



International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)
A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal
ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)
Volume-III, Issue-V, March 2017, Page No. 340-346
Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711
Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

Poverty: Cause of Wastage & Stagnation at Secondary School in Meghalaya

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Abstract

School's wastage and stagnation depends upon various factors such as poverty, school's distance, transport communications, teachers' quality, social environment and many other factors. Poverty is a leading reason in student wastage and stagnation across rural schools in Meghalaya and this is a major reason of students leaving secondary school. It is one of the serious and alarming problems of wastage and stagnation in Meghalaya and especially in rural villages where there are still people living below the poverty line and living under distressing and difficult circumstances.

This research article investigated the problem of Poverty as the main cause and reason for cause of wastage and stagnation at Secondary School level in Meghalaya. It will be employing a descriptive and empirical analysis method to identify the problem. This research is conducted in the area of Mawkyrwat, South West Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya. The villages in which the sample population located are Mawlangwir, Mawkyrwat, Mawten, Nonglang, Sakwang, Marshilong, Jakrem, Umjarain, Rangthong, Rangmaw, Mawranglang and Laitlawsang.

A total of 350 secondary school students and 50 dropout students participated in the investigation. The highest dropout rate, wastage and stagnation at secondary school were observed and the main reasons of poverty that lead to wastage and stagnation were self-supporting and self-financing (18%), textbook's price is very high (62%), people belong to Below Poverty Line (35%), irregularity and lack of interest (39%) and education fees is very expensive (72%). There is a need to encourage the community concerning the significance of education and measures should be taken to address poverty and its consequences.

Key Words: Poverty, Wastage & Stagnation, Dropouts, Secondary School, Education, Meghalaya

1.1 Introduction: Education is a basic human right where every girl and boy in every country is entitled to it. Quality education is vital to growth and development both of societies and of individuals and it helps pave the way to a successful and fruitful future.

But poverty has been one of the stumbling blocks in imparting quality education, especially in rural areas where majority of the parent or school's children withdraw themselves from school as they are very poor and cannot afford it. For this reason, majority had to leave school halfway so as to help their parents either in household chores or in the fields to gain extra income for the family. Poverty brings an end to youthful education and their hopes of an independent and quality citizen. It may take different forms and has various causes, one issue is supreme, whether it happens to a girl or a boy, it is a desecration of human rights.

Poverty is a state of being extremely poor or of not having enough money to meet the daily basic needs and requirements. It is one of the major causes of wastage and stagnation at any stage of education, particularly if the parents are living below poverty line. Gillin and Gillin defined *Poverty as the condition in which a person either because of inadequate income or unwise expenditure, does not maintain a scale of living high enough to provide for his physical and mental efficiency and to enable him and his natural dependents to function usefully according to the standards of the society of which he is a member.* (Rao, 1990)

1.2 The Issues: The concern of this article is an investigation on poverty as one of the cause of wastage and stagnation at Secondary School level in the Khasi-Jaintia society of Meghalaya. Though there are several factors that lead to wastage and stagnation at secondary school level, but poverty emerged as one of the major factor in the rural areas of Meghalaya that brought about school dropouts, both among boys and girls.

The main objective of this investigation is to understand and to examine wastage and stagnation at secondary school level in the Khasi-Jaintia society with relating to socio-economic problems, relating to educational drop out; to examine that poverty is one of the responsible factors of wastage and stagnation at secondary school level and to put forward measures and solutions for preventing poverty which obstruct the development of education at secondary school level.

1.3 Methodology: The present investigation is assessed by employing a descriptive and empirical survey method to identify the reasons for wastage and stagnation at secondary schools in rural areas of Meghalaya. This research is conducted in the rural areas of Mawkyrwat, South West Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya. Representative sample populations of located villages are Mawlangwir, Mawkyrwat, Mawten, Nonglang, Sakwang, Marshilong, Jakrem, Umjarain, Rangthong, Rangmaw, Mawranglang and Laitlawsang.

It is officially recorded that in 2013, there were 63 secondary schools in South West Khasi Hills District and most of them are private schools. (DI, 2003) The sample is taken

from 350 secondary school students and 50 secondary school dropout students who belong to Mawkyrwat area of South West Khasi Hills District had been taken for the research study.

The research investigation is based on data collected from the field in the form of scheduled interviews to collect information on social variables and to evaluate the reasons for wastage and stagnation at secondary school and school dropout.

1.4 Hypothesis: Wastage and stagnation at secondary schools level can be reduced and abridged with better economic and financial conditions of the parents.

1.5 Review of Related literature: Randy Brown in his study, *Why Do Youth Drop Out?* found out that most of the students drop out their education and could not keep up with school work due to lack of financial supporting and most of them are engaged in labour work to support their family income. (Brown, 1998)

Mindy, L. Crain-Dorough in her study, “*Dropout Characteristics and School Level Effects on Dropout Prevention*” revealed that the main dropout reasons were poverty and difference in ethnicity. The findings of her study revealed an issue that permeates many areas in educational research, that being the relationship between ethnicity and poverty. (Dorough, 2003)

Frances Hunt from the Consortium for Educational Access Transitions and Equity (CREATE), examined *Dropping out from School: A Cross-Country Review of Literature* revealed that the reasons of school dropout were household income and financial circumstances, school fees, resources and facilities. The study also revealed child labour, migration, household contexts and living conditions, bereavement and orphanhood of the students. (Hunt, 2008)

The Indian Institute of Education, Bombay (Chitkara, 1953) carried out an investigation into wastage at the secondary level. For the purpose of this investigation, 34 secondary schools in four districts of Maharashtra State were selected. In each school, the investigation was confined to those pupils, who were enrolling in standard VIII in June, 1949. The data of each such pupil was traced till he appeared at the SSLC examination at the end of four years, i.e. in March, 1953 or left the school in middle without completing the course. It was found that out of 2565 pupils enrolled in Standard VIII in 1949, only 545 passed the SSLC examination at the first attempt. This gave apparent wastage at 78.8%. An attempt was made to go beyond the school records and to study the nature and cause of wastage. For this purpose, 204 pupils were contacted and interviewed and it was also revealed that the social and economic background of the communities were the main causes of the wastage.

(NCERT, 1967) found that wastage and stagnation in Delhi schools were more a case of:

- (a) Schools having double shift system, lower paid teachers, teachers residing away from schools and schools with inadequate provision for co-curricular activities;

- (b) Students who have lower percentage of attendance and who belong to lower or higher age groups than the age prescribed for the class;
- (c) Students who belong to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe families and to families having agriculture, artisan work and daily labor as profession as well as belonging to parents having low educational background or belonging to lower income groups.

1.6 Need and Significance of the Study: The main endeavor of this research study is to observe poverty as one of the main factor of wastage and stagnation at secondary school level in Mawkyrwat area. Secondary School Education has an essential role to play in any program of education for the community. It prepares pupils for colleges, universities and other institutions of Higher Education. Besides, it is the stage which in all countries marks the completion of education for the vast majority. Even the minority which goes for higher education cannot take full advantage of the under opportunities offered by the universities unless they have received their grounding in a system of sound secondary education. It was generally found out that in most of the rural villages in Meghalaya and in particular Mawkyrwat area of South West Khasi Hills District, wastage and stagnation is due to poverty which is a difficult and challenging problem at secondary school level. Therefore, the researcher is determined to conduct a research as to find out the causes and reasons and at the same time to give probable suggestions for its removal.

1.7 Poverty: The Responsible Factors of Wastage and Stagnation: Education is an essential social goal of any community. The responsibility it plays and its probable contribution to the intellectual growth and development of the community have become points of general concern in both developed and developing countries. It enables individuals and the community to make an all-round contribution in the development process by obtaining knowledge, aptitudes and talents. It also plays a part in promoting respect for human rights and values, creating the condition for equality, mutual understanding and collaboration among people.

It has been anticipated that 65 percent of the causes of wastage and stagnation are due to economic and financial reasons. As the annual income of about 50 percent of our country is very low and majority of the parents have to depend on direct or indirect earning by their children. Poverty may be directly responsible for wastage and stagnation in secondary school level as in many cases the children who are admitted in schools are withdrawn from school in order to help the family in household chores or seeking employment. Educational institutions especially in villages are suffering from scarcity of funds and students usually come bare footed, their clothes are dilapidated and filthy. They do not take curiosity in their children's education nor can they assist them in their studies.

Mawkyrwat, a village falling under the administrative district of South West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya is approximately 75 kms from Shillong. This village being one of the low economic communities where majority of the people live from hand to mouth, and for that reason may also lead to the causes for wastage and stagnation in the area. Many of the

children are withdrawn from school in order to help their parents in household chores or in their field. The educational expenditures are much more than what the poor parents can afford. Their livelihood and poverty compel the parents to withdraw their children from the school.

It is clearly observed that the greatest problem of secondary education in Meghalaya is wastage and stagnation. A large number of class IX and class X students remained in the same class for more than one academic year before dropping out particularly in the rural areas. Many of the adolescent students drop out from their studies before completing their secondary education within the prescribed period. This is the case which is also happened in Mawkyrwat area of South West Khasi Hills due to poverty where many young students have to take up works and efforts to supplement their family income by dropping out their secondary school or discontinue after their Senior School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) examination.

The normal parents are not at all in a situation to send their children to school and to sustain them there, on a full time basis till they reach the age of 14. So poverty of the parents is the primary reason which stops the children from attending schools, it is impracticable on their part to bear the expenses incurred in educating their children. Above all, in rural villages the children step into their father's occupation at an early age which obstructs their education.

In India, numerous people are still living in primitive unawareness. And they are culturally and educationally backward that their unwillingness for education acted as a check on any better development. Besides, for vast majority of backward class, life is a problem of hunger and want. Therefore, children share the duties responsibilities of the adults and participate in daily activities for earning the livelihood.

Therefore most people of India and in Meghalaya as well are economically backward. The economic situation does not allow their children to act against their study. Studies conducted on the subjects; show that 65 percent of the wastage is due to poverty. Kothari Commission pointed out *A child is sent to school between 6 and 8 years age, because at this stage he/she is more a nuisance at home than a help. At the age of 9 or 10, the child becomes an economic asset, because he/she can work at home or earn something outside. This is especially true of girls who have to assist the over-working mother at home.* (Kothari, 1964/66)

1.8 Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

- i. This research investigation on poverty as the responsible factor to wastage and stagnations in Meghalaya, identify that **18%** of the students at secondary school level finance and supported their education by themselves. The students who support their education by themselves faced great problem in completing their school tasks like home assignment, project work and unit test. They are not very regular to school so also they do not show interest in studies.

- ii. The research investigation identify of about **62%** of the respondents stated that the textbooks' price is very high consequently they could not afford to buy the textbooks. Most of the students also come from a very poor family and low economic background. Furthermore, the investigation revealed that when their parents could not afford to buy them the prescribed textbooks, they had to borrow it from their classmates and friends, which in turn affecting their studies as well their classmate studies.
- iii. It also identify that **35%** of the respondents belong to Below Poverty Line (BPL) level of livelihood. It was also found out that most of the respondents who belong to Below Poverty Line (BPL) are illiterate and are unable to send all their children to school, since they also have many children. Such families are not able to afford educational necessities and requirements of their children and most of them send their wards to work in order to supplement the family financial income.
- iv. The research investigation also identify of around **39%** of the respondents portrayed that they are not regular and show no interest in attending school as they have to help and assist their parents in their agricultural work and household chores.
- v. The research investigation concludes that **72%** of the respondents stated that the school fees are very expensive and costly as they could not afford to pay it.

1.9 Major Finding of the Research: The enormity of the problem of wastage and stagnation increases further when we observe it in relation to the areas and its population, who are living in poor conditions and are victims of economic deprivation and deficiency. Most of the parents in the rural areas were mostly illiterate and they do not have job stability. Most of them are daily labourers and farmers who toil very hard daily to meet the basic needs through their daily wages only. Some of them belonged to *Below Poverty Line* (BPL) and the size of their family also is very large, where they could not afford to meet their daily needs and requirements. Therefore, the people suffer from economic oppression and could not send all their children to school, while on the other hand, their children have to help their parents in their fields and home so as to increase the family income and hence, they are unable to attend school regularly.

2.0 Suggestions:

- i. In order to reduce the problem of dropout of secondary school students from school which is due to poverty, certain scholarship should be provided to these students with careful examination from the school authority.
- ii. School authorities should make special provisions and condition to alleviate the students from paying large amount of school fees.
- iii. School fees can be reduced for poor students and installment facility should be there whereby they can pay the fees in several parts without going through extreme financial crisis
- iv. Book grants should be given to all secondary school students.
- v. The State Government should also provide incentives schemes for the poor families so that they are motivated to send their children to school.

2.1 Conclusion: There are several reasons why there are wastage and stagnation in secondary school, which range from relocation of families, socio-economic problem of the family, early marriage, lack of school infrastructure, etc. This problem in Meghalaya especially in the rural areas is due to poverty and this has been a universal problem that spread over on every level of education, in the entire State and Districts. Soha Moitra of *Child Rights and You* (CRY) stated that poverty is one of the big reasons why children drop out of school, and *when a family is not financially secure, prioritising a child's education takes a backseat*. Reducing dropouts in secondary school education in rural Meghalaya is the need of the hour to protect, nourish and equip school's children. Initiatives to minimize *school wastage and stagnation* must play a central role in any serious effort to reach the goal of Education for All and also be an urgent priority to reach out to rural villages in and around Meghalaya.

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