

Quality of Education in India: A Case Study of Primary Schools of Assam

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Abstract: *The global community is giving significant importance on educational expansion ignoring the quality aspect of education- what students are learning in school? Mere schooling is worst if students are not acquiring knowledge in school. Many studies have proved the importance of learning for the individual as well as for the economic development of the country. This study was conducted in Assam, a state of Indian union, with a special focus on primary education. The basic objective of primary education is to impart the knowledge of 3Rs to children irrespective of caste, sex, area and religion. The main objectives of this study are: (i) whether all the students, irrespective of their religion are learning in schools? And what are the socio-economic factors that are affecting children's learning in school. The study was conducted on 500 students reading in class five.*

Introduction

During the last 60 years, a notable progress has been achieved in primary education in the world, especially by the developing countries. But, is the world getting considerable quantitative expansion of education at the cost of quality? How much the students of a particular stage of education learn and why it is important, is a policy question, because it is related to several factors ranging from ensuring Human Right Protection, income of the individual, economic development and its effects on the society.

Education was recognized as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Right in 1948. In subsequent time many other international Acts were enacted to ensure 'this' right of the child. Reasserted in Jomtein and Dakar Declarations, this right has since been incorporated into most national constitutions.

Education is a process of development of physical, mental and spiritual aspects of human beings (Ghandhiji). Only admitting in a school is not 'education'. A student must have to learn the specific contents of the curriculum at a particular point or level of education. Every child has a *right to learning (acquiring knowledge), like the right to education (admission)*. So, there should be a guarantee that all students irrespective of their colour, caste, religion and area of living, are getting an equal opportunity to learn.

Education is inextricably related to individual labour markets. Most of the researches which are studying income and education, take average years of schooling of a person as independent variable for income (dependent variable). Such studies show that on average, an additional year of education (schooling) is associated with increase in wage (income) (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos: 2004). But, is it true? Schooling is an imperfect measure of the educational components of human capital (Lee and

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Barro: 2001). Measuring the *education* on the basis of average years of schooling, only measures the quantity of schooling, not quality. Everyone would acknowledge that a year of schooling does not produce the same cognitive skills everywhere.

In the field of education and economics, researchers now investigate different aspects which affect the income of the individual. They typically find that learning achievement of the students has a clear impact on earning after controlling for the other variables namely quantity of schooling and the experiences of the worker. A strong association between test score and wage was found (UNESCO: GMR: 2004). Murnane, Willett, Duhaldeborde and Tyler (2000) have found that cognitive skills are important determinants of subsequent earning. Educational quality, measured by what pupils know, has powerful effect on individual earning, on the distribution of income and economic growth (Hanushek and Woßmann: 2007). This impact is thought to increase with work experiences or further education attainment (Altonji and Pierret 2001). Hanushek and Woßmann (2007) show that the return of learning (achievement of the students) may be higher in developing countries than in developed countries.

International agencies have been conducting learning achievement in different subject matter since the early 1960s. Over the past 10 years growth research demonstrated that considering the quality of education, measured by the cognitive skilled, dramatically alters the assessment of the role of education in economic development (Hanushek and woßmann 2007). Hanushek and Kimko (2000) using the international data on student achievement test of 1991 has found a statistically and economically significant positive effect of quality of education on economic growth that is far larger than the association between quantity of education and growth. Lee and Lee (1995) studied the association of human capital and economic growth on the basis of the test score of international standardized test of learning achievement. They used IEA 1970-71 data (only the science score, out of six subject scores available) and found a positive association between the science score and economic growth. E.A Hanushek and Woßmann (2007) used more recent data on the students' learning achievement and measured its association with economic development. They found a statistically significant relation between test score and growth of real per capita income in 1960-2000. So, ignoring quality difference may significantly miss the true importance of education for economic growth.

Objective of the study

1. To compare the learning achievement of the students of different religions.
2. To identify the family factors (socio-economic) responsible for students' academic performance.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in learning achievement among the students of different religions.
2. Family income, father's education and mother's education have a positive impact on students learning achievement.

Methodology

The required data for this study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Statistical techniques like mean, standard deviation etc. including regression analysis were used. Statistical Package for Social Sciences 11.5 Windows has been used for regression and other calculations.

The proposed study has adopted non-probability sampling method for primary data instead of probability sampling method. Though the probability sampling method gives better accuracy in terms of confidence level of the inferences of the study, there are many practical difficulties in fully executing probability sampling methods. For example, while drawing a sample using probability sampling methods, say, random sampling technique, the frequency of occurrence of a particular category over others may frustrate the objective of the study. Keeping this issue in mind, the judgment sampling or non-probability sampling method was followed.

The study covered four districts of Assam namely Dhubri, Sibsagar, Karbi Anglong and Cachar. A total of 24 sample schools were selected from these four districts. Three categories of schools were selected namely government, private aided (venture) and private unaided schools. Out of the 6 schools that were surveyed in each district, 3 schools were chosen from urban areas and another 3 were chosen from rural areas. While the urban schools were chosen from district headquarters, where educational facilities are expected to be better, and the rural schools were chosen from a sub-division which is lagging behind in terms of educational facilities. In both cases, schools of different categories were identified for survey based on the enrolment size. That is, under each category, the school having the highest enrolment was chosen for the survey. All the students of class IV of the selected schools were considered as sample student.

Learning achievement tests were conducted in two subjects - Languages and Mathematics. Each test carries thirty questions and each question carry two marks. We formed two learning norms for students- one is minimum level of learning and another one is desirable level of learning. A student has to score a minimum 42 (out of 60) marks to reach the desirable level of learning achievement and minimum 36 (out of 60) to reach the minimum level of learning achievement.

In this study 500 students participated in both learning achievement tests. Moreover we surveyed 92 students' home to collect their socio-economic data which helped us to identify the factors responsible for students' learning achievement. For this, from each school we chose four students on the basis of their score in the learning achievement test. The data of students' socio-economic condition were collected by the researcher through well-defined schedule.

Results

Out of 500 students, 59.9 percent students are boys and 40.1 percent are girls, 16 percent are Schedule Caste, 7.4 percent are Schedule Tribe and 76.6 percent are General. Also 69.6 percent of participated student's religion is Hindu, 29.2 percent is Muslim and 1.2 percent having "Other" religion. Students who have participated in learning achievement test, 40.8 percent are from government schools, 38.2 percent are from private unaided schools and 21 percent are from private aided schools (venture). The percentages of students from the sample district are 22.8, 28.6, 22.6 and 26.0 respectively for Dhubri, Sibsagar, Karbi Anglong and Cachar.

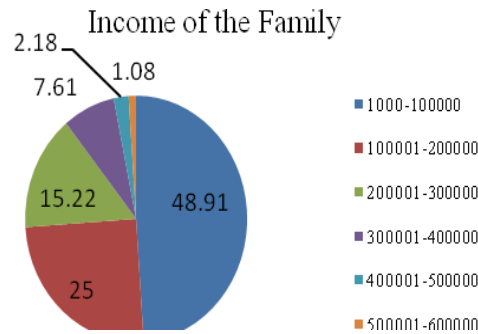


Figure 1: Income of the Family

Figure 1 represents the family income of the sample students. About 48.91 percent students are from the family having an annual income of Rs 1000-100000. About 25 percent sample students are from having income between Rs. 100001-200000 and 15.22 percent sample student are between Rs. 200001-300000.

Regression Model

Simple linear regression analyses were used to test the second hypothesis.

$$Y = a + b_1FI + b_2FE + b_3ME + U$$

Coefficients are b_1 , b_2 and b_3 . U represents the disturbance term of the model.

Exogenous (independent) variables

FI= student's annual family income in rupees.

FE= Father's Education in years of schooling.

ME= Mother’s Education in years of schooling.

Exogenous (dependent) variable

Y= Student’s learning achievement score

Expected relations with depended variables

1. Family income of the student is positively associated with student’s academic performance.
2. Father’s education is positively associated with the academic performance of the student.
3. Academic performance of the student is positively associated with student’s mother education.

Data Analysis

The learning achievement test results reveal the fact that overall students’ learning achievement is very poor irrespective of their religion. Table 1 shows the results of learning achievement test. Mean achievement in mathematics is 15.02 and mean achievement in language is 15.79. The overall mean achievement of the students in both the test is 30.55.

Table 1: Mean Achievement of the Students

Mean achievement in Mathematics	15.02
Mean achievement in Language	15.79
Mean achievement in both subjects	30.55

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 shows the religion wise comparison of the students’ learning achievement. The mean learning achievement of Hindu students is 32.66 on the other hand the mean achievement of Muslim students is 25.38. Students belonging to “other” religion have a higher learning achievement than the Hindu and Muslim students. So the results of the field study reveals the fact that Muslim students learn less compared to students of other religions.

Table 2: Religion wise mean learning achievement

Religion	Mean
Hindu	32.6695
Muslim	25.3836
Other	33.1667

Source: Field Study

We have also compared the learning achievement of the students of different religion on the basis of our learning norms. It exhibits a very serious problem about the poor learning achievement of the Muslim students compared to other religions. About 32.47 percent of Hindu students have achieved

the desirable norms of learning achievement and about 17.81 percent reached minimum level of learning achievement (i.e. overall 50.28 percent reached minimum level of learning achievement) but only 14.38 percent of Muslim students have reached the desirable level of learning achievement and 9.58 percent achieved the minimum level of learning achievement (i.e. overall 23.96 percent reached the minimum level). We did not compare with “other” religion students as their numbers were very little in the sample.

So from the above discussion it is clear that there is a significant difference in learning achievement of the students of different religions. Muslim students performed significantly poorly compared to other religions.

To test the second hypothesis of our study, we used regression. The result of regression analysis is presented below:

Summary output of regression analysis

Regression statistics

Multiple R	.767(a)
R square	.588
Adjust R Square	.574
Standard Error	11.24257
F stat	41.854

Standardized Coefficients

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t
(Intercept)	16.205	3.153		5.139
FINCOM	-2.268E-05	.000	-.158	-1.402
FATEDUN	-.709	.459	-.196	-1.547
MATEDUN	3.225	.379	1.015	8.517

The r square value is .588. It means that 3 of the variables together can explain 59% of the model and rest 41% may be explained by the other factors not mentioned in our regression model.

It is believed that the relationship between students’ performance and students’ family income is positive as money can buy you all the comforts that you need to concentrate on your studies. But our

regression results could not prove this association, because our coefficient value is $-.158$ and negative non-significant t-value -1.402 shows that there is an inverse relation. It means that students belonging to more prosperous/ affluent families do not give proper weight to studies. Affluence cannot make a student serious about his study or if a student wants to study then affluence is not a prerequisite.

It was expected that students' learning achievement is positively related to student's father's education as an educated father can help his children in study. The result of this study shows that the coefficient value is $-.196$ and there is negative non-significant t value -1.547 . It states that the relationship is negative. Fathers are generally busy with their occupation and their chief aim is to earn more money and make available all the comforts to their family. They are not able to give much time for their family and especially for the education of their children.

It was assumed that mother's education is positively related to the academic performance of the student. An educated mother can take better care for her child and the result of the study also proves the association. Educated mothers help their children in study and their children perform well in school. This relation is accepted by the coefficient value 1.015 and positive highly significant t-value 8.517 . Our study reveals the fact that there is a positive relation between student's academic performance and student's mother's education. Generally we ignore the importance of mother's education. Educated mothers can give proper attention to their children's activities (school copies, grade card and report card).

Conclusion

At the time of adopting the Constitution the Indian state had committed itself to provide elementary education under Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State policy. Article 45 stated that "The State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." In 1993, in a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that the right to education is a fundamental right flowing from the Right to Life in Article 21 of the Constitution. Subsequently in 2002 education as a fundamental right was endorsed through the 86th amendment to the Constitution. The 86th Amendment also modified Article 45 which now reads as "The state shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 6 years". On 1st April 2010 the Right to Education Act has been implemented in the union of India. All those efforts were made to make quality education available for all the people of the society irrespective of their caste, religion and race, but still the quality of education in India is very poor.

India Government has to introduce some programmes and policies for the betterment of the marginalized group, especially for the Muslims. As we see that the learning achievements of the Muslim student is lower than the students of other religions. Lack of education among the Muslim

women may be the reason for the low level of learning achievements of the Muslim students. Government should implement some programmes which will benefit the Muslim women. It has been found that the attendance rate among the Muslim students is very low. Government has to introduce some scholarship scheme for the Muslim students to attract them to the school.

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