

Impact of parents' education and occupation on academic performance of students at secondary level

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Abstract

Education is a continuous process lasting till the last breath. It is a mechanism that shapes us and informs our decision making process as well as our behaviour. It has potential to change our outlook and the way we behave and carry ourselves. Education is a tool that is used by the governments to inculcate moral values and legal duties among the citizens. It is also a medium through which individuals could be made civilized and well-behaved.

It is, therefore, crucial to understand and analyse how parents' education and occupation affect academic performance of students at secondary level. Secondary education is a vital stage in a student's life as it prepares him for the senior secondary and higher studies. It is a main threshold of education.

Hence, it is necessary to examine how family background and the occupation of the parents affect children's academic achievement at secondary level.

Keywords: parents' education, occupation, academic performance, secondary level

Introduction

India is a vast country with numerous differences and houses a massive population of around 1.3 billion people. It possesses a robust education system funded primarily by the Union and State Governments as well as philanthropic organizations. India is a signatory to several covenants of the United Nations pledging itself to achieving universal elementary as well as equitable access to quality education for all. India views the UN as the world body and has high regard for it and its associated subsidiary organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF.

The UN is meant not only to achieve global peace and a solution to the problems confronted by the world together such as climate change and poverty eradication as well as universalization of education. The UN has one of its subsidiary organs known as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal on Education aims to achieve free and equitable access to quality secondary education for all by 2030.

Under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) initiative, India has over 200,000 secondary schools. This initiative is meant to achieve universalization of secondary education and ensure delivery of high quality educational outcomes. India has a robust educational network of schools with many of the problems. These problems persist despite India has committed a vast sum of the money to the education sector.

Role of Secondary Education

The Indian education system has inherited a lot of positive characteristics from the British administration and it has retained many aspects even after seven decades following India's independence. The Indian education system is classified into primary, elementary, secondary, higher secondary and college and university levels. The primary

education is up to the level of the fifth standard whereas the elementary education covers the eighth standard. Together, it is known as the basic or fundamental education which was made compulsory under the Right to Education Act passed in 2009 and enacted in 2010. The Act envisaged free and compulsory education to all Indian children from 6 to 14 years of age with compulsory education.

After elementary education comes the secondary education which sharpens and strengthens a student's comprehensive skills. It also prepares a student to take up higher education. It plays a key role in one's progress and academic development. The Indian government has time and again focused on this stage and has pledged itself to develop it further. The government constituted one mission known as "Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan" in 2009. It had envisaged a goal of imparting universal secondary education by 2017 that coincided with the end of the 12th five-year plan that began in 2012 and was set to last till 2017. The "Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan" was also aimed at gaining universal retention in secondary education by 2020. The Mission also included gaining quality education, better infrastructure such as rooms and washrooms which are student-friendly and with gender segregation, potable water facilities, a focus on teacher-student ratio and an emphasis on science, technology, mathematics and engineering. The Mission, in brief sought to modernize the education sector and make it more scientific and productive keeping in view of the modern requirements of the education.

The Differences among People's Income and Occupation

India is a large country with massive income disparities. India has a sizeable of its population below poverty level. The National Institution for Transforming India (Niti Aayog) had, in 2014, constituted a committee led by former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor C. Rangarajan. The committee, according to an Economic Times Report

published on August 20, 2020, had then pegged the total number of India's poor at 363 million, or 29.6% of the population. We have another committee in the form of "the Suresh Tendulkar committee" that was formed in 2009. The Suresh Tendulkar committee had estimated the number of poor Indians at 269.8 million (21.9% of the population).

The foregoing income disparities are an indicator to emphasize the fact that India is plagued with income inequalities. These income inequalities translate into access to basic facilities such as education and healthcare. We tend to perceive that these disparities do affect the students' access to the secondary level education and their educational outcomes. We tend to argue that modern facilities do have an impact on the learning capabilities and potential of the students. These disparities not only affect the outcomes at secondary level but also at primary and tertiary levels.

Similarly, we have income disparities among the rural segments of people as well as their urban counterparts. It is commonly perceived that rural India does not enjoy the kind of facilities which are available for their urban counterparts. This is the reason that a lot of rural students migrate to cities for quality education and better employment opportunities. We tend to see few students migrating to rural India or rural towns in order to acquire higher education.

Similarly, the rich students who have the wealthy parents have an option of going abroad for higher education and are prone to get better economic opportunities as well as better learning outcomes with an international exposure at their disposal making them distinct from their rural and urban counterparts who could not travel abroad due to economic restraints and inability of their parents to afford them an international exposure and a foreign campus for higher studies.

Finally, the wealthy parents have more tendencies to comprehend the vitality of education and that is why they tend to egg on their wards to do better and keep a regular tab on their performance. This privilege is not available to those students whose fathers have low level of educational qualification and are engaged in some low level of occupations leaving them with miniscule time to sit with their wards and encourage them to work hard or to check their progress.

In short, we could conclude that the parents' interest and their encouragement of their children to do well and to work hard have a great impact on student's performances in the school. It is often seen that those students who are poor but have their parents' active support and encouragement do better the way the wealthy students fare well.

Parents' Income and Consequent Education Levels

In order to shed further light on the foregoing arguments, we would analyse the data on intergenerational mobility presented by the World Bank. The Bank, in its report published in the Business Standard on 4 June 1918, argued that India has made progress on educational intergenerational mobility, with those born in the 1980s doing better than those born in the 1940s. The report was named as "Fair Progress: Economic Mobility across Generations around the World". The report measured intergenerational mobility by comparing the income and education levels of one generation with those of their parents.

The Report studied five countries as its research variables

and found that countries such as Brazil, India, Nigeria, Peru and South Africa had significant income disparities and consequent educational gains. The Report disclosed that if a person earned double the amount earned by another, their ward was expected to make somewhere between 60-70% more than the child of the lower-income person.

The Report found this gap morewide when it came to countries such as the Arab Republic of Egypt, Morocco and Panama where the gap was found to be worse rising up to 90 percent.

In comparison, the difference is less than 20% in countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Norway, and 50% in the United States and Vietnam.

The Report also quantified the mobility of those whose parents belonged to the bottom half in educational attainment, and found that educational levels were dependent on parents' educational levels across generations. For instance, there was a 71% chance that an individual born in the 1980s to parents in the bottom half in terms of educational attainment would stay in the bottom half, and just a 9% chance that he or she would move to the topmost quarter.

The Exceptional Students Who Fare Well Despite Odds

In the foregoing paragraphs, we analysed how income disparities affected educational attainment of students at secondary level as well as at other levels. In the following section, we would dwell upon how the poor students in India fare despite all the hurdles and bottlenecks. India is a country of vast opportunities despite several impediments one has to go through due to intense competition that exist in India. We would take, for instance, the aspirants of the Civil Service Examination in which many poor students belonging to the very destitute families fare exceptionally well and crack the exam beating thousands of more privileged students.

Similarly, we tend to see many rural students doing well in terms of their students while beating more privileged urban students. In the same vein, we tend to see girls scoring flying marks in the exams and doing better than boys despite their routine engagement in household chores.

Conclusion and Some Recommendations

This write-up argues that highly educated parents with an established occupation tend to have more influence on their children to achieve and perform well in their studies at secondary school level. This claim is substantiated with the fact that highly qualified parents usually take care of all the needs of their wards and actively engage with them and actively encourage them. This encouragement and sustained support leads to better performance and achievement in studies.

Sometimes though, parental influence fails to make a desirable positive impact on the students.

Given the vast country India is, the government should enhance the spending on education which is currently close to 4 percent only. The government should ensure a regular supply of the qualified and highly educated teachers to the secondary level schools. The parents should make sure that they provide the adequate support to their wards.

The government should ensure that teachers are given continuous training while they are inducted into the system and on certain occasions as well such as during the time the new syllabi are introduced. This will enable them to cope up

with the new syllabi. The school management should organize occasional trainings on the new concepts which are developed by the experts from time to time to keep them abreast with recent developments. The government should pay attention to the measures which are needed in order to lessen the poverty as it is an impediment in the way of academic progress. The government should run the awareness programs for the parents in particular and the society in general in order to educate them regarding the vitality of education and the losses which stem from illiteracy and lack of education. The government should also from time to time disseminate the measures it is taking to ameliorate the sector of education and it should convey its commitment to take the education sector to the zenith of success.

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