

PATTERNS OF ENROLMENT IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract: *Elementary education forms the foundation of a nation's human resource development and social equity. This paper examines the patterns of enrolment in elementary education across Indian states, with a specific focus on Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) as key indicators. Using data from UDISE 2019–20, the study highlights significant disparities in GER among states, gender-wise differences, and systemic inefficiencies such as over-aged and under-aged enrolment. States like Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Karnataka exhibit GERs exceeding 100 percent, reflecting broader access but also potential anomalies in age-appropriate enrolment. Conversely, states like Bihar and Madhya Pradesh lag behind, indicating persistent challenges in universalizing education. The analysis reveals that despite national efforts and policies aimed at universal elementary education, regional disparities and cultural factors continue to affect enrolment patterns. The findings underscore the need for state-specific policy interventions to improve access, equity, and efficiency in elementary education.*

Key words: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Elementary Education in India, UDISE 2019–20

Introduction

Education is a key of success in life and it works as an useful tool for social change. Education initiates the process of social change and removes inequalities in society. Educated people are resource for a country. Education starts with elementary school and if the base is strong then the chances are bright in higher education and hence the people are more resourceful. The quality of elementary education plays an important role for future overall growth and personality development of a child. Our central government and state governments made several provisions from time to time in their education policies and implemented various schemes of education and programme to universalize elementary education. This research paper, tries to make assessment of the present status of elementary education in India using the two important aspects of enrolment, i.e., Gross enrolment ratio (GER) and Net enrolment ratio (NER) of elementary education.

Research Question: What is the current state of enrolment in India?

Objective: To know the patterns of enrolment in elementary education state-wise.

Data Base: UDISE data 2019-20 are used to study the patterns of enrolment at the state level.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

GER is a statistical measure used in the education sector, and formerly by the UN in its Education Index. It determines the number of students enrolled in school at several different grade levels (elementary, middle school and high school) and use it to show *the ratio of the number of students who live in that area/country to those who qualify that particular grade level*. GER can be over 100 percent as it includes students who may be older or younger than the official defined age group, e.g. 6-10 primary, 11-13 for Upper Primary and 14-17 age for Senior Secondary School. UNESCO describes *GER as the total enrolment within a country 'in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education.'*¹ India has also used this index as a Human Development Index, indicating well-being status of a country. GER is widely used to show the general level of participation in and capacity of primary education. This ratio is used in place of the net enrolment ratio when data on enrolment by single year of age are not available. GER can be used together with the NER to measure the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment. Let us look at the national scenario within which our study is carried out. The present study focuses on the patterns of GER of elementary education in India. The following table 1 gives ranking of the states for GER for boys and girls in a descending order. There is almost a symmetry between the national (for both boys and girls) and for individual gender, boys scoring a bit better from girls and the national average ratio.

The GER of India state-wise for the year 2019-20 has following observations-

1. Meghalaya has the highest GER which is 143.48 percent and it shows that the state lags behind in enrolling children of right school age.
2. The GER also has children below the 6 years of age and the data doesn't show children below 6 years of age. If a child is below 6 years of age and still in class 1 then it is not the inefficiency of the system.
3. States like Karnataka, Mizoram and Tripura also has GER above 100 and these states are known for their high enrolment ratios as the changes in the education system has come fast as compared to other states.

4. Punjab and Himachal Pradesh has experienced higher GER, though the states have progressive policies in elementary education.
5. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim and Orissa have low GER and these states earlier has lower enrolment, the fact is that the no state specific policies have come up to address the problem of low enrolment from government of India upto now.
6. Meghalaya and Manipur has more gender gap in enrolment and though the state have high sex ratio still the gap is significant and the reason for such gap is that there is high preference of boy child to send the school and cultural fusion from patriarchal central belt of India.

Table 01 : Descending Ranking of Gross Enrolment Ratios by Gender for Elementary Section, India (2019-20) (in percent)

| # | States | Girls | Boys | Total |
|----|-------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Meghalaya | 147.83 | 139.30 | 143.48* |
| 2 | Mizoram | 123.98 | 124.73 | 124.36 |
| 3 | Manipur | 117.71 | 114.54 | 116.07 |
| 4 | Punjab | 109.69 | 108.95 | 109.29 |
| 5 | Uttarakhand | 109.73 | 107.28 | 108.42 |
| 6 | Assam | 110.42 | 104.47 | 107.38 |
| 7 | Tripura | 108.95 | 105.65 | 107.26 |
| 8 | Telangana | 106.39 | 106.24 | 106.31 |
| 9 | Arunachal Pradesh | 106.93 | 103.51 | 105.19 |
| 10 | Karnataka | 104.59 | 105.40 | 105.01 |
| 11 | Himachal Pradesh | 105.46 | 103.94 | 104.65 |
| 12 | West Bengal | 105.01 | 102.27 | 103.61 |
| 13 | Maharashtra | 103.55 | 103.41 | 103.48 |
| 14 | Haryana | 102.39 | 103.07 | 102.76 |
| 15 | Rajasthan | 99.01 | 100.31 | 99.70** |
| 16 | Kerala | 98.95 | 99.33 | 99.14 |
| 17 | Tamil Nadu | 98.16 | 97.87 | 98.01 |
| 18 | Andhra Pradesh | 95.74 | 99.20 | 97.52 |
| 19 | Goa | 98.07 | 94.81 | 96.36 |
| 20 | Chhattisgarh | 95.51 | 95.37 | 95.44 |
| 21 | Uttar Pradesh | 97.33 | 93.12 | 95.11 |
| 22 | Jharkhand | 95.88 | 94.26 | 95.05 |
| 23 | Odisha | 93.31 | 94.72 | 94.04 |
| 24 | Gujarat | 95.01 | 92.73 | 93.79 |
| 25 | Sikkim | 91.72 | 95.33 | 93.56 |
| 26 | Madhya Pradesh | 91.76 | 92.91 | 92.35 |
| 27 | Bihar | 90.45 | 85.90 | 88.10 |
| 28 | Nagaland | 86.89 | 82.10 | 84.39 |
| 29 | Jammu & Kashmir | 83.74 | 80.28 | 81.90 |
| 30 | Ladakh | 81.50 | 73.17 | 77.11*** |
| | India | 99.92 | 97.97 | 98.89 |

Note : * Highest value, ** Median value, *** Lowest value

Source: Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE).

Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)

The NER is the number of boys and girls of the age of a particular level of education that are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. NER for elementary school means the ratio of elementary school children in the age group of 6 to 13 years attending school to the total population of 6 to 13 years. Main observations of NER for India at state level are as follows;

1. Punjab, Tripura and Meghalaya has 100 percent NER, for Punjab and Tripura it could be said that the states have progressive policies towards education, but for Meghalaya the data seems to be incorrect as Meghalaya from the past data is showing low value and suddenly the values within a year cannot be 100 percent.
2. States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh are showing value less than 90 percent and these are the states which have progressive policies in elementary education. The reason for low NER could be because the data processing for these states is incorrect.
3. Certain states have higher NER for girls as compared to boys and this looks promising but last year the data told different story where boys excelled than girls and in the span of one year picture couldn't be changed that easily, so, here also data have not been properly processed.
4. States like Bihar, U.P, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, M.P, Odisha and Ladakh have lowest values which could be because the state specific policies do not focus to improve enrolment, neither there are schemes like Lok Jumbish where community itself can open their own schools.

Table 02: Descending Ranking of Net Enrolment Ratio for Elementary Section, India (2019-20) (in percent)

| State | Girls | Boys | Total |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Punjab | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00* |
| Tripura | 100.00 | 99.80 | 100.00* |
| Meghalaya | 100.00 | 98.77 | 100.00* |
| Karnataka | 96.62 | 97.50 | 97.07 |
| Manipur | 97.56 | 94.75 | 96.11 |
| Assam | 98.20 | 93.08 | 95.58 |
| West Bengal | 93.97 | 92.11 | 93.02 |
| Mizoram | 93.44 | 92.61 | 93.01 |
| Maharashtra | 91.02 | 90.20 | 90.59 |
| Uttarakhand | 88.58 | 86.35 | 87.39 |
| Kerala | 87.18 | 87.24 | 87.21 |
| Telangana | 86.30 | 86.29 | 86.30 |
| Goa | 87.78 | 84.37 | 85.99 |
| Himachal Pradesh | 86.71 | 85.12 | 85.87 |
| Jharkhand | 84.62 | 83.14 | 83.86** |
| Chhattisgarh | 83.68 | 83.17 | 83.42 |
| Bihar | 83.99 | 79.63 | 81.74 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 79.84 | 82.43 | 81.17 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 82.41 | 78.79 | 80.50 |
| Haryana | 78.91 | 80.26 | 79.65 |
| Tamil Nadu | 79.35 | 79.82 | 79.59 |
| Gujarat | 80.62 | 78.48 | 79.48 |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 80.30 | 77.67 | 78.96 |
| Rajasthan | 78.36 | 79.16 | 78.78 |
| MP | 76.27 | 76.76 | 76.53 |
| Odisha | 70.55 | 71.90 | 71.25 |
| Sikkim | 69.33 | 69.31 | 69.32 |
| Nagaland | 68.97 | 65.31 | 67.06 |
| Jammu & Kashmir | 63.94 | 61.34 | 62.56 |
| Ladakh | 64.02 | 57.14 | 60.40*** |
| India | 83.11 | 81.50 | 82.30 |

Note : * Highest value, ** Median value, *** Lowest value

Source: UDISE

Conclusion

To know the enrolment scenario of elementary education of India at state level, the two ratios GER and NER were considered and analyzed. The gender gap in enrolment were seen in North East states which means that patriarchal central belt has fused in this part of the country. Some states like Bihar, U.P, M.P, Orissa and Sikkim have lower NER since the inception of the data but till now no state specific policies are being formed. Lowest enrolment ratio are being observed for border states and India need to relook on its policies for these states from perspective like geographical position etc. To increase enrolment in elementary education, basic infrastructure facilities such as electricity, drinking water, usable toilets, essential teaching aids, trained teachers etc. must be provided. For retaining children in schools activity based teaching and child centric teaching must be done. Constant efforts for improvement in the quality of elementary education and effective implementation of education policy measures can be proved a asset to achieve the aim of universalization of elementary education.

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