



EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS AND DISPARITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SILIGURI SUB-DIVISION

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Siliguri subdivision is one of the subdivisions of Darjeeling consisting of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation and four community development blocks, namely, Matigara, Naxalbari, Phansidewa and Kharobari. Siliguri is a unique city as 15 out of 47 wards of siliguri municipal corporation falls within the territorial jurisdiction of Jalpaiguri District. The four blocks contain 22 gram panchayats, 985 villages and two census towns: Baratisal and Upper Bagdogra. From a small village, Siliguri became a subdivision in Darjeeling district exactly a hundred years ago. It is really surprising to note that the growth of the small town into one of the largest city in the entire North-East of India. In 2008 the estimated population is 800,000. Not surprisingly much of the population in Siliguri has its root in other places. First time there were thousand of refugees pouring in from East Pakistan after the country was divided. Then there was the refugees from Assam in the 1960's who lost their home in anti Bengali riot. War with China in 1962 contributed major inflow of refugees to the subdivision. The friendship relation between India with Nepal and Bhutan contributed a large number of immigrants and they permanently settled on different areas of Siliguri subdivision. There was also major influx of business communities from other parts of the country such as Bihar and Rajasthan who came here to take advantage of the increasing business opportunity in the subdivision .

Increasing population demanded facilities for education. Few number of Bengali medium schools were established before independence. For the development of education in Siliguri subdivision the British Administrator had not taken any initiatives. At Siliguri subdivision the Britishers had established their Tea estates and Timber merchant only for business purposes. But after independence previously there had been just a handful of schools of late there has been a spurt of growth in numbers with most catering to the ICSE, CBSE and West Bengal Secondary and Higher Secondary Board(s). in spite of this after 60 years of independence, the educational infrastructure of Siliguri subdivision had



not reached its development.

OBJECTIVES: The major attempt of this paper is aimed at to find out the educational disparity have within same region or subdivision and to know the factors responsible for backwardness of school education. Thus the major thrust of the paper is to analyze the regional disparity within a region. Any attempt to discuss the major problems of educational backwardness in contemporary Siliguri subdivision is beset with one serious difficulty.

METHODOLOGY: The relevant data collected from the office of District Inspector of School Primary Education and Secondary Education of Siliguri subdivision in Darjeeling for the session of 2011 to 2012.

DISCUSSION: Siliguri has always been the hub of education in the subdivision as well as the terrai region. There have some disparity in respect of number of schools, geographical location, quality of education and infra structural arrangement of educational institution in Siliguri subdivision. Before going into the backwardness finding in the educational sector of Siliguri subdivision, it is necessary to find out the number of primary and secondary Government aided schools.

TABLE NO: 1

Within Siliguri municipal corporation area the total number of primary school is 112, in Phansidewa block there have 132 primary schools, in Kharibari block there have 90 schools. Thus it has been observed that 23.4% primary schools are located within Siliguri municipal corporation area, 13.4% primary schools are located within Matigara Block, only 17% primary schools found within Naxalbari Block and within Kharibari Block there have 18.7% primary school are located within Phansidewa Block it is 27.5%.

TABLE NO: 2

The above table shows that there is wide spread disparity the number of primary schools and number of higher secondary, secondary and junior high schools and the most significant thing is that within Siliguri corporation area there have 39.4% secondary, higher secondary and junior high school. But in Matigara Block and Kharibari Block only 10.6% schools are there. In Phansidewa



and Naxalbari Block there have respectively 21.3% and 18.1% higher secondary, secondary and junior high schools. According to Secondary Board of Education of Siliguri subdivision report the schools of Siliguri subdivision is under control of seven circles. These are Phansidewa, Bidhannagar, Siliguri-Naxalbari, Siliguri West, Kharibari, Batashi and Naxalbari circles. Bidhannagar and Batashi circle are considered as most backward circle.

From table no. 2 it is very much clear to us that the highest number of educational institutions are located with in Siliguri city boundary and adjacent area. For the other parts of Siliguri subdivision extremely poor quality of education has been provided and it is less in number. Due to this reason the school students of Phansidewa, Naxalbari, Matigara and Kharibari area has to travel long distance for seeking good education. It is fact and reality that within same region or same subdivision the department of education has create an inequality and disparity among the students. Thus the actual aim of education has been ignored. But the people of Siliguri city are enjoy good educational facilities and high quality infrastructure. So that the regional backwardness is supported by the department of education. A large area of Siliguri subdivision is deprived to received quality education. Within same region the educational disparity can be measured in respect of quantity and quality and/or private and public education.

TABLE NO: 3

The above table clearly states that at the level of higher secondary (class 11+12) the number of Government aided school is very few. Only 47 schools of whole Siliguri subdivision provide H.S (higher secondary) standard education and surprisingly out of 47, 25 H.S (higher secondary) schools located within jurisdiction of Siliguri corporation. As usual the blocks are lacking for high school education and each an every high schools are facing the problem of unbalance pupil-teacher ratio (PTR).

The backwardness and the inequalities that prevail are masked by the fact that the enrolment statistics normally used as indicators of the success of the programmes are much too broad to reveal specific short comings (Chitnis, 1972). The short comings that exist in the school education of the Government



aided institutions may be understood in the context of caste hierarchy. Here some facts regarding the situation of Scheduled Caste students in school education, in the Siliguri subdivision has been discussed in general. The Bengali Scheduled Caste students (Rajbanshi community or Namasudra community) and scheduled tribe students are studying in Bengali medium Government aided schools, due to their poor economic background. At the same time the Bihari and Nepali scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students are studying in Hindi and Nepali medium Government aided schools respectively. To receive the facilities of mid day meal and other facilities provided under Sarva Siksha Abhijan the students of poor parents are enrolled in Government aided schools. This is universally true that in India the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people are underprivileged and destitute community. In spite of all the limitations of Government aided institution they are bound to receive the Government aided education. On the other hand the children of upper middle and upper class Bengali, Nepali, Marwari and Bihari families are enjoying high class convent or private education and they are belong to higher or intermediary caste groups. It is true that the local dominate caste groups of each community are enjoying the high class education.

At present day, politically Siliguri subdivision is the most disputed area. Due to Gorkhaland Movement, Amra Bangali (we are Bengali) Movement, Adivashi Bikash Parisad Movement and regular political conflict between CPIM and Trinamul Congress the incidence of Bandh and Strike is now more frequent than ever before. Education of students suffer drastically due to Bandh and Strike in every week. In these circumstances the private schools compensate the regular teaching days by reopen school in week end. But there have no methodology used by the Government aided institution to compensate the teaching days.

Due to over politicization in education, every political parties of the state are trying to capture the body of managing committee or governing body of the school. Thus the parents or guardian and teachers are very much involve in political process and finally in schools political process is getting first priority than education.

Nowadays the public or government aided schools are unable to



satisfied the global demands in reality. Financially stable parents or educationally conscious parents have their first choice for private or convent education. There have some important factors behind the high preference of convent education and less preference of Government education.

1. Actually maximum number of primary and secondary Government aided schools had been located either on residential area or beside the National High ways.
2. Most of the schools have no boundary wall and guards.
3. For the poor quality of sanitation the surrounding school environment is polluted. Some time they have no toilet for teachers and students. The drinking water is provided from tub well and well.
4. They have no provision for special care of children.
5. The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) has been increase day by day. Unbalance pupil-teacher ratio effects negatively on academic curriculum.
6. The most alarming factor is that the teacher and parents have no communication or meeting for future development of children. In some special cases or in extreme level they have some provision of guardian cell.
7. Each an every Government schools have insufficient library materials, insufficient laboratory instruments and irregularity of classes.
8. Less variety of mid day meal fail to attract students towards school.
9. Monotonous study materials and below standard co-curricular activities are continuously decreasing the standard of education.

A positive step for encouraging mass education, the Government began a scheme of lump-sum grants to pupils of al class category. It has been noticed that the total enrolment of students in different stages in school education in the subdivision is continuously increasing after the direct of compulsory education and Sarva Siksha Avijan. In spite of the compulsory education system in rural and urban areas the incidence of dropout is not



uncommon. Moreover the parents agitation against the system of education frequently increases day by day. They have the opinion that there is no fruitful result or out put of this education system. The short comings that exist in the school education of the Government aided institutions may best be understood in the context of the global demands and employment attainment. Another negative consequences of Government aided institution is that the below standard educational background is the prime attribute for delinquency. They are mainly involved in school lifting, smoking, crossing boundary, dropping classes, less interest in studies, evetising, disobedience, violence, visiting cinemas and video halls during school hour etc.

The union Government has itself recognized English as a vehicle of economic expansion. Intellectuals view English as the 'link language', India needs to be on the same wavelength as other countries on a host of common global concerns. But the medium of Government aided schools is Hindi/Nepali/Bengali. In view of globalization computer literacy is inevitable and compulsory. Under the pressure of globalization the convent schools of Siliguri subdivision makes computer education compulsory from class Nursery to class 10, while in the same subdivision at a same time the Government aided school teachers computer education from class 6 to class 8 only compulsory, from class 9 it is optional.

Under these circumstances the parents tend to become angry when they notice the widening chasm between what the actual aims of education and what they practice. Parents agitation is characterized by 1) collective movement, 2) dysfunctional conditions, 3) public concern and) the need for change in the existing system. The forms of parents agitation may be expressed by gherao the head master and teachers, demonstrations given to the sub inspector of schools and media, boycott of classes and slogan shouting. Surprising fact is that the parents agitation against the Government aided education system within the four blocks of Siliguri subdivision is more prominent than the corporation area. Moreover most of the higher secondary schools of Siliguri corporation area have greater option of different subjects, science, arts, commerce education and laboratory facilities. On the other hand in block area very few number of schools have science subjects and limited option of subjects.



At the time of natural calamities or during the rainy season the building or the roof of the schools are badly affected. Consequent whereof the study materials, laboratory apparatus are found to be badly damaged. Due to the natural calamities school buildings are acquired by the Government authority for relief camp.

Under these circumstances the parents of well off section are giving their full attention towards the convent education system to satisfy the global demands. Moreover at present the situation in Siliguri corporation area a new trends of education is dormant like anything. The child of working mother or high class family, they prefer to get their child education from day boarding schools or brand name schools (like-Delhi Public School, Birla Divya Joty, G.D. Goyenka, Doon Heritage School, Usha Martin etc.). It is very clear that the disparity can be seen within the region in respect of catering education.

In global era at Siliguri subdivision the parents living in good financial condition or may have one or two children always prefer private, convent or English education without any second option. They have the believe that these expansive education gives their children future prosperity or good fortune and through this education system they can satisfied the global demands.

FINDINGS: On the basis of these analysis, result and discussion on some key parameters of development of school education in Siliguri subdivision a few major conclusions are briefly discussed.

1. That the access of schooling facilities within a walk able distance of one or three kilometer had not been achieved for all block habitations in Siliguri subdivision.
2. The expansion in number of block schools was quite slow and disparities among and within subdivision were prevailing.
3. The PTR in schools block area has gone up thereby showing a poor achievement.
4. The increase in number of higher secondary schools are less than the primary schools.

SUGGESTIONS: It is very necessary to remodel the school education by



removing regional disparity and backwardness within the subdivision. The school education system in Siliguri subdivision has not attempt its satisfactory out come. Here I like to suggest some remedies below that come to my mind.

- 1) Improve the quantity and quality level of faculty member, library materials.
- 2) Government schools must improve infrastructure to provide minimum standard in sanitation, drinking water and mid day meal.
- 3) Enlarge the opportunity of secondary and higher secondary education in village level or block level to remove disparity.
- 4) Provide standard English language or education for all Government schools to satisfy global demands in future.

TABLE. NO: 1

TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AT PRIMARY LEVEL

Area	No. of Schools	Percentage
Siliguri Corporation	112	23.40%
Kharibari	90	18.70%
Naxalbari	81	17.00%
Matigara	64	13.40%
Phansidewa	132	27.50%
Total	479	100%

TABLE- 2

TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOL AT JUNIOR HIGH,
SECONDARY AND HIGHER SECONDARY

Area	No. of Schools	Percentage
Siliguri Corporation	37	39.40%
Kharibari	10	10.60%
Naxalbari	17	18.10%
Matigara	10	10.60%
Phansidewa	20	21%
Total	94	100.00%



TABLE NO: 3
TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AT HIGHER
SECONDARY LEVEL

Area	Number of Schools	Percentage
Slg. Corporation	25	54.2
Kharibari	6	12
Naxalbari	4	8.3
Matigara	2	4.2
Phansidewa	10	20.8
Total	47	100

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