

# Drop-out is a Threat to Complete the Cycle of Primary Education (up to Grade-V), Bangladesh Perspectives

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**Abstract:** The primary education system in Bangladesh is one of the largest systems in the world. The country has taken a number of measures to improve primary education since its independence 1971. Bangladesh is committed to the rights of basic education for all children by the Article 17th of its constitution. Now a days Bangladesh has improved a lot in case of primary level enrolment, but many children are dropped out for various reason. To complete the full cycle of primary education (up to grade five), dropout should be reduced to zero level. Bangladesh Government also trying best to reach that goal by introducing many project such as Hard to Reach, Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) and also creating new division in Directorate of Primary education like Second Chance and Alternative Education (SCE) Division. All these efforts are giving good results but yet to go a long way.

**Keywords-** Enrolment, Dropout, Primary education, Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC), Second Chance.

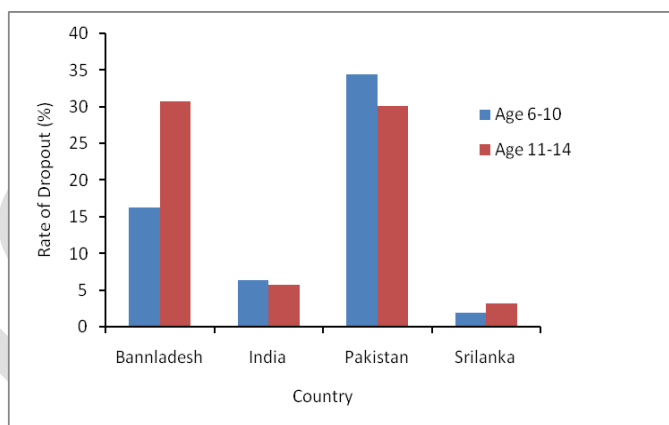


Fig: 1. Dropout rate of four countries of the subcontinent

## I. INTRODUCTION

Primary education is the basic stage of formal education. Every child should complete the cycle of primary education which means they should complete grade five successfully. In Bangladesh, Government is committed to ensure primary education for all. The advancement in primary enrollment is near about 100 percent but matter of great regret that a number of children dropped out form primary school for various reasons. At this moment the dropout rate in Bangladesh is about 21%. This number is not small so government is trying hard to reduce this rate to zero level.

## II. DROPOUT

The ideal situation towards which all countries are striving is 100 per cent enrolment of both boys and girls, and 100 per cent retention at least up to the end of the primary school cycle up to a minimum of five years. Within that context, drop-out is perhaps the most critical form of wastage; that having enrolled a child in school, the school fails to retain the child.

Not only in Bangladesh dropout is a problem, but all over the world it is a headache. Fig-1 shows the dropout rate of some subcontinent countries.

## III. REASONS OF DROPOUT

To stop dropout, we should firstly know the reasons and types of dropout. Reasons for drop-out may be classified into two groups “internal” and “external”. Neither group should be treated to be isolated. An educational system reflects the values and priorities of the society it serves. It can rarely be more advanced than the general cultural matrix which supports it. Interaction between internal and external factors is continual.

### Factors involved in Dropout

- A. *Internal factors affecting drop-out-* The primary school itself, its facilities, and pedagogical methods, all affect the child’s learning experience and exert an influence upon retention or drop-out. The facilities available are inadequate for the number of students who attend the schools. There are not enough schools, and within existing schools there are not enough benches, desks, or chalkboards to mention only the most basic equipment.
- B. *External factors affecting drop-out-* The external factors are those within the child’s socio-cultural environment. Of these, the economic and social

condition of the family is the single most vital variable affecting drop-out. Sometimes children work outside to earn for their family to be another reason behind high dropout and low enrollment. Among the working children, most are fishing and day labor and others work with his parents. This happens mostly with the boys. Girls drop out at later ages than boys. The children were found to be more interested to work rather than study. At this early age, they seem to have realized the importance of money in their lives.

- C. Another most important factor affecting both enrolment and drop-out is **geographical location**. Hard to reach (water surrounded, hill) areas experience higher drop-out rates, as do deltaic regions. Provision of primary school and of teachers in these regions can be very difficult and travelling to school poses a problem for many school attendees. Poverty, remote area, slum dwelling, Lack of awareness, less attractive school environment all these are also responsible for dropout.

#### IV. ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE DROPOUT

While the priority of the Government of Bangladesh is to ensure that all children enrol in Primary School at an appropriate age and complete the primary cycle, it is recognized that this is not always achieved for a number of reasons. So the number of out of school children remain high, particularly in some cases like urban, poverty prone and geographically disadvantage locations, it emerged as serious concern. Different types of non-formal education is addressing the educational need of these deprived groups of children since long by providing them second chance to complete their education that are mostly implemented by NGOs with funding from different donors. Through BNFE, government was also involved in this movement but sufficient resource allocation was not there and hence the programs were mostly supported by donors. Government has approved NFE policy (2006) and act (2014) where BNFE played a crucial role but not much attention was given to implement the policy.

A project named Hard to Reach was funded by the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) of the Government of Bangladesh, CIDA, SIDA and UNICEF was introduced to reduce dropout. The duration of the project was 5 years and 4 months from 01-07-2006 to 30-10-2011.

The objective of this project was to enhance life options of the urban working children and adolescents to access their rights to education, protection, development and participation.

Tenghamara Mohola Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) was operating this project in 9 wards of Chittagong metropolitan city and 3 Unions of Sitakunda Upazilla.

The GOB projects to encourage enrolment and retention of children of disadvantaged sections of the population living in the urban slums and extreme remote areas include (a) Reaching Out of School Children Project that targets enrolling 720,000 students implemented in 148 rural Upazilas and in Dhaka slums, (b) School Feeding Program implemented in 72 Upazilas providing nutritional biscuits and mid-day meal to about 2.7 million children. These the projects are implemented by the DPE and co-financed by the World Bank, UNICEF and World Food Program with the GOB. The Government has introduced pre-primary classes for the 3-5-year age group children to increase enrolment, reduce drop out and to make the children interested in education right from initial period. Government is committed to ensure 2<sup>nd</sup> chance education for never enrolled and dropped out students of 7-14 age group in the formal primary education system. 73 formal primary schools for urban working children have been established and run by the Shishu Kalyan Trust (SKT) in 64 district Head Quarters with the financial assistance of ROSC project for ensuring formal education and also livelihood skill for urban working children.

On the other hand, it is now recognized by all that Second Chance Education (SCE) acts as a safety net for children who do not enrol on time or do not complete their primary education. Through addressing the needs of children who have never enrolled in primary school or dropped out from school, a second chance can be given to them to learn and be mainstreamed or linked with alternative stream to complete basic education and be productive human resource and good citizen. Finally Government of Bangladesh has also shown its commitment to SCE and positioned SCE as one of the Primary Education Development Program -3 (PEDP-3)'s sub-components (sub-component 2.1.1 – Second Chance Education).

Children is now completing their basic education and Parents of working children are now conscious about their children's education, Dropout of learners decreased. Children are now more interested to join regular schools. Local elites, parents, guardians and employers are aware on issues related to education, child rights, child labor and hazardous work.

Besides that, a new division named Second Chance and Alternative Education Division in DPE has recently established to work with these dropout children.

So Second Chance Education should be part of state's planning considering the big picture of education. The major directions for planning should be;

- Making formal primary education attractive, flexible and efficient to move towards ZERO exclusion.
- Creating second chance for them who are still out of school/education to integrate or reintegrate them in to formal system to complete primary education.
- Creating opportunity (3<sup>rd</sup> chance) for them who are out even from 2<sup>nd</sup> chance, to give them basic literacy,

numeracy and skill for life and livelihood (Adult Education and Life skills)

V. RESULTS OF THE ALREADY TAKEN MEASURES

Already taken measures by the government following achievements have been done;

- a) Access of the formal Primary Education ensured by enrolment of 99.47% students;
- b) 98.5% students have come out successfully completing grade five terminal examinations.
- c) Teacher student ratio has been reduced from 1:56 to 1:48 in primary education which helps to reduce dropout rate.
- d) 0.75 million poor disadvantaged dropout students have got second chance education through ROSC intervention.
- e) The number of stipend for primary school children has been increased to 7.8 million from 4.8 million in order to achieve the 100% enrolment and to reduce the drop out rate.
- f) The present government has reduced drop-out rate from 50% to 39.8% through different types of safety net coverage like: stipend, supply of free text books, school feeding program, effective home visit and mother counseling, etc.
- g) Introducing Primary School Completion (PEC) is examination throughout the country with uniform question and provision of the primary scholarship based on the result of the PEC is the epoch-making initiative of the present government.

- a) Have to ensure vigorous social mobilization negating child marriage.
- b) Have to create public opinion in favor of learning through social mobilization.
- c) Have to take step to eradicate ominous superstitions from the society.
- d) Most of the parents in rural area are illiterate and not concerned about the importance of education. They should know the necessity of education by entangling themselves with proper social awareness program.
- e) Current scholarship program has some difficulties to meet the needs of remote area students. These problems should be addressed immediately and more stipends should be awarded to the children. It needs to be ensured that stipends are given to those who actually need it. School-feeding program (lunch) should be helpful to those remote areas.
- f) Monitoring system should bring under ICT, so that anyone can monitor whole system from anywhere.
- g) Have to establish some special school with special arrangement in those hard to reach areas such as boat school, tent school etc. where water is a problem to reach school in time.
- h) Classrooms must have enough space with other environmental facilities and adequate number of furniture also be available there.
- i) At the hard to reach area communication is a big problem. Easy transport system should be facilitated by the GOB to the students and as well as to the teachers also.
- j) Have to ensure quality teacher appointment. Teaching learning and other remained logistics should be ensured.

Fig: 2. show governments efforts are working good and dropout rate is reducing remarkably

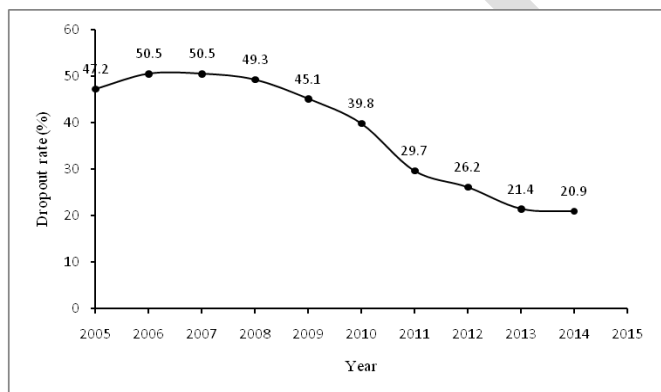


Fig: 2. Year wise percentage of Dropout rate

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Not a single approach cannot prevent dropout completely. An integrated action plan should be taken to reduce the drop rate remarkably. Following measures may be taken to address these problems:

VII. CONCLUSION

There is no other way but to reduce dropout to reach the goal of primary education. Only government initiatives will be not enough to reduce that. GO-NGO collaboration is the real way to achieve the target. In Bangladesh the scenario is changing very rapidly. Bangladesh has done remarkably well in enhancing access and equity in education. It is attaining gender equity at the primary and also secondary education. Dropout rates are being minimized up to a tolerable rate generally, and that day is not far behind when all the students would be successful is completely their desired cycle and prove them worthy citizen of Bangladesh.

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