



Full Length Research Article

**THE SILENT EXCLUSION OF FIRST GENERATION LEARNERS FROM EDUCATIONAL SCENARIO—A
PROFILE FROM PUNCHA BLOCK OF PURULIA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL**

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ABSTRACT

First generation learners are the first one in their entire generation to go to school and to receive education. This exceptional nature makes them “special need children”. Uneducated parents fail to provide any educational, vocational or personal guidance to their children because there is no provision of appropriate educational environment at home. The present study encompasses the first generation learners of Pancha block of Puruliya district. Low female literacy rate (41.2% according to Census, 2001) and lack of enough employment opportunity have made 21 villages (out of 170 villages) backward in the block. About 164 Primary, 5 Upper Primary and 20 numbers of Upper Primary and Sec. /Higher Secondary schools are there in the Pancha block. Huge number of first generation learners predominate the educational scenario of the block under scrutiny. The study tries to highlight various facets of first generation learners like their ambitions in life, their social background, nature of drop out and factors responsible for it, their views on the present education system, etc. It also attempts to explore the problems faced by the first generation learners at school, their hesitation to communicate or share their problems, feelings or doubts with their teachers and classmates. Their low academic achievement is also an area of concern. Even in their personal life, they experience difficulty in sharing their feelings and views with their peers. Besides, inferiority complex, lack of initiative in them, maladjustment and underdeveloped personality are the various features of first generation learners to be highlighted in the present enquiry. There is need to develop positive behaviour in them.

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INTRODUCTION

First generation learners may be defined as those who of their family members have come for education for the first time in schools and their parents have no formal education at all. They come to school without any orientation. They are less ready and less prepared for the school life. They lack any guidance from any one neither at home nor there any stimulation for them to learn. They do not have the facilities for better learning as their parents fail to realize the importance of education. Their home environment is both discouraging and non-facilitating. This may result into poor academic achievement and less healthy attitudes towards life and society. First generation learners are likely to lack knowledge of time management, school finances, and bureaucratic operations of higher education. They have been found to less likely to encounter a welcoming environment on campus. Entering the school means for them that they are entering into

an alien physical and social environment which they, their family and their peers have never experienced. They are faced with leaving a certain world in which they fit for an uncertain world where they know they don't fit. In fact, first generation learners may find themselves “on the margins of two cultures” and have to offer renegotiate relationship at school and at home to manage the tension between the two. As a result, they become the highest risk students for dropping out. Against this backdrop a comparative survey had been conducted to chalk out the home and school level variations of the first generation communities and non first generations. The emphasis is appropriate on two reasons, viz., firstly, students from first generation are among the least likely to be retained through degree completion, secondly, strategies that are effective for increasing persistence of first generation learners are also successful for increasing the persistence rates of general student population as well. The paper is divided into four sections. Section I represents the comparative profile of home and school perspectives of the first generation learners relative to the non first generations. The academic and social integration of the first generation learners are depicted in the

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second section. Section III is an attempt to explore the academic factors responsible for educational backwardness while section IV concludes the paper with some suggestions.

Objectives

The study deals with the various facets of first generation learners with the following objectives:

- To compare and analyze the socio-economic as well as socio-cultural conditions between the first generations and non first generation learners.
- To study the attitudes, achievement and adjustment of such learners towards their teachers as well as towards other advanced learners;
- To study problems related to 'social and personal psychological relations' of the first generation learners;
- To evaluate the academic factors leading to educational deprivation.
- And finally, to suggest ways and means so that the barriers of access and success can be overcome making the goal of securing universal elementary education a success.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology has been precisely Qualitative. Direct open-ended interview was conducted through Questionnaire and Opinionaire to put question to individual respondents to gain information about their academic environment at home, socio-economic background, barriers faced in education, etc. The study population in the present enquiry comprised of 100 students from first generation communities and 100 from non first generations studying from class X to XII in various pockets of Pancha Block. The students were selected from sc, st dominated schools since first generation learners mostly come from these sections of the society. More to note that twenty girls students from both communities were randomly selected from class VIII to XII to perceive their barriers. Besides, various simple as well as sophisticated Quantitative techniques like Random Sampling, Regression and correlation, Z score analysis, are also fruitful in the recent study.

3. National Sample Survey (NSS) 50th Round data;
4. Census of India, 2001;
5. "Zilla Profile", Purulia district Administration;
6. District Statistical Handbook, Purulia, 2007;
7. Dropout data from Office of School Inspector, Pancha block;
8. Child Register maintained by Village Education Community at each Gram Panchayet of Pancha block.

AREA IDENTITY

The rain fed Purulia district (from 22°42'35"N to 23°42'00"N latitudes and from 85°49'25"E to 86°54'37"E longitudes) is a part of the Chhotonagpur plateau in India consisting of "succession of rolling uplands with intervening hollows" and infertile lateritic soil. The physical landscape, quite unique having distinctive topography, soil, terrain, drainage, forest can be characterized as poorly suited to agriculture and a high incidence of severe poverty. Like the topography of the district, its population structure (Area: 6259km²; Population: 2536516 as per 2001 Census of India) is unique having highest concentration of Scheduled Tribe population (18.27% %) in West Bengal. The bulk of its population consists of Hinduized and Semi-Hinduized communities who still preserve some of the life style of their tribal forefathers. As per the State Human Development Report, 2004 of West Bengal, Purulia is ranked 16th out of 17 districts of West Bengal. In addition, the rankings of the Gender Development Index (GDI) often follow the same pattern as the HDI rankings regarding Purulia district as depicted in the table below. Pancha (Lat. 23°10'N – 23°16'N and Long. 86°40'E – 86°55'E), one of the backward blocks of Purulia District, is surrounded by Hura on north, Manbazar on South, Purulia II and Barabazar on the west while Bankura district marks the eastern part. Pancha (Area: 330.11km² and population: 108129 as per 2001 census), having an average elevation of 163 meters forms the lowest step of the Chhotonagpur plateau. Pancha (Lat. 23°10'N – 23°17'N and Long. 86°39'E – 86°65'E), one of the backward blocks of Purulia District, is surrounded by Hura on north, Manbazar on South, Purulia II and Barabazar on the west while Bankura

Table 1. Selected schools with their personalities

Name of the School	Location	Student strength	Sample size of First generation learners	Sample size of Non first generation learners	Basis of Selection
Arali Raghunathpur	Chirudih Gram Panchayet of	231	25	5	
Adibasi high school	Puncha Circle.				ST domination.
Kenda girls	Kenda GP of Kenda circle	290	20	20	Girls problems.
Badra High school.	Lakhra GP of Puncha Block	439	35	20	SC, ST Domination.
Laulara RC Academy.	Puncha GP of Puncha circle	1333	20	55	High enrolled, huge catchment area Higher secondary.
N		2293	100	100	

Source- Field survey, 2013.

Materials

Primary Database: 100 respondents of the first generation and non first generation category of Pancha as stated above.

Secondary Database:

1. Annual Report, 2007-08, Department of School Education, Govt. of West Bengal, Bikash Bhawan, Bidhan Nagar, Kolkata-700091.
2. District Information System for Education (DISE) at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration;

district marks the eastern part. Pancha (Area: 330.11km² and population: 108129 as per 2001 census), having an average elevation of 163 meters forms the lowest step of the Chhotonagpur plateau. The present study opts to explain how economic uncertainties as well as socio-cultural barriers, e.g., caste, gender, illiteracy, poverty, child labour and seasonal migration contribute a great deal to the educational deprivation among children in Pancha block of Purulia district. Very low female literacy rate (37.1%, Census 2001) and poor Education Index (0.500-0.599 in 2002) depict the poor access of schooling at Pancha. Though recent survey shows a positive trend of high enrolment even among the poorer sections in this

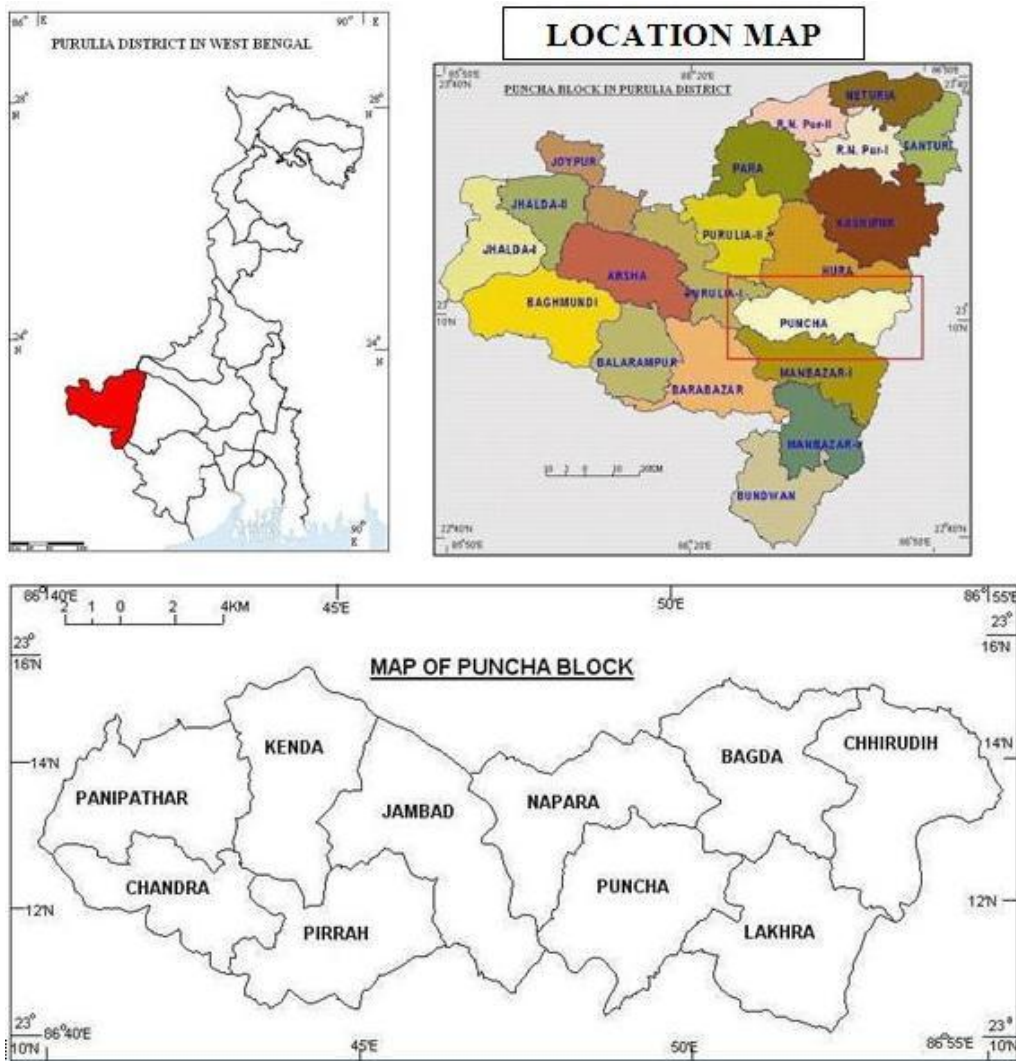


Fig. 1. Location Map of Pancha Block, Puruliya District, West Bengal

block, regular attendance and completion of primary schooling however, still remain as issues. Social exclusion and discrimination, together with landlessness and poverty, combine to keep marginal caste people out of the sphere of education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Section I: -- First generations and Non first generations: comparative profile on personal and educational features

First Generation Learners who fail to access or complete a basic education cycle do not constitute a homogeneous group. For some children physical access to school is difficult, others fail to access school due to socio-economic reasons. Some join school, but are silently excluded and rarely participate in the educational process. To study the personal and educational aspirations of the first and non first generation learners twenty items have been chosen for close scrutiny; as follows:—
The short forms used for comparisons are as under, viz.,

- CAGE =Child Age in years.
- LOW CASTE= Low caste=1, other=0.
- MFLE =Male 1, female 0.
- TRATME = Travel time in minutes.

- MNSCOMMU= Means of communication, walking=0, other=1
- HMEINSP=Home inspiration. Yes=1, no=0.
- STAKETUI=Student takes private tuition, yes=1, no=0
- GENPRF= Gender preference, male=1, no=0
- SCHLAT = School Attendance per week.
- HSECHORES = Hours spent in household chores.
- BOOKHOM = Greater than 20 books at home. Yes=1, no=0
- CEDASP= educational aspiration of students, an index from 1 to 6 of the highest education child aspires, e.g. 2 =upto class 10, 4= first degrass, 6= professional degree.
- STRDLIVING=standard of living, high=1, other=0
- MOTIHME= motivation at home, yes=1, no=0.
- TCRPRTCON= teacher parent contact, always=1, other=0
- PRTCRCN= parent teacher contact, always=1, other=0.
- TCRCLSCN= teacher classroom contact, always=1, other=0
- TCRTMEPRLMS= teachers provide enough time or scope in learning /personal problems. always=1, others=0
- TCRBVR= teachers behavior to you, cordial=1, other=0
- PVRSODISBR=Poverty, social distance barrier. Always=1, other=0

The figures in parentheses are standard deviation. For yes=1/no=0 type of variables, the mean represents the percentage of 1. The variable standard of living was constructed by assigning the values to owned assets as

Table 2. Comparative Profile

VARIABLES	First generation learners	Non- first generation learners	Total Sample	t value	Probability
CAGE	18.1000 (2.359)	16.5000 (1.933)	1.60 (3.60)	1.985	P<0.05
LOW CASTE	.9000 (0.367)	.3000 (0.470)	0.60000 (0.50)	5.339	P>0.05
MFLE	.2000 (0.410)	.3500 (0.489)	0.15 (0.37)	-1.831	P<0.05
TRATME	19.9000 (11.79607)	19.8000 (16.13)	.10000 (18.83)	.024	P<0.05
MNSCOMMU	.1500 (.36635)	.5000 (.513)	-.35000 (0.49)	-3.199	P>0.05
HMEINSP	0.15 (0.37)	.2000 (0.410)	-.05000 (0.22)	-1.000	p < 0.05
STAKETUI	.4500 (.51042)	.7500 (.444)	-.30000 (0.86)	-1.552	P<0.05
GENPRF	1.0000 (0.00)	0.500 (0.513)	.50000(0.51)	4.359	P>0.05
SCHLAT	4.6500 (.671)	5.8500 (0.366)	-1.20000 (0.62)	-8.718	P>0.05
HSECHORES	8.3500 (1.39)	1.9500 (1.31)	6.40000 (1.94)	14.775	P>0.05
BOOKHOM	.0500 (.234)	0.4500 (0.510)	-.40000 (0.50)	-3.559	P>0.05
CEDASP	2.4000 (.821)	3.4000 (1.14)	-1.00000 (1.21)	-3.684	P>0.05
STRDLIVING	0.00 (0.00)	.3000 (0.47)	-.30000 (0.47)	-2.854	P>0.05
MOTIHOME	0.15 (0.37)	.8000 (.410)	-.65000 (0.74)	-3.901	P>0.05
TCRPRTCON	0.15 (0.37)	.2000 (0.410)	-.05000 (0.22)	-1.000	p < 0.05
PRTCRCN	0.200 (.410)	.4000 (0.503)	-.20000 (0.41)	-2.179	P>0.05
TCRCLSCN	.5500 (.510)	.7500 (0.444)	-.20000 (0.41)	-2.179	P>0.05
TCRTMEPRLMS	.0500 (.224)	0.700 (0.470)	-.65000 (0.49)	-5.940	P>0.05
TCRBVR	.4000 (.503)	.8000 (0.410)	-.40000 (0.82)	-2.179	P>0.05
PVRSODISBR	.9500 (.224)	.8500 (0.366)	0.100 (0.31)	1.453	p < 0.05

Source:--Field Survey and Computed by Author

prescribed by NFHS, given in appendix I. Many children may not have known their parents' income but all knew the answer to the factual question on which of the assets their family owned. As regards to the age of the children in school, first generation learners show higher values than the subsequent generations. It averaged around 16 years for sgl as against 18 years of fgls, implying more repetition for the latter. More than 90% first generation learners mostly consist of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students. Needless to say, from the ancient period of Aryans SCs have occupied the last bench in the hierarchical ladder of the society's structure. The British regime cannot turn the table completely. SC and STs were then socially disadvantaged group also, occupying a backseat in education and employment opportunity.

Time changed gradually, awakening came slowly. Despite several safeguards in the Indian Constitution, SC and STs still are backward in all stages and levels of education. SC students are highly 'upward social mobility' oriented, their aspiration for entering the professions are limited and more often they opt for jobs of school teaching and clerical services mainly on reserved quota. After independence in India, Government support and facilities have been provided to the backward class of SC and ST students in the field of education. But a section of them had not been in a position to utilize them. First generation learners belong to these societies who are still suffering from different kinds of socio-economic barriers. No substantial variations are found to occur with regard to travel time to school between the two generations in the context of rural puncha where a lot of time is involved in access school owing to physical barriers and scanty transport network. The problem is more vigorous for the fgls, 80% of whom have no means of communication other than walking. The corresponding figure for sgl stand at 50%. The calculated t value of the means are found to be 3.199 and it is significant at 0.05 level. In rural India, subsistence agriculture is the main source of livelihood for people. Majority of people possess small and marginal land holdings, while others are the landless labourers. There is high dependence on wage work. Economic conditions being uncomfortable, domestic chores come in the

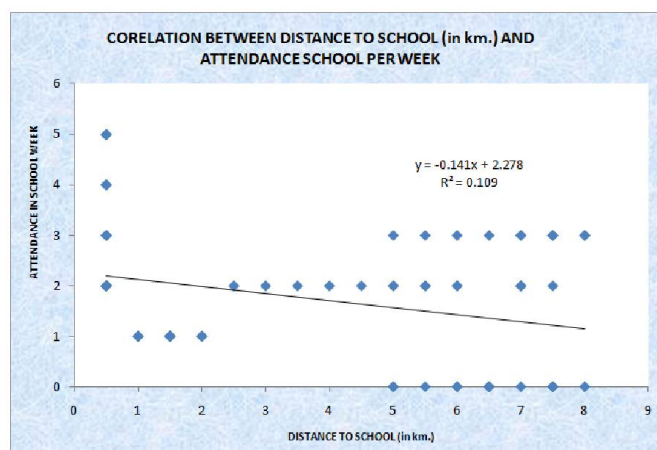


Fig. 2. Correlation between distance to school (IN KM.) and attendance school per week

way of such little learners' education in various forms like cooking, fetching water, sibling care, cattle grazing, farm work, etc. As a result they become unable to attend school regularly. In our survey it has been found that a fgl has to spend 8.35 hours per day in domestic chores daily, almost seven times higher than the Sgls. Though their work ensures economic security it affects their studies adversely leading to their educational backwardness. "Iscoole gele bhaikhe dekhbe k?" (If I go to school, who will care after my brother?), "Iscool gele barite ranna k korbe?" (If I am in school, who will cook at home?), "Prae deeni babar sathe mathe jetei hoi." (Very often I have to go to the field with father.), are samples of answer given by them. The condition of female fgls are awesome. Poor parents depend economically on their children for their survival and hence there is high 'opportunity cost' of schooling a child. In the context of rural India, girl children from early stages are engaged in household activities like cooking, baby caring, fetching water, etc. Hence the opportunity costs of girl children are high and female first generation learners are educationally disadvantaged compared to the boys. Against this constraints a student of the fgl communities can attend school not more than four days in a

week, on an average, as against five or six days for sgl. Educational aspiration of students from fgls are limited to the school level in most cases, about 80% of whom only aspire having a school passout certificate, 20% cherish graduation degrees, none found interested in professional degrees. The figure stand at 35%, 60% and 5% respectively for sgl. Recent research has demonstrated that students develop more psychological maturity and do better in school when they come from families in which parents monitor and regulate their children's activities and at the same time they provide emotional support and encourage independent decision making (Astone and Mchanahan, 1991). Being illiterate the parents do not realize the importance of education in life with the result that they do not encourage their children at all to receive education. About 95% fgls get discouraging and non-facilitating educational environment at home.

This may result into poor academic achievement and less healthy attitudes towards life and society. The t value shows that means are statistically significant at 0.05 level between the fgls and sgl as to the educational motivation at home. Family's financial status, as proxied by the monetary value of owned assets is a significant determinant of achievement. In the present survey it has been found that none of the families belonging to fgls are having a good standard of living, nor even a medium standards. In such a condition where every member of the households have to work day in and day out for having square meals a day, education is considered 'meaningless' and 'luxury' rather than a 'prerequisite' for development. Though not encouraging, still the standard of living is slightly better for sgl wherein about 30% belongs to medium SES category. The t value of -2.854 establishes significant difference at 0.95 levels. Substantial variations persists as to teacher parent and teacher classroom contact between the two communities. In both the respects, the sgl show better results. About 35% students of the first generation learners opined that their parents never have a contact with their teachers regarding their study affairs. Their shyness, less responsive nature in the classroom fails to attract teacher attention. More than seventy five percent students of the sgl comment on good teacher classroom contact as against fifty percent from fgls.

There is no differences regarding parent teacher contact between the two communities. It depicts lower values in both the cases, only to the tune of less than ten percent in both cases. This is attributed to lower literacy level of parents, higher gender gap, apathetic attitude towards kids education, dearth of educational momentum etc. Another point to note that only 5% students of the fgls feel that teachers or H.Ms' always provide enough time or opportunities to their learning related and/ or personal problems, the t value of -5.940 is statistically significant at 0.95 level. More than eighty percent students of the sgl communities feel satisfied with the ways their teachers behave to them relative to 45% of the fgl communities. Almost all students of the fgls look upon poverty and social distance as the main reason for their backwardness though 55% think otherwise of the sgl communities. According to the 61st Round NSS (2004-2005) (GoI, 2006b), in rural areas 26% of households do not have a single literate member aged 15 years or older in 2004-2005 in India. In West Bengal also, the proportion of 14% households carry no literate adults in rural areas. Participating in schools

and successfully completing the whole cycle with no one at home to support and to understand schooling processes is an uphill task for many girl learners (Govinda, & Bandyopadhyay, 2008). The social inequalities of class, caste and gender have been identified as the major causes of educational deprivation among these learners. The education of SC/ST girls is a serious issue as they are often *doubly disadvantaged*, due to their social status and their gender both. Family and social roles often do not prioritize their education. According to Dreze, "educational disparities, which contribute a great deal to the persistence of massive inequalities in Indian society, also largely derive from more fundamental inequalities such as those of class caste and gender" (Dreze 2003; page. 982).

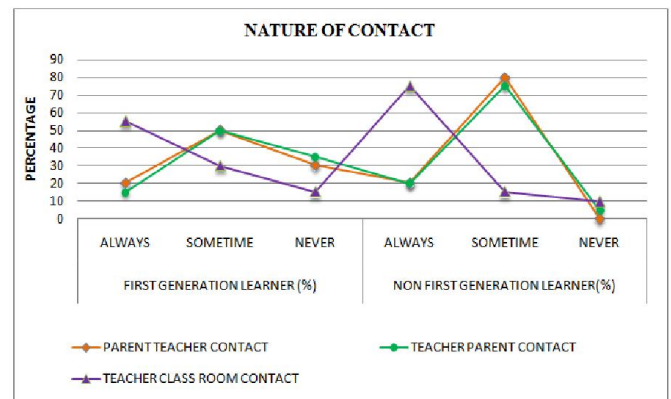


Fig. 3. Nature of Contact

As a result, a significant number of first generation learners in rural areas are failed to access and complete even five years of basic education (Fig. 14). It has been revealed that the majority of in-school children are from economically better-off sections, while the majority of 'out of school' children belong to poorer households. Similar disparity is found in primary school enrolment between the poorest 20% and the richest 20% in rural India. The most common form of educational disparity in India is based on gender differentiation. The girl children generally face discrimination in enrolling and attending school. Disparity in school attendance by sex increases with the age of the children. Though in recent years the rate has been declining but the gender gap remains constant. Son preferences, gender division of labour, puberty and early marriage, patrilineal kinship system, intra-household biases are the major socio-cultural factors impeding schooling of girls. First generation learners of backward classes also face hostile peer behaviour from upper caste children who often bully them and do not treat them as equals (Jha and Jhingran, 2002). Even teachers look down upon the mental abilities of first generation learners, and labeled them as uneducable. Sometimes, teachers refuse to touch them, abuse verbally and beat them. These adverse learning environments affect the overall confidence and esteem of these children, leading to drop out from school. Current models suggest that dropping out of school is but the final stage in a dynamic and cumulative process of disengagement or withdrawal. Finn (1989) reviews two alternative models. The first one is *frustration –self esteem* model. It argues that the initial antecedent to school withdrawal is early school failure that in-turn leads to low self-esteem and then problem behaviours such as absenteeism. The

second one named the *Participation –Identification Model* that describes students' identification (or 'bonding') with school arising as a result of years of engagement in classroom activities accompanied by performance rewards. When this cycle does not occur, various (fig. 6) forms of disengagement may arise including leaving school altogether.

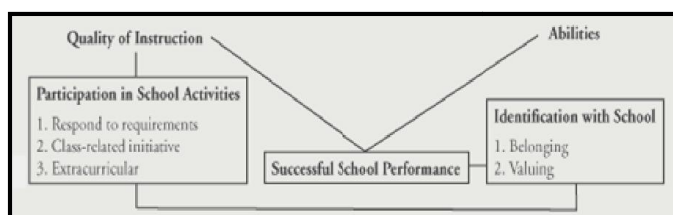


Fig. 4. Finn's participation-identification model of school management

Section II: -- Academic and Social Integration

Educational engagement and school membership or social bonding exert a strong influence on educational outcome. Tinto (1987) has observed that the attrition in higher education is explained through academic and social integration. These two jointly influence the commitment and the decision to finish school. Present study included an analysis of first generation students' academic and social integration during the 2012-13 academic year relative to the non first generations. These measures represent students' involvement in and adaptation to the institution. Each index is an average of students' responses to questions regarding the frequency of their participation in various academic and social activities during their school life. As regards to academic integration, students were asked to report how often they did each of the following during the 2012-13 term: attend career-related lectures, participate in study groups with other students, talk over academic matters with faculty and meet with advisor concerning academic plans. Scores included never (0), sometimes (1), and always (2). A mean of the scores of the four variables was calculated to compose the academic integration score. The scores were multiplied by 100. Then the scores were classified into low, moderate, and high.

like Saraswati Puja, Rabindra Jayanti, Teachers' Day, Annual Cultural Programme, etc. Scores included never (0), sometimes (1), and always (2). A mean of the scores of the four variables was calculated to compose the social integration score. The scores were multiplied by 100. Then the scores were classified into low, moderate, and high. It indicates their weak social ties with others. The first generation learners showed ambivalent attitudes in several areas. They sought shelters in their traditional group ties by sharing rooms with member of their own caste, tribe or groups and showed higher homophiles in their friendship pattern. They feel shy of exposing themselves to mass media and also of modernizing their attitudes and behaviors. These lower scores in social integration may be related to the fact that first-generation students tend to be older than non-first-generation students, and may have less time or interest in participating in these kinds of activities.¹⁸ Alternatively, cultural differences, such as the value that students' families place on attaining a postsecondary education credential, may influence the extent to which students whose parents have different educational levels choose to involve themselves in the institutional community.

Section III:--Academic factors leading to the educational backwardness of first generation learners

Various academic factors include (a) course content, (b) methods of teaching, (c) regular attendance, (d) present examination system and (e) participation in co-curricular activities, etc. All are responsible for academic exclusion of first generation learners to a great extent. Most of the first generation learners (66 out of 100) find *English* as the least interesting subject in the course content. Problems in *Arithmetic* are a regular occurrence to them. Regarding methods of teaching a few (only 13 out of 100) clearly understand the subject matter put across to them. But the remaining majority finds it hard to follow the subject matter taught in the class.

Regular Attendance

From the attendance register it has been found that 80.12%

Table 3. Academic and social integration index

	ACADEMIC INTEGRATION			SOCIAL INTEGRATION		
	Low Score	Moderate score	High score	Low Score	Moderate score	High score
Total	55.5	35.0	9.5	45.6	44.2	10.2
First generation learners	24.5	46.5	29.0	15.2	67.5	17.3

Source:- Field survey and computation by author, 2013.

Low score Academic integration score fell at or below the lowest 25th percentile (0–100.49).

Moderate score Academic integration score fell between the 25th and the 75th percentiles (100.5–200.49).

High score Academic integration score fell at or above the 75th percentile (200.5–350.00)

In addition to having lower levels of academic integration, first-generation students also had lower levels of social integration in the school environment than their non-first-generation counterparts. Social integration is a composite based on student responses regarding how often they went places with classmates from schools, participated in school sports, clubs and cultural functions, had contact with teachers outside the class, participated in various students' programmes

because examination scores judge the success of the students. First generation learners are of opinion that model of examination system is bound to be a barrier by itself. Only a few students from urban middle class get high scores, thanks to the system of tuitions and coaching. In Puncha block, majority of first generation learners (74 cases out of 100) were in favour of the previous examination system (one half-yearly and one annually). The progress report of first generation

learners in the school examination depicts a gloomy picture. Most of the first generation learners (58%) repent if they fail to appear and success the Madhyamik Examination at the first attempt. They have showed their grievance depicting the reasons like loss of year, repeat the same lessons, lagging behind from other classmates, door of education will close forever, feel uncomfortable towards 'didimoni' (school teachers), about their dark future etc.

Participation in Co-Curricular Activities

Various co-curricular activities like Arts and Sports, School Parliament, Social service programme are held in the schools. First generation learners were found to have a general lack of enthusiasm for co-curricular activities (Table 5). Only one in five students sometime take part in co—curricular activities. It adversely affects the development of their innate potentialities and abilities. To boot, it also reflects their poor social interaction with their peers. This may result educational backwardness. These above mentioned academic factors responsible for drop out of first generation learners from school act as a catalyst creating certain prominent *psychological factors* that affects the education of the first generation learners in schools. It is noted that lack of proper recognition from teachers, disapproval from teachers, and discriminating behaviour among the peers, pupils' inferiority complex and lack of proper parental attention may cause to lead educational backwardness of first generation learners.

Table 4. Academic barriers of first generation learners at puncha block

REASONS	FIRST GENERATION LEARNERS (%)
The subject matter is too difficult to follow	70.45
Not capable to follow the instructional procedure in the class	51.32
Not punctual and regular in their attendance	80.12

Data Source: Primary survey

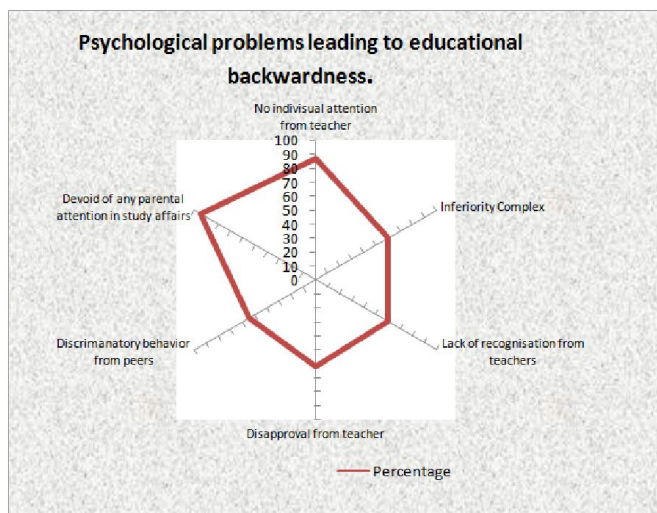


Fig. 5. Psychological problems leading to educational backwardness

Section IV: -- Some Recommendation

First of all, two kinds of initiatives are crucial regarding first generation learners of Dhaniakhali block that focuses on supply side (i.e. making school more accessible, improve

quality or providing a supplementary service for SC children) and initiatives that promote greater demand for education (i.e. providing incentives). These two types of initiatives should be balanced. During the 1990s, the 'Sarba Siksha Abhiyan' in Hugli district of West Bengal (SSA) (Universal Primary Education Campaign) vowed to address the problems related to inadequate budgetary resources and poor quality of teaching, the two main constraints towards achieving universal participation. The SSA focused on "enrolment of children of SC and ST will be at near parity with that of other group". It stresses on enrolment rather than completions, 'near parity' rather than 'parity'. It is note worthy to mention that while the main success has been in access, there are still many children in Dhaniakhali block lagging behind. There is even more who are enrolled, but learning little.

The problem is, therefore, two fold; it evolves (a) ensuring complete access, (b) ensuring a certain minimum quality of education for everyone. Expanding access without a simultaneous commitment for improving quality would be of little worth. Innovative funds already existed in the block under study should be used to boost the performance of the first generation learners. The fund should be managed locally and based on the barriers faced by the first generation learners within the household, the community and in the school (and the interplay between these). A holistic approach based on the interplay and interrelationship of various components of the decision-making process is to be adapted. Dhaniakhali block is not an exception. Excluded population should be involved in community life. Access to all basic services should be ensured. Innovative programmes shall be taken up to bring and keep children of the block into the mainstream school system by making schooling attractive to them and also worthwhile for the parents. It is not just enough to provide text books and uniforms to the students but policies must address other factors within the households related to decision-making process or to the other factors related to school or community. More than anything else, a change in attitudes and behaviour should be deeply inculcated within society.

If first generation learners in the said block are faced with discriminatory practices within the classroom or within the community more generally on the way to school, then all the programmes will be ended in a smoke. In a nutshell, a comprehensive and context specific strategy is the need of the hour to fight the menace of social exclusion of first generation learners. Children themselves should be engaged in the participation of the management of the school. 'Child cabinet' initiative supported as a part of the UNICEF Quality Education Package is a significant step towards ensuring children involvement in school management. Moreover, reaching children at a very younger stage would be fruitful in so far as the comprehensive response to addressing social exclusion is concerned. Young children do not hold the prejudices existing in a society. Intervening at the household, community and school level as soon as possible, prior to a child learns discriminatory norms of the society would be very much effective. Last but not the least, the policies concerning the first generation learners in our country should be flexible or dynamic. Those who are first generation learners today should be facilitated with proper educational opportunity. But as and when they get education and employment, their next generation no longer remains first generation learners. But the

Appendix 1

Table 5. NFHS Standard of Living Index components and weights

	Household characteristic	Scores		
1	House type	- pucca =4	- semi pucca=2	- kachha=0
2	Separate room for cooking	- yes=1		- no=0
3	Ownership of house	- yes=1		- no=0
4	Toilet facility	- own flush toilet=4	- public or shared flush toilet or own pit toilet=2	- shared or public pit toilet=1 - no facility=0
5	Source of lighting	- electricity=2	- kerosene, gas, oil=1	- other source of lighting=0
6	Main fuel for cooking	- electricity, liquid petroleum gas or biogas=2	- coal, charcoal or kerosene=1	- other fuel=0
7	Source of drinking water	- pipe, hand pump, well in residence/ yard/ plot=2	- public tap, hand pump or well=1	- other water source=0
8	Car or tractor	- yes=4		- no=0
9	Moped or scooter	- yes=3		- no=0
10	Telephone	- yes=3		- no=0
11	Refrigerator	- yes=3		- no=0
12	Colour TV	- yes=3		- no=0
13	Black and white TV	- yes=2		- no=0
14	Bicycle	- yes=2		- no=0
15	Electric fan	- yes=2		- no=0
16	Radio	- yes=2		- no=0
17	Sewing machine	- yes=2		- no=0
18	Mattress	- yes=1		- no=0
19	Pressure cooker	- yes=1		- no=0
20	Chair	- yes=1		- no=0
21	Cot or bed	- yes=1		- no=0
22	Table	- yes=1		- no=0
23	Clock or watch	- yes=1		- no=0
24	Ownership of livestock	- yes=2		- no=0
25	Water pump	- yes=2		- no=0
26	Bullock cart	- yes=2		- no=0
27	Thresher	- yes=2		- no=0

SOURCE:- The NFHS Standard of Living Index

policies concerning their educational upliftment still go on. This is not correct, we suppose. So, the policies should be context, time and area specific so that much more first generation learners are entrained within the policy framework. A standard of living index was created by the NFHS as a summary household measure (IIPS, 2000). It is composed of 27 items, including consumer durables, agricultural machinery, housing conditions and access to basic services (water, light, fuel, etc). The components of the NFHS index are set out in Table II.1, together with their respective weights. The index is calculated by summing the weights which have been developed by the International Institute of Population Sciences NFHS research team in India. These weights are based upon their considerable knowledge of the relative significance of ownership of these items, rather than on a more formal analysis. For example, a household which owns a colour TV is considered to be three times as wealthy as one that owns its own house (IIPS, 2000).

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