educational Attainment, Literacy Levels, Child Workers

INTRODUCTION

Obtaining an education is both a fundamental right and a fundamental requirement for every individual who is a citizen of a nation. Because it increases individuals's earning potential and enhances their quality of life, obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent is the most important thing that people can do. Individuals gain agency, access to greater employment opportunities, and an improvement in their level of living when they are literate. Improved health, sustainable development, and reduced rates of unemployment and poverty are all attainable outcomes that may be achieved via improved access to excellent education. Every individual has an innate right to get an education, and the formal education system considers elementary school to be an essential component of both individual and community development. Getting an education is of the utmost significance. According to Dey and Rajput (2013), education is the primary factor that drives social developments in the areas of economy, society, culture, and technology. The majority of individuals are of the opinion that it is the single most successful technique for building one's character, conquering challenges, and opening doors to improved chances for long-term health and pleasure. The level of education is one of the most important variables that influences the level of economic development. Indicative as well as a tool for advancement, it fulfills two roles simultaneously. According to Rao (1966), investments in education

often result in a high economic return, and they also increase the amount of labor that is produced in both rural and urban regions. According to Tilak (1986), higher education increases economic productivity, which in turn reduces poverty and contributes to the development of the whole region, which in turn contributes to the development of the nation as a whole. There is a return on investment in education that is not just economic but also social. In order to enhance a country and its people, education alters people's ways of thinking, acting, and attitude; it elevates awareness, forms character, and eventually adds to the prosperity of both the nation and the individual.

Literacy and education

The ability to read and write understanding in any language is what the Census of India (2001) defines as literacy. Literacy rate is the total of all percentages of a population at a certain time who are seven years old or older and can read and write comprehension. Literacy is defined as the capacity to read and write comprehension in any language. To determine the denominator in this scenario, the population that is seven years old or older is taken into consideration. One is regarded to be literate if they are at least seven years old, have the ability to read and write effectively in any language, and have completed their education. According to Khayamkhani and Chaplot (2014), those who belong to this category are also referred to as effective literates. Literacy and education are very important in order to eliminate poverty, encourage intellectual development, and construct human conditions that are peaceful and welcoming toward others. It serves as an important medium for the dissemination of ideas, the acquisition of information, and the comprehension of our surroundings. The development of both individuals and the country is dependent on it. Education is the most important factor in determining the possibility for human advancement in each society (Ibid).

According to Dash (1986), literacy rates are an important measure of both economic and social transformation. It contributes to the raising of awareness and the building of economic foundations on a personal, social, regional, and national level (Rai, 2014). The return on investment in every sector of the economy and government is improved, and it also makes it possible for social progress to be made. As a critical benchmark for the growth of women and other groups who are excluded, it represents an important step forward. Literacy rates are an accurate indication of social and economic success (Pore and Mote, 2010). A population that is more educated is better suited to manage resources, therefore literacy rates are a positive indicator of progress. In spite of this, a great number of developing countries all over the globe, including India, are struggling to overcome the social and economic issues that are brought about by differences in the levels of literacy and education.

Informal, formal, and non-formal education systems are the three primary classifications of educational systems. A formal education may be obtained from establishments that are similar to schools. When it comes to learning, people acquire knowledge via their day-to-day lives, both officially and informally; the former falls somewhere in the center. When it comes to achieving a considerable improvement in educational quality, the "3Rs"—reading, writing, and mathematics—are absolutely necessary. Reading, writing, arithmetic, various forms of leisure, rights, responsibilities, and relationships are all components of the 7Rs curriculum that is now being implemented in the school system. A fundamental human right is the right to get an education. When it comes to growth, it is good in both the vertical and horizontal directions. Growth on both an individual and societal level is what is referred to as "vertical development," while "horizontal development" is what is referred to as "paving the way for future development."

Educational attainment

When referring to a person's level of education or the quantity of schooling that they have finished, the phrase "educational attainment" is used. There are many different levels of education, ranging from "not literate" to "literate without formal schooling," and from "primary" to "above graduate." In addition, there are intermediate and upper secondary levels, as well as elementary, middle, and lower secondary levels. The Indian Census provides information on these various levels of education. It is only after a person has successfully completed the last year of a certain level of education that they are considered to have attained that level of education (Chamar, 2015). The degree of knowledge and expertise that an individual has is evaluated in order to establish the possibility of that individual's success in the workforce. A reflection of the skills that are valued by society, businesses, and the nation as a whole may be found in it. The level of education attained has a significant impact on a variety of societal outcomes, including infant mortality, fertility, the number of children who attend school, and the distribution of economic resources. It is possible for a person's level of education to be impacted by the educational level of their family, the educational options that are accessible to them, and the settings in which they study at home (Bhatty, 1998, 1863). Some of the indicators that are used to evaluate educational achievement throughout society and space include the literacy rate, the enrollment rate, the attendance rate, the dropout rate, the retention rate of school-going children or girls, and the percentage of the population that has credentials in technical and higher education.

Within the context of the modern world, literacy and education have evolved into vital skills. Literacy is a skill that every segment of a nation's population, regardless of where they reside, has to learn in order for the nation to make any type of effort toward social or economic growth. It is a reflection of India's varied and diversified geography that literacy rates in the nation vary widely from area to region and from socioeconomic position to socioeconomic status. Actions that are organized and purposeful are being taken in order to overcome the sociospatial gaps in educational and literacy success. It is essential to take into consideration the potential effects that these policies may have on communities and regions that have traditionally lagged behind in this particular field.

OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend how acquired literacy and educational levels are used in many domains of activity.
2. To provide recommendations for potential strategies to raise standards and reduce gaps in educational achievement and literacy. a more robust bond.

Structure of Indian Education

There are two types of educational systems that are used in India: formal and non-formal. It is possible for a child to continue their education to the next level once they have finished each level of elementary, middle, and high school. This process starts when the child is six years old and continues until the child graduates from high school. Through the non-formal education system, students between the ages of 9 and 14 get their education from the school. An alternative educational system is available for children whose parents are unable to send them to conventional schools due to the fact that they are employed or because of the difficulties they are experiencing in their social or economic lives.

A school is a location where it is possible for children to learn under the direction of adults who are referred to as teachers. The management of the nation's educational institutions is the responsibility of a number of different Boards of Education, which are generally supervised by either the federal or state governments. The primary education level, which also encompasses the upper primary level, is the first stage of formal education. The subsequent three levels of formal education are secondary education, advanced secondary education, and university education. In addition, the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) of the Government of India is responsible for providing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), which encompasses the years three to six within the curriculum. A large number of preschools are run in India by a variety of organizations, including the government, non-profit organizations, and the commercial sector. A broad range of courses, including those at the undergraduate and graduate levels, are offered by colleges and universities. These courses include general education, vocational education, and technical education. As a result, the educational system in the country is organized in a manner that includes public schools, private schools that get support from the government, and institutions that do not receive funding from the government.

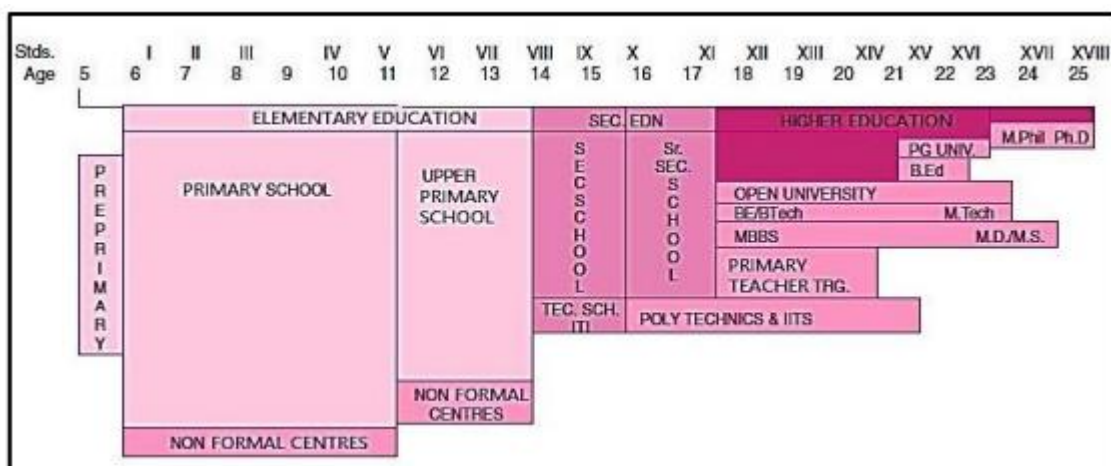


Figure – 1: The Indian Education System's Organization

Educational attainment in India-present scenario

Following over sixty years of stagnant development since the country's independence, it is heartening to see an improvement in the literacy and education levels of the nation. According to the results of the Census that was conducted in 2011, there was a significant rise in the percentage of people who could read and write. The years 1991 to 2001 were considered to be the decade that would be considered the literacy decade (Shagwan and Shagwan, 2008). Even if the government has not yet achieved the goal of providing children under the age of fourteen with a compulsory education of sufficient quality, the first census of this century started on a positive note in terms of literacy and education in the country.

Over the course of the last decade, there has been a widespread recognition and acknowledgment of the significance of education. The efficacy of primary education in satisfying the fundamental needs of the poor, especially the impoverished, is no longer a contentious issue that has been the subject of fierce debate.

According to India's Human Development Report (2011), 11 many projects were undertaken between the years 2001 and 2011 with the intention of raising the percentage of people who are literate. These initiatives were launched by both governmental and non-governmental groups. Literacy is becoming more and more significance in today's society as things continue to progress. Despite this, there is still a need to handle concerns concerning infrastructure with the utmost seriousness and efficiency. These issues include access to education, the function of education, and the quality of education.

Each and every component of society, including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, has achieved impressive progress in recent years. It is true that there are discernible variations in performance from one state to the next; some states have made significant progress toward universal literacy, while others are still a long way behind other states. The literacy rate in India has been continuously increasing since 1991, going from 52.21 percent in 1991 to 65.4% in 2001 and 72.99 percent in 2011. There has also been a discernible rise in the number of women who are literate. Additionally, the enrollment rate is growing at an alarming pace. There has been a significant amount of growth in the number of schools, particularly in more remote areas. Additionally, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of postsecondary educational institutions, including universities, colleges, and other educational establishments. Ninety-five percent of the population resides within one kilometer of a primary school in 826,000 rural homes, while 85.5% of the population lives within three kilometers of an upper primary school (India Infrastructure Report, 2007, 288). In the event that this pattern continues, it is not completely out of the question that the country might easily achieve universal literacy within the next 10 years.

Literacy rates have increased considerably throughout the nation, which is proof that several measures taken by both the federal government and state governments have contributed to this beneficial trend. On the other hand, the total number of individuals who are illiterate is growing, despite the fact that the United States of America set a new record for the percentage of its population that is literate in the Census taken in 2011. While participating in this census, one quarter of the Indian population self-identified as being illiterate. The dropout rates among female students remained to be higher. When parents lose interest in sending their daughters to school for a variety of reasons relating to economy and society, the likelihood of girls dropping out of school is higher than the likelihood of boys dropping out on their own. According to Sharma et al. (2007), a significant number of young women contribute to the income of their families by working or helping out around the house. According to Sen (1996), 22 the general lack of access to health care for girls is a contributing factor to the higher dropout rate. As a consequence of their poor earnings potential and career prospects, women's educational opportunities are less likely to provide the benefits that were expected for them. Performing a cost-benefit analysis of education is a method that may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of education. The findings of the research indicate that educational resources are being squandered as a consequence of students dropping out of school and repeating classes.

CONCLUSION

The Indian Constitution mandates that the state provide free, obligatory education to all citizens up to the age of fourteen. India attempted to achieve this aim via a series of initiatives and policies. Children's

education, school attendance, and even the proportion of money spent on education have all significantly improved. The education sector has received less than four percent of the nation's GDP. An attempt has been made to increase funding by the imposition of a two percent education cess. Although education has always been a state responsibility, the federal government has sometimes had a significant involvement in the development of different education programs. The objective of offering high-quality education has not been achieved despite all efforts.

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