

Dimensions of Education in Rural Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal

Abstract

Education is a crucial factor that plays a pivotal role in the initiation of the process of social, economic and cultural advancement. It is essential for social reconstruction, improvement of quality of life and preparation of man power for rapid development. The present paper deals with the dimensions of education in the blocks of rural Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. The analysis exhibits the influence of educational institutions on the literacy rates of the study area and it has been observed that the higher the degree of availability of educational institutions the more is the percentage of literates. In order to describe the quality of education received in any educational unit, student-teacher ratio and student-school ratio has been calculated. For this work, data has been collected through field survey from each of the 40 sampled villages of the blocks of Jalpaiguri district.

Keywords: Literacy Rate, Educational Institutions, Education Policy, Correlation

Introduction

The importance of education in the human resource development has been recognized by all sections of the society and in all types of economics. Education is one of the important qualitative characteristics of population. It helps to increase knowledge, skills, talent, and enhances quality of life of the people.

Total eradication of illiteracy has been and still is a priority of the Indian government. The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched in May 1988 which aimed at promoting literacy to non-literates in the age group of 15-35 years. The Total Literacy Campaign is the principal strategy of the NLM for eradication of illiteracy. Thus Literacy Mission was thereafter carried out in different districts of West Bengal as well as in other states as per suggestions of NLM through integrated approach to Total Literacy Campaign and Post Literacy Campaign under one literacy project for all age groups of 15-35 years. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in 2001 to ensure that all children in the age group between 6-14 years attend school and complete their eight years of schooling. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002 made education in India a Fundamental Right for children in the age group between 6-14 years by providing free and compulsory education to all children. Saakshar Bharat Mission was launched in India, 2009, for the promotion of adult education especially focusing on female literacy in the areas where there are less than 50 percent literate women, as per Census 2001.

However, in Jalpaiguri district, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been implemented in order to universalize elementary education in 2001 and a Baseline Assessment Survey (BAS) was carried out for assessing the infrastructure of schools, rate of enrollment and quality of education and retention of the students. Under NLMA (National Literacy Mission Authority) Continuing Education Programme (CEP) was launched in Jalpaiguri district, on 01.05.2005, for the promotion of literacy for the age group between 15-45 years. Nine districts of West Bengal came under the scheme Saakshar Bharat Mission and in Jalpaiguri district it has been implemented in 2010 and is ongoing under the supervision of Jalpaiguri Zilla Lok Siksha Samiti.

The Study Area

The study area, Jalpaiguri district, extends between 26°15'47" to 26°59'34" N latitude and 88°23'2" to 89°7'30" E longitude comprising an area of 3044 sq. km. It is situated in the northern part of West Bengal and is drained by south and south-east flowing rivers of which Mahananda, Tista and Jaldhaka are noteworthy. The study area is composed of coal, dolomite and enormous deposits of sand and gravel. With the exception of the hilly northern fringe, the whole of the district is covered by alluvial



Rituparna Das

Research Scholar,
Deptt.of Geography and Applied
Geography,
University of North Bengal,
West Bengal

deposits. At present, the total population of the study area is 2,381,596, with 7 C.D. Blocks, 80 Gram Panchayats and 391 inhabited villages. (Census, 2011).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To identify the spatial pattern of literates and illiterates among the blocks of Jalpaiguri district,
2. To highlight the level of literacy rates in the study area,
3. To examine the relationship between the literates and the number of educational institutions in the study area, and
4. To assess the quality of education in various educational institutions in the blocks of Jalpaiguri district.

Review of Literature

A review of some relevant literature related to the dimensions of education has been used for the present study. A number of scholars and researchers have studied the various dimensions of education with definite objectives and expresses their findings in the past and at present.

Mundhe, Pawan and Rokhade (2017) examine the level of disparity in the rural urban literacy rate among the tahsils of Pune district, Maharashtra. The authors assessed that the level of literacy rate of the rural population is far behind than that of the urban population. However the authors highlights the fact that the disparity in rural urban literacy rate is associated with the availability of educational facilities, level of urbanization, adequate medical facilities and mostly the availability of proper transport facilities.

Banu and Rawal (2015) made an attempt to analyze the regional variation in the level of education in West Bengal and concluded that the level of education is highly dependent on the occupational structure of the region. The high level of education is observed in the southern part as compared to the northern part of the region. Since the people of the northern and the middle part of West Bengal is mostly engaged in primary and secondary activities so they gave lesser weightage to higher education as compared to the people of southern region, where the people are engaged of various economic activities

giving much importance to higher education for the sake of better employment opportunities.

Chattoraj and Chand (2015) discusses the literacy trend of West Bengal and its differentials and observes that the gap between male and female literacy and the differentials in rural urban literacy rate has declined in 2011 as compared to the previous decade. The female literacy has increased significantly and the Karyasree project of the Government of West Bengal has highly influenced in the reduction of the dropout rates of the females in the study area. However, Government should take initiatives in the reduction of poverty which acts as a barrier to educational development in West Bengal.

Pant (2013) outlined the literacy status of women in the Himalayan states of India and concluded that Himalayan states are the least female literate regions of the country. He observed that the low female literacy and male-female literacy gap are due to the influence of harsh climatic conditions, rugged topography and the predominance of subsistence economy in the study area.

Methodology

The study has been conducted on the basis of both primary and secondary sources of data. For the collection of primary data, multi-stage random sampling technique without replacement has been applied. In the first stage, 7 CD Blocks of Jalpaiguri district has been considered as an independent sampling unit. In the second stage, 10 percent villages of the total inhabited villages have been selected from each block. Again, from each village 5-10 percent households has been taken as a sample randomly in order to avoid bias. Secondary data has been obtained from Village Directory, Jalpaiguri, Census of India, 2011. The collected data were then tabulated and analyzed through statistical and cartographic technique.

Discussion and Results

Literate and Illiterate Population

The literacy rates are taken to be one of the key indicators of a country's development because literacy is a means to bring about a fundamental change in socio-economic development. The table below represents the percentage of the literate and the illiterate males and females on the sampled villages of Jalpaiguri district.

Table 1: Block Wise Percentage of Literates and Illiterates

C.D. Blocks	Literate (%)		Illiterate (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Rajganj	57.22	55.48	42.78	44.52
Jalpaiguri	55.17	57.89	44.83	42.11
Maynaguri	56.67	57.58	43.33	40.05
Dhupguri	59.20	59.91	43.24	42.41
Mal	59.96	56.26	46.34	51.06
Matiali	57.14	44.71	35.71	45.88
Nagrakata	53.93	51.48	46.07	48.52

Source- Field survey, 2015-2016

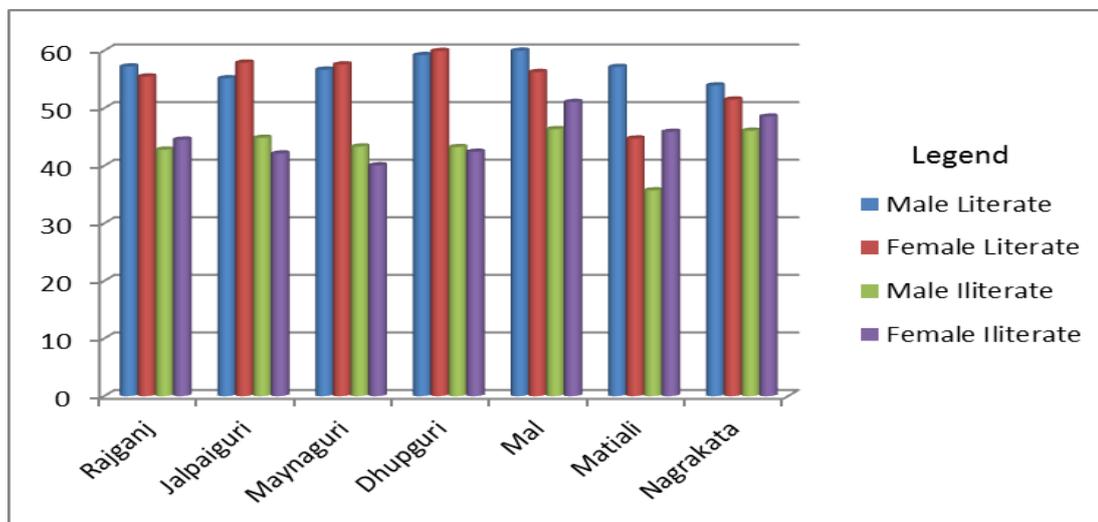
As a whole, 57.74% males and 56.58% females are literate, whereas, 44.00% males and 44.71% females are illiterate (Fig. 1). According to the field survey 2015-2016, Mal block has the highest percentage of male literates (59.96%) and the lowest has been observed in Nagrakata block (53.93%),

(table 1). However, female literacy in the study area varies considerably with a maximum of 59.91% in Dhupguri block and a minimum of 44.71% in Matiali block. The prime reason behind the lower literacy rates of the females as compared to the males is that they are mostly engaged as the tea garden labourers

in this part of the study area and the traditional outlook of the parents along with the unequal access

to educational facilities restricts them from doing higher studies.

Figure 1: Percentage of Literate and Illiterate Population



Illiteracy is one of the major hindrances of the society as it hampers social advancement and economic growth of an area. It is very discouraging that overwhelming proportions of rural population of the sampled villages are illiterate and have not attended school. Among the sampled households 46.34% male illiterates and 51.06% female illiterates has been obtained in Mal block, the highest as compared to the other blocks, followed by Nagrakata block. The reasons behind the illiteracy in these rural areas are the inadequate educational institutions, lack of access to school and poverty which forces them to quit study and seek jobs outside their homes. However access to quality education for the rural population should be increased with proper infrastructural facilities in order to decline the level of illiteracy from the rural areas of the district.

Level of Literates

The degree of literacy is the first indispensable step towards the measurement of educational status and therefore it is highly significant to measure the level of literates, as it determines the nature of social, economic and cultural development of any region. According to the field survey 2015-2016, the proportion of the rural population who are educated up to the level of primary school are 27.23%. 35.81% members of the sampled household got their education up to the level of middle or the upper primary school (table 2), again 21.97% rural population of the sampled household are educated up to the level of secondary school, 8.38% members of the sampled household are educated up to higher secondary school, likewise 5.91% rural population of the sampled household are graduates and 0.7% members of the sampled household had higher studies and has been categorized as other literates.

Table 2: Level of Literacy

C.D. Blocks	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Graduate	Others
Rajganj	24.46	25.54	26.09	11.96	9.78	2.17
Jalpaiguri	24.84	35.03	21.66	10.83	7.64	0.00
Maynaguri	26.57	36.81	21.26	9.25	4.72	1.38
Dhupguri	24.57	37.24	22.87	7.94	6.81	0.57
Mal	29.30	39.70	22.08	4.25	4.46	0.21
Matiali	35.78	34.86	15.60	6.42	7.34	0.00
Nagrakata	31.05	30.53	21.05	13.16	4.21	0.00

Source- Field survey

Education from primary institution is the most basic and the essential criterion of the educational structure. Matiali block has the highest percentage of population (35.78%) who are educated up to the primary school whereas; Rajganj block has recorded the least percentage of members whose level of education is up to the primary school (24.46). Though the number of the primary schools is more than that of the middle schools yet the percentage of members who are educated up to the middle school is high as compared to the members who are educated up to the level of primary school. It has been obtained that

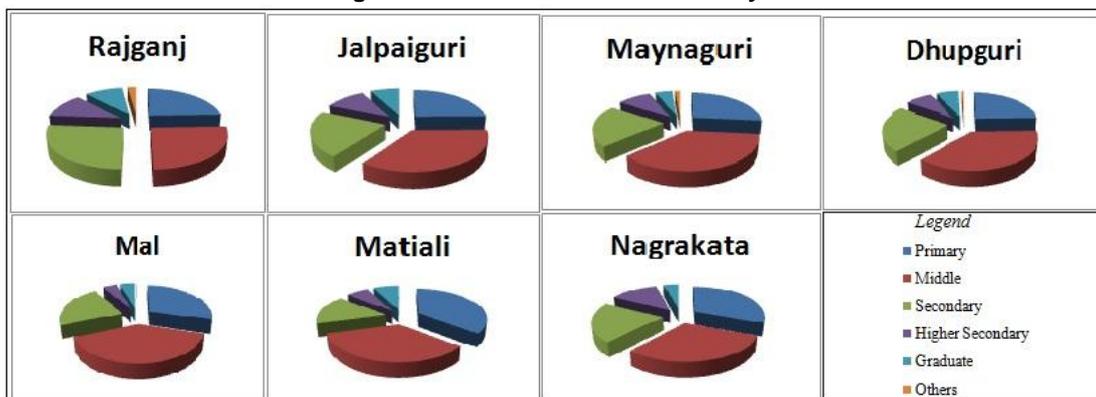
Mal block has the highest percentage of members who are educated up to the level of middle school (39.70) followed by Dhupguri and Maynaguri blocks.

The percentage of the members who are educated up to the level of secondary and the higher secondary school is considerably low as compared to the members of the sampled household who are educated up to the level of primary and middle school. The fact has to be emphasized that there is a complete absence of secondary schools in the sampled villages with a presence of only a single higher secondary school in Mal block. The highest

percentage of members who are educated up to the level of secondary school has been obtained in Rajganj block (26.09%) and the lowest in Matiali block with 15.60%, (Fig.2). The percentage of graduates from the colleges is very low when compared to the percentage of primary and middle school literates as

none of the village has a general degree college. Therefore, construction of the higher educational institutions is necessary as higher education always provides a way to better employment and educational development.

Figure 2: Block wise Level of Literacy



Educational Institutions of the sampled villages of Jalpaiguri district

Educational institutions are the competent tools of educational development. It forms the backbone of the whole educational system. The table

below discloses that achievement with regard to primary schools in the study area is quite significant as compared to middle, secondary and higher secondary schools.

Table 3: Educational Institutions

C.D. Blocks	Primary school	Middle School	Secondary School	Higher Secondary School	SSK	MSK
Rajganj	2	0	0	0	2	0
Jalpaiguri	4	1	0	0	1	0
Maynaguri	9	0	0	0	2	1
Dhupguri	16	1	0	0	4	2
Mal	12	1	0	1	2	1
Matiali	4	1	0	0	1	0
Nagrakata	4	0	0	0	1	1

Source- Village Directory, Census, 2011

It is interesting to note that there are 51 primary schools, 4 middle schools and 1 higher secondary institution found in the sampled villages among the seven blocks of Jalpaiguri district (fig. 4). The table above (table 3) discloses that there are about 13 SSK (Sishu Siksha Kendra) and 5 MSK (Madhyamik Siksha Kendra) obtained in the sampled villages of Jalpaiguri district.

Thus, it is evident from the table above that the villages of Dhupguri block constitute the highest number of educational institutions as compared to the villages of the other blocks. The block lies in the eastern part of Jalpaiguri district and is connected to NH-31 and NH-31c which indicates a better communication system in the block. Thus, high degree of accessibility by the roadways has played a

significant role in the development of educational institutions in the block. However the development of the pucca roads also facilitates the formation of the educational institutions in the villages of the block.

Relation between Literates and Educational Institutions

Literacy mainly depends on three factors- the willingness to learn, the ability to learn and the learning institutions (Ghosh, 1985). In general it is expected that, the higher the degree of availability of educational institutions the more will be the percentage of literates. However the level of literacy is quite low in all the blocks of Jalpaiguri district. The table below reveals the total population and the total literates of the sampled villages of each block of Jalpaiguri district.

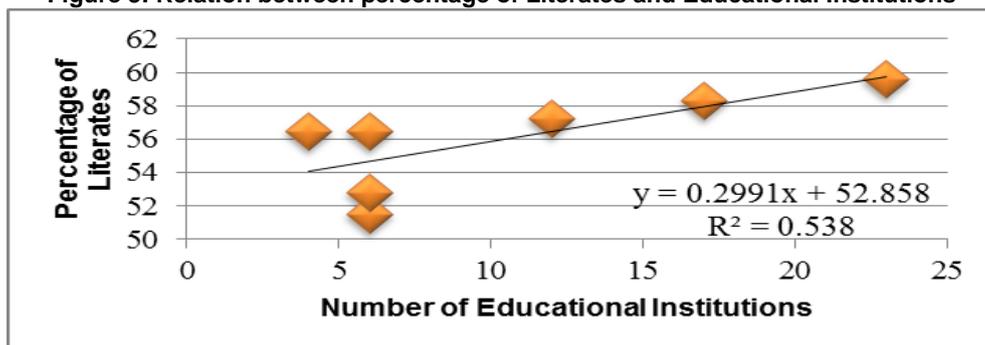
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Table 4: Total Population and Total Literates

C.D. Blocks	Total population	Total literates	Literates (%)	Educational Institutions
Rajganj	326	184	56.44	4
Jalpaiguri	278	157	56.47	6
Maynaguri	872	498	57.18	12
Dhupguri	925	551	59.56	23
Mal	915	533	58.25	17
Matiali	183	94	51.47	6
Nagrakata	360	190	52.77	6

Source- Field survey

Figure 3: Relation between percentage of Literates and Educational Institutions



From the scatter diagram above it has been observed in the study area that there exists a positive correlation between percentage of literates and educational institutions and it is significant as $r = 0.733$. However, emphasis needs to be given regarding the expansion of enrollments in school education and the extension of the number of higher educational institutions with an easy access for the spread of literacy in the study area.

Quality of Education

The factors namely student-teacher ratio and student-school ratio have been used to assess the quality of education in the rural Jalpaiguri district.

Student-Teacher Ratio

The student-teacher ratio in any region not only shows the educational facilities but also indicates the quality of teaching in various institutions. The high value of student-teacher ratio indicates a high pressure of students on teacher, whereas, its low value exhibits high level of educational development. According to the norm in West Bengal following the RTE Act, the student-teacher ratio is 40:1. However, the student-teacher ratio has been computed for Jalpaiguri district and it exhibits that the ratio of primary school student and teacher is 27:1, for middle school student and teacher the ratio is 33:1 and the ratio for Higher Secondary school student and teacher is 57:1.

Table 5: Student-Teacher Ratio

C.D. Blocks	Student-Teacher Ratio		
	Primary School	Middle School	Higher Secondary School
Rajganj	31:1	-	-
Jalpaiguri	21:1	28:1	-
Maynaguri	21:1	-	-
Dhupguri	28:1	46:1	-
Mal	24:1	27:1	56:1
Matiali	18:1	29:1	-
Nagrakata	51:1	-	-

Source- calculated by author

Considering the student-teacher ratio of the state, it has been observed that the ratio is lower for primary school and middle school whereas it is high for the higher secondary school in the sampled villages of Jalpaiguri district. However, the high value of student-teacher ratio is the reflection of the less number of teachers in the institutions. For primary school, the high student-teacher ratio is noticed only in Nagrakata block having 51 students per teacher in the district whereas the low student-teacher ratio has been observed in the rest of the blocks of the district (table 5) where the student-teacher ratio is below 40. Though, the lower the number of students per

teacher, the lesser is the pressure of students on teacher where the students get the chance of individual attention from the teachers yet the number of students studying in various classes is the indicator of educational status of any region. Therefore there is an urgent need to increase the level of enrollments of the students where the ratio of student-teacher is below the ideal ratio of the state. It is Dhupguri block where the level of student-teacher ratio for the middle schools is high and has recorded more than 40 students per teacher in Jalpaiguri district. Again for the higher secondary school Mal block comprises more than 40 students per teacher and therefore it

observes high students per teacher ratio in Jalpaiguri district.

Student-School Ratio

In order to examine the quality of education in Jalpaiguri district the ratio of the number of students

per institution has been computed. As a whole, the ratio of Primary school students and Primary school is 105:1, the ratio for middle school student and middle school is 99:1, and for the Higher Secondary (HS) student and HS school the ratio is 1078:1.

Table 6: Student-School Ratio

C.D. Blocks	Primary School	Middle School	Higher Secondary School
Rajganj	220:1	-	-
Jalpaiguri	65:1	114:1	-
Maynaguri	86:1	-	-
Dhupguri	91:1	140:1	-
Mal	122:1	54:1	1078:1
Matiali	59:1	87:1	-
Nagrakata	180:1	-	-

Source- Calculated by Author

The table above (table 6) reveals the ratio of the students per primary school, middle school and higher secondary school among the sampled villages of the seven blocks of Jalpaiguri district. The ratio ranges from 65 in Jalpaiguri block to 220 in Rajganj block for primary school. Similarly for the middle school the ratio varies from 54 in Mal block to 140 in Dhupguri block. Whereas for higher secondary school the student school ratio is 1078 in Mal block.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Though the government of India as well as the government of West Bengal has implemented a number of educational schemes for the upliftment of quality education yet 37.87 percent males and 40.40 percent females are still uneducated in the sampled villages of Jalpaiguri district. However, poor socio-economic conditions and poverty in particular restricts the children from their continuance in schools. Since, the qualitative expansion of formal education is by no means enough to ensure education for the entire people therefore; the central and the state governments should be more vigilant in order to provide education for all.

It needs to be mentioned that the awareness of the parents regarding sending their children to school has to be increased as it bears a significant impact upon the status of education. Hence, the government should take more initiatives regarding the allocation of more educational institutions especially higher educational institutions in the study area and emphasis should be given on reduction of gender disparity in literacy rate which in turn will raise the total literacy.

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