Nature and Dimension of Disparities in the State of Primary Education in West Bengal

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Abstract: This paper critically examines the nature and dimension of the disparities in the state of primary education in West Bengal. We have actually tried to find out the proximate factors behind regional disparities and other inequities in respect of the diffusion of primary education in the state. This paper is exclusively based on secondary data. It is found that although the State has experienced a remarkably slow rate of spread of education during the first two decade after independence; the rate of spread of education has gathered momentum since then especially after the implementation of policy of universalization of primary education. However, the rate of change in the spread of primary education has experienced a fluctuating pattern across time both at the aggregative level and across gender. Further, we find that the rural-urban divides in respects of the spread of the Primary Education, which was very high initially after independence, has been reduced steadily. Interestingly, the Male-Female divides in respect of attainment of primary education in the State has also been fallen steadily, albeit the rate of fall in the same in urban area is found to be much faster than that in rural areas. It seems that the proximate factors behind such divide and differential in rate of fall in gender divide pertaining to the attainment of primary education are basically economic and social. This is also supported by the empirical result of our basic discrimination model. As far as the policy implication of our study is concerned, we may argue for more allocation of resource for the development of infrastructure for primary education and for the enhancement of the social consciousness of the people.

Key-words: Disparity in primary education, disparity in rural-urban, disparity in male-female, rural-urban differential.

1. Introduction

Education plays an immense role not only on the socio-economic and political transformation of the society but also on the economic growth of the society. In fact education generates moral value and ethics within the human beings, which in turn, provides empowerment of the people of the society so as to overcome the vulnerability and marginalization in the modern society. Further it is well known that the primary education-its equity and quality, has a strong spillover effect on the equity and quality of higher education in a society. Obviously, the equity and quality of education of a society involves a cumulative process beginning with the primary

education. So, primary education of the people in a society can be treated as a pillar for the erection of the educational structure of the society. It is well recognized that the avowed objectives of the development strategy of India immediately after her emancipation of from the British Colonial rule were, the ending of poverty, ignorance, and inequality. Ironically, even after the elapse of sixty seven years of our independence we find that only-74.04% of our total populations are literate and vast majorities of our people still suffer from ignorance. Further we find sharp disparity in the spread of education not only across the states of India but also across sex, caste, and across the rural and urban areas of our country. For instance, in case of male, the literacy rate is 82.1% where as in case of female; the literacy rate is found to be 65.5% in 2011. Further we find strong disparity in the spread of education both in urban and rural area. In case of urban-male, we find that the literacy rate is 89.7%, whereas in case of urban female, the literacy rate is 79.9%. But if we consider rural area, the scenario is rather pessimistic such that while rural male literacy rate is 78.6%, the rural female literacy rate is only 58.8%. Further, we find more disappointing picture if we compare the overall literacy rate between rural (68.91%) area and urban (84.98%) area in our country. So the vast majority people in rural area still remain illiterate.

Obviously, West Bengal is also not an exception to this scenario. Though the literacy rate in West Bengal has always been higher than all Indian average such that it ranks 20 among 35 states in 2011, the improvement in literacy has been relatively slow especially for women. In fact in West Bengal we find the persistence of considerable inter district variations sex wise and cast wise variation, and also a sharp rural urban variations in respect of the spread of primary education since independence. The scenario of West Bengal pertaining to the primary education also reflects almost the same tradition. Under this backdrop we in our study, have made an intensive investigation on the dynamics of the state of primary education and its disparities across the district, regions (rural-urban), sex (Male-Female) and so as to find out the proximate explanatory factors behind such disparity.

There is as such no intensive study on the dynamics of the status of primary education in West Bengal excepting the study made by Rana, et-al. (2003) (2009), and the study made by the Pratichi Trust (2002). However, there are few studies on the status of elementary as well as primary education across the states, as well as at the aggregative level. The most important of the studies are the studies made by Pranajape (2007), Azim (2005), Sood (2003), etc. Most of these studies found on regional and gender disparities in the state of primary education in West Bengal.

Infact brief review of literature reveals that there is as such no intensive study on the state of primary education and it's dynamics in West Bengal. So we have undertaken an intensive study in order to capture the nature and dimension of the disparities in the state of primary education in West Bengal. We, in our study have also tried to find out the correlates behind such regional disparities and other inequities in respect of the diffusion of primary education in the state.

This paper centre round the following questions :

i) What has been the nature and dimension of the primary education in West Bengal?

ii) What are the nature and degree of disparities in the spread of primary education across the district of West Bengal?

iii) What has been the nature of rural-urban disparities in the state of primary education at the inter-district level?

On the basis of these questions we form the following hypotheses which have been substantiated in our study :

a) There is a sharp cross-district as well as cross-region (rural-urban) disparities in the spread of primary education in the state.

b) It seems that there is tremendous inequity in the state of primary education across gender, region and castes in the state.

c) The regional disparities and the inequity in the level and growth of primary education in the state are primarily the outcome of the economic factors and partly that of social factors.

This paper is designed as follows:

Section 2 discusses the data and methodology; section 3 analyses the state of Primary Education in West Bengal since independence. Section 4 is devoted to the analysis of nature of disparity in spread of Primary Education and the proximate factor behind it. Finally, section 5 is summarising the concluding observations.

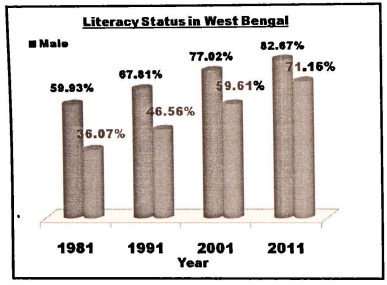
2. Data and Methodology

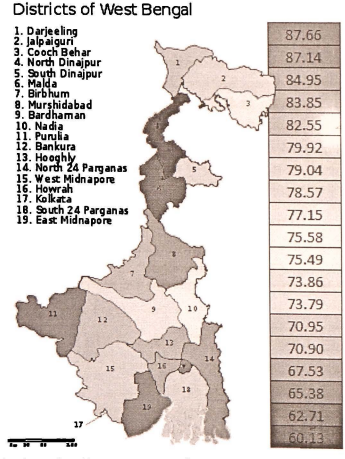
This study is primarily based on the Secondary data available from various census reports of the Goverment of India; Statistical Abstract of the Goverment of West Bengal, District Statistical Hand Book of Goverment of West Bengal and various issues of Economic Review, the Census Report, NSS Report, Economic Survey, Demographic and Health Surveys, Human Development Report, Books, Journal, Magazine, etc. We have used conventional statistical tools for analytical purpose. However we have tried to make a quantitative analysis by using a very simple model of discrimination analysis.

3. Status of Primary Education in West Bengal

In this section we analyse the present state of primary education in West Bengal and the trend in the expansion of the same at the aggregate level.

It is evident from the bar diagram below that the male literacy rate has been increased from 59.93% in the year 1981 to 82.67% in the year 2011 with an average increase of 5.69% per decade whereas female literacy rate has been increased from 36.07% in the year 1981 to 71.16% in the year 2011 with an average increase of 8.77% per decade.





Source: District wise literacy maps of West Bengal as per census 2011.

West Bengal has a total area of 88,752 sq kms and it has a total population of 9,12,76,115, of which total male population is 4,68,09,027 and total female population is 4,44,67,088. 7.55% of India's population lives in West Bengal with a decadal growth rate of 13.93% (All India figure of 17.64%). The average annual exponential growth rate in West Bengal is 1.31% which is less than the all India figure of 1.64%. West Bengal ranked fourth among the states as far as population is concerned, whereas area wise it ranked fourteenth. West Bengal has a density of 1030 person/square km which is the highest in the country. As a result of partition, the influx of refugees put a heavy pressure on land.

Table-1

	Population	Literacy	Percent	Density	Sex Ratio
Male	468,09,027	3,45,08,159	82.67%	529	947
Female	444,67,088	281,06,397	71.16%	501	
Total	912,76,115	6,26,14,556	77.08%	1030	

Source: Census 2011

As per census data 2011 Schedule Cast constituted approximately 23.51 percentage (total SC population is 2, 14, 63,270) of total population and in the case of Schedule tribe this figure is approximately 5.80 percentage (total ST population is 52, 96,953) of total population.

As per 2011 census, the urban population in West Bengal is 2,90,93,002, which is about 31.81% of total population and increased from 27.97% in 2001. Whereas total rural population is 6, 21, 83, 113 which is about 68.13% of total population. The decadal population growth in rural area is 7.68% whereas in urban area decadal population growth is 29.72%. This indicates a rapid urbanization in West Bengal. West Bengal has 19 districts, 341 blocks and 40997 villages in the state according to census 2011.

West Bengal is one of the few states which has shown maximum declining trend in absolute number of child population in 2011 in comparison with figures of census 2001. The child population in West Bengal now stands at 10,112,599 (5,187,264 male and 4,925,335 female). A negative change in population in age group 0-6 years has been witnessed since 1991. The decadal change in child population (age group 0-6 years) was -148,075 in 2001 (around 14%) and -1,301,623 in 2011 (around 11.7%).

West Bengal's proverbial diversity applies in particular to literacy and education. At one end of the scale, remaining uneducated is almost unthinkable for the elite (General upper middle class) in Kolkata, or the upper middle class in the suburban or urban areas in all over West Bengal. At the other end, literacy rate in 1981 was as low as 2.25 percent among the Scheduled Tribe Female in rural Birbhum and 2.56 per cent among the Scheduled Tribe Female in rural Burdwan.

The progress of literacy of West Bengal during the last eleven decades from 1901-2011 in comparison to all India can be seen from the following table:

Table-2 : Progress of Literacy in West Bengal (1901-2011) (figure in %) vis-à-vis all India

Year	Male (WB)	Decadal percent point Change in Male literacy	Female (WB)	Decadal percent point Change in Female literacy	Male-female gap (WB)	WB Aggre-gate	Decadal percent point Change in WB	Indian Aggre-gate	Decadal percent point Change in India	WB India gap in aggre-gate
1901	17.9		1.2		16.7	9.8		5.35		4.45
1911	19.1	6.70	1.7	41.67	17.4	10.8	10.2	5.92	10.7	4.88
1921	21	9.95	2.5	47.06	18.5	12.3	13.9	7.16	20.9	5.14
1931	20.4	-2.86	3.8	52.00	16.6	12.4	0.8	9.5	32.7	2.9
1941	29.3	43.63	8.3	118.42	21	19.7	58.9	16.1	69.5	3.6
1951	34.1	16.38	12.7	53.01	21.4	24.6	24.9	16.67	3.5	7.94
1961	46.6	36.66	20.3	59.84	26.3	34.46	40.1	24.02	44.1	10.44
1971	49.6	6.44	26.6	31.03	23	38.86	12.8	29.45	22.6	9.41
1981	56.9	14.72	34.4	29.32	22.5	48.65	25.2	36.23	23	12.42
1991	67.8	19.16	46.6	35.47	21.2	57.7	18.6	42.84	18.2	14.86
2001	77	13.57	59.6	27.90	17.4	68.64	19	64.84	51.4	3.81
2011	82.67	7.36	71.16	19.40	11.51	77.08	12.3	74.04	14.2	3.04
MAX		43.63		118.42	26.3		58.87		69.47	14.9
Mean		17.94		52.79	19.5		21.5		28.25	6.9
SD		13.60		26.80	3.89		15.99		19.58	4.03
CV		75.81		50.76	19.97		74.35		69.3	58.28

Source: Census reports

The level of literacy in West Bengal was as low as 9.8% for persons in the age group 5+ in 1901, whereas in India it was 5.35%. The gap was 4.45. There was little increase in literacy level until 1931 when it reached the level of 12.4%. By 1951 the literacy rate was

24.6%. Thereafter, literacy rate increased continuously to reach the level of 46.2% by 1981. In 1991, 2001 and 2011, the age group of 0-6 was excluded from the literate persons. The literacy rate were respectively, 57.7%, 68.64% and 77.08% which were higher than the corresponding all India average of 42.84%, 64.84% and 74.04% and as such reaching an all-time highest gap 14.86 percent point in 1991 and thereafter declining to 3.81 in 2001 and 3.04 in 2011.This suggests that the extra advantage of being pioneer and starter has now evaporated. If this trend continues, it may happen that the Literacy rate of All India aggregate may supersede the Literacy rate of West Bengal in the near future.

Now, if we consider the Decadal percent point change, we observe that West Bengal has 21.50 average decadal percent point change with Standard Deviation (SD) of 15.99 and Coefficient of Variation (CV) 74.35%, whereas the average all India decadal percent point change is 28.25 with Standard Deviation(SD) of 19.58 and Coefficient of Variation (CV) 69.30%.

The gap between male and female literacy has been particularly striking. Since 1951 there had been a continuous increase in the gap between male and female literacy rate until 1961 when it reached 26.3%. The only exception was 1931. Since 1961, the gap has been lessening, although the female literates were still lagging behind the male literates by 17.4% in 2001 and by 11.51% in 2011. But if we go by rural-urban segment, the picture will be different.

RURAL–URBAN

Table-3: The population growth in rural-urban areas of India and West Bengal

	Population In Cores			Decadal Growth (%)		
	1991	2001	2011	1991-2001	2001-2011	Difference
India	84.63	102.9	121	21.5	17.6	-3.9
Rural	62.87	74.3	83.3	18.1	12.2	-5.9
Urban	21.76	28.6	37.7	31.5	31.8	0.3
West Bengal	6.8	8.02	9.13	17.9	16.3	-1.6
Rural	4.94	5.77	6.22	16.8	7.8	-9.0
Urban	1.87	2.24	2.91	19.79	29.9	10.1

Source: Census 2011

The slowing down of the overall growth rate of population is due to the sharp decline in the growth rate in rural areas, while the growth rate in urban areas remains almost the same but in case of West Bengal is slightly different.

Table-4: Rural- Urban Distribution of Population (%)

	1901	1951	2011
Rural Population Share of India	89.2%	82.7%	68.8%
Urban Population Share of India	10.8%	17.3%	31.2%
	100	100	100

Source: Census 2011

For the first time since Independence, the absolute increase in population is more in urban areas than in rural areas: Rural–Urban distribution: 68.84% & 31.16%. Level of urbanization increased from 27.81% in 2001 Census to 31.16% in 2011 Census. The proportion of rural population declined from 72.19% to 68.84%.

Source: Census 2011

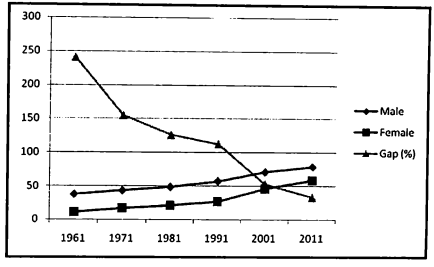
The number of Literates in India is 778.5 million in the year 2011, divided as: Rural: 493.0 million, Urban: 285.4 million. There has been an increase of 217.8 million literates since 2001. Out of this; 131.1 million were in rural areas and 86.6 million in urban areas.

Table-5: Rural (India) Male–Female Literacy Gap (%)

Year	Male	Female	Gap (%)
1961	37.49	11	240.8
1971	42.98	16.86	154.9
1981	48.26	21.35	126
1991	56.96	26.79	112.6
2001	70.7	46.13	53.3
2011	78.57	58.75	33.7

Source: Census 2011

From the above table it is observed that rural India male-female gap has been reduced from 240.8 to 33.7 though the pace of increase in Female Literacy Rate is perceptibly higher in Rural Areas, it has increase from 46.13% in 2001 to 58.75% in 2011 and Gender Gap in Literacy Rate in rural India has narrowed down considerably over the censuses but continue to remain high (33.7%). This can be viewed from the graph shown below:



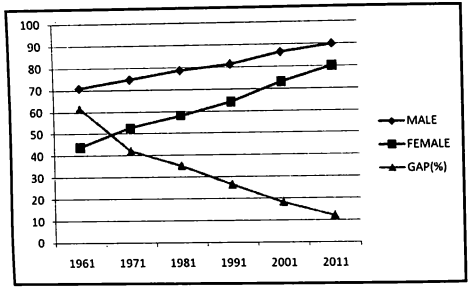
Source: Census 2011

Table-6: Urban (India) Male-Female Literacy Gap (%)

Year	Male	Female	Gap (%)
1961	70.77	43.75	61.76
1971	74.64	52.54	42.06
1981	78.56	58.07	35.29
1991	81.09	64.05	26.60
2001	86.27	72.86	18.41
2011	89.67	79.92	12.20

Source: Census 2011

From the above table it is observed that there has been a constant increase in both Male and Female Literacy Rate in Urban areas of India, the steady increase in the Female literacy Rate has reduced the Gender Gap significantly in Urban India, and the Gender Gap in Literacy Rate has narrowed down considerably over the years but still continue to be high (12.2%).



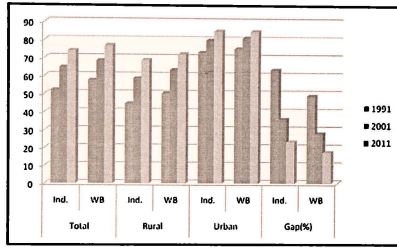
Source: Census 2011

Table-7: Rural-Urban Literacy Gap

	Total		Rural		Urban		Gap (%)	
	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB
1991	52.2	57.70	44.7	50.50	73.1	75.27	63.53	49.05
2001	64.8	68.64	58.7	63.42	79.9	81.25	36.12	28.11
2011	74.04	77.08	68.9	72.13	85.0	84.78	23.37	17.54

Source: Census 2011

From the above table it is seen that at national level the aggregate literacy rate is increasing gradually. In West Bengal, though the literacy rate is marginally higher than national level, the growth rate shows a similar trend. Both at national level and West Bengal, the urban literacy rate is good, about 85%. Till 2001, the rate of growth in West Bengal was better than India, but, in 2011, it has slightly decreased than the national level. The rural literacy rate shows an increase both in West Bengal and national level. Here West Bengal still enjoys a gap of 12.65% in its favour.



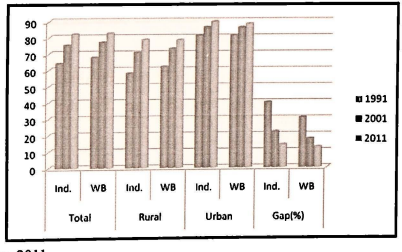
Source: Census 2011

Table-8: Rural-Urban Male Literacy Gap

	Total		Rural		Urban		Gap (%)	
	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB
1991	64.1	67.8	57.9	62.05	81.1	81.19	40.07	30.7
2001	75.3	77.0	70.7	73.13	86.3	86.13	22.07	17.78
2011	82.1	82.67	78.6	78.44	89.7	88.37	14.12	12.66

Source: Census 2011

From the above table it is observed that the male literacy rate shows a trend to increase, though the rate of increase is low and the urban males are more literate than the rural male by 12.66%.



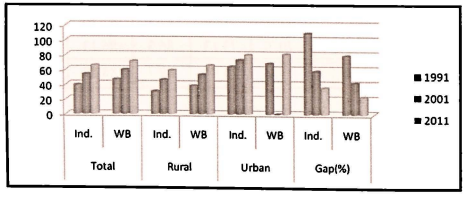
Source: Census 2011

Table-9: Rural-Urban Female Literacy Gap

	Total		Rural		Urban		Gap (%)	
	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB	Ind.	WB
1991	39.3	46.6	30.6	38.12	64.0	68.25	109.15	79.04
2001	53.7	59.6	46.1	53.16	72.9	75.74	58.13	42.48
2011	65.5	71.16	58.8	65.51	79.9	80.98	35.88	23.61

Source: Census 2011

From the above table it is observed female literacy rate in rural areas is abnormally lower than literacy rate in urban areas. A similar trend is found both at the national level and in West Bengal. In West Bengal, female literacy rate is marginally higher than at the national level. The urban female literacy rate of national level has crossed the West Bengal rate and the rural –urban female literacy gap is decreasing but has not yet reached a satisfactory level. The gap is 23.61% in West Bengal against 35.88% in India.



Source: Census 2011

4. Analysis of nature of disparity in the state of primary education in West Bengal

Table-10: District wise Literacy Rate 2001-2011 and Decadal present change

Rank	District			Decadal
		2001	2011	Change%
1.	Purba Medinipur	80.16	87.66	9.36
2.	Kolkata	80.86	87.14	7.77
3.	North 24 Parganas	78.07	84.95	8.81
4.	Howrah	77.01	83.85	8.88

Table-10: District wise Literacy Rate 2001-2011 and Decadal present change (*Contd.*)

Rank	District	2001	2011	Decadal Change%
5.	Hooghly	75.11	82.55	9.91
6.	Darjeeling	71.79	79.92	11.32
7.	PaschimMedinipur	70.41	79.04	12.26
8.	South 24 Parganas	69.45	78.57	13.13
9.	Bardhaman	70.18	77.15	9.93
10.	Nadia	66.14	75.58	14.27
11.	Cooch Behar	66.3	75.49	13.86
12.	Dakshin Dinajpur	63.59	73.86	16.15
13.	Jalpaiguri	62.85	73.79	17.41
14.	Bankura	63.44	70.95	11.84
15.	Birbhum	61.48	70.9	15.32
16.	Murshidabad	54.35	67.53	24.25
17.	Purulia	55.57	65.38	17.65
18.	Maldah	50.28	62.71	24.72
19.	Uttar Dinajpur	47.89	60.13	25.56
	Max			25.56
	Mean			14.34
	SD			5.5
	CV			260.07

Source: Census reports

As already mentioned the overall rate of literacy for all district (6+ age group) was 68.64% in 2001 and 77.08% in 2011. But there is a considerable regional variation in literacy within the State. The rate of literacy of the districts in West Bengal varied between 47.89% and 80.86% in 2001 and between 60.13% and 87.66% in 2011. In 10 districts namely, Uttar Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Purulia, Birbhum, Jalpaguri, Bankura, Dakhin Dinajpur, Nadia and Coochbihar, the literacy rate are less than the State average literacy rate both in the year 2001 and 2011. The literacy rate is lowest in Uttar Dinajpur and highest in PurboMidnapur in 2011. In 9 districts the literacy rate is higher than the states average literacy rate both in the year 2001and 2011. This analysis shows huge disparities in cross district literacy rate in West Bengal. The following table will depict the situation clearly:

Table-11

Ranking of Districts by Literacy Rate in 2001 and 2011

Rank in 2011	District	Literates 2011	Literates 2001	Literates Rate (%) (Excluding 0-6 age group) 2011	Literates Rate (%) (Excluding 0-6 age group) 2001	Rank in 2001
0.	West Bengal	62614556	47196401	77.08	68.64	0
1.	Purba Medinipur*	3969750	3037106	87.66	80.16	2
2.	Kolkata	3648210	3382103	87.14	80.86	1
3.	North Twenty Four Parganas	7798722	6151527	84.95	78.07	3
4.	Haora	3642617	2895625	83.85	77.01	4
5.	Hugli	4140487	3333988	82.55	75.11	5
6.	Darjiling	1328218	1008288	79.92	71.79	6
7.	Paschim Medinipur*	4173522	3127210	79.04	70.41	7
8.	South Twenty Four Parganas	5639112	4067343	78.57	69.45	9
9.	Barddhaman	5350197	4205146	77.15	70.18	8
10.	Nadia	3524073	2644461	75.58	66.14	11
11.	Koch Bihar	1879984	1386965	75.49	66.30	10
12.	Dakshin Dinajpur	1102355	799479	73.86	63.59	12
13.	Jalpaiguri	2527018	1810083	73.79	62.85	14
14.	Bankura	2264013	1734222	70.95	63.44	13
15.	Birbhum	2175923	1553852	70.90	61.48	15
16.	Murshidabad	4134584	2620538	67.53	54.35	17
17.	Puruliya	1656940	1182284	65.38	55.57	16
18.	Maldah	2136898	1332704	62.71	50.28	18
19.	Uttar Dinajpur	1521933	923477	60.13	47.89	19

Source: Census 2011

*Figures of Paschim Medinipur & Purba Medinipur for 2001 have been recast as erstwhile Medinipur divided into two districts after 2001 Census. Ranking of Districts for 2001 marginally changed accordingly.

Rural-Urban Disparity - Decomposition Model

In this model, we have assumed that the disparities in education, which is measured in terms of Gross enrolment ratios across the rural-urban region of the state is due mainly to differences in income. Now, since the separate data on the rural and urban area are not available, the wage rate for urban and rural area are used, as a proxy of income. The model is as follows:

In this model

$$\ln(\overline{GER}_R) = \hat{\beta}_R \ln(\overline{W}_R) + \varepsilon_R \qquad \text{(Rural Gross Enrolment equation)} \qquad (1)$$

$$\ln(\overline{GER}_U) = \hat{\beta}_U \ln(\overline{W}_U) + \varepsilon_U \qquad \text{(Urban Gross Enrolment equation)} \qquad (2)$$

Therefore, the Rural-Urban Gross Enrolment differential can be written as:

$$\ln(\overline{GER}_R) - \ln(\overline{GER}_U) = \hat{\beta}_R \ln(\overline{W}_R) - \hat{\beta}_U \ln(\overline{W}_U) \qquad (3)$$

If, for a given wage rate, urban students are enrolled according to the enrolment structure of the rural students in the absence of discrimination then the hypothetical Gross Enrolment function of urban students will be

$$\ln(\overline{GER}_U) = \hat{\beta}_R \ln(\overline{W}_U) \qquad (4)$$

Subtracting equation (4) from equation (3) we get

$$\ln(\overline{GER}_R) - \ln(\overline{GER}_U) = \hat{\beta}_R [\ln(\overline{W}_R) - \ln(\overline{W}_U)] + \ln(\overline{W}_U)(\hat{\beta}_R - \hat{\beta}_U) \qquad (5)$$

The first term of the right hand side denotes the observed endowment difference component and the second term denotes the discrimination component.

Regression Results-Primary Enrolment

Decomposition Model:

Regression results of Rural Gross Enrolment Function in West Bengal in 2001

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.421607548	0.177752924	0.119021	0.1121347
a	Predictors: (Constant), $\ln(W_R)$			

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.260652	1.553376		0.811556	0.4306288
$\ln(W_R)$	0.795333	0.45717	0.421607548	1.739687	0.1038408
Dependent Variable : $\ln(GER_R)$					

Table-12: Decomposition Results for Rural-Urban Primary GER

Components of Decomposition	2001
Amount attributable	2.065
due to endowment (E)	-0.039
due to coefficients (C)	13.615
Shift Coefficient (i.e. difference between the constant terms) (U)	-11.522
Raw Differential : R = E + C + U	2.054
Adjusted Differential : D = C + U	2.093
Endowment as % of total differential : (E/R) × 100	-1.883
Discrimination as % of total differential : (D/R) × 100	101.883

Regression results of Urban Gross Enrolment Function in West Bengal in 2001

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.287498	0.082655	0.021499	0.473173
a	Predictors: (Constant), $\ln(W_U)$			

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	10.52118	9.918287		1.060786	0.305569
$\ln(W_U)$	-3.34595	2.878102	-0.2875	-1.16256	0.263173
Dependent Variable : $\ln(GER_U)$					

Average Productivity Characteristics of Rural students

$\ln(\overline{GER}_R)$	1.2174512
$\ln(\overline{W}_R)$	3.397253

Average Productivity Characteristics of Urban students

$\ln(\overline{GER}_U)$	-.8638346
$\ln(\overline{W}_U)$	3.44589

5. Conclusion

We critically examined the nature and dimension of the disparities in the state of primary education in West Bengal. Based on the analysis presented above, the following conclusion emerges:

i) After independence, West Bengal has had only moderate success in spreading elementary education among the masses, and the record of West Bengal goes pretty well with the overall trend compared to the all-India average. But, if we consider the Decadal percent point change, we observe that West Bengal has a lower (21.50) average decadal percent point change (with SD of 15.99% and CV of 74.35%), compared to average all India decadal percent point change (28.25) with SD of 19.58% and CV is 69.3%. Though the literacy rate in West Bengal has always been higher than the all-India average, (it ranked 20th among 35 states in 2011), the improvement in literacy has been relatively slow especially for women. If these trends continue, West Bengal may go down in near feature to all-India average as far as spreading of elementary education among the masses is concerned.

ii) It is found that although the State has experienced a remarkably slow rate of spread of education during the first two decades after independence; the rate of spread of education has gathered momentum since then especially after the implementation of policy of universalization of primary education. However, the rate of change in the spread of primary education, as experienced a fluctuating pattern across time and both at the aggregative level and across gender. Although it continues to remain substantially below the average for the empowered states (like Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and others), the gap with the all-India average has narrowed down slightly over the last few decades.

iii) We find that the rural-urban divides in respects of the spread of the Primary Education, which was very high initially after independence, has been reduced steadily since then.A closer look at the spread of primary education for rural and urban areas of the state

reveals that a part of the gap can be attributed to the low level of urbanization in the state, as we observe that more than two-third of the total population of West Bengal lives in rural areas. As a result the overall spread of primary education in the state carries an overwhelming weight of the spread of primary education in rural area, which is generally lower than the urban areas. Although, last two census (the census 2001 and 2011), indicates a narrowing down of rural-urban differential.

iv) Interestingly, the Male-Female divides in respect of attainment of Primary Education in the State has also fallen steadily albeit the rate of fall in the same in urban area is found to be much faster than that in rural areas. It seems that the proximate factors behind such divide and differential in rate of fall in gender divide pertaining to the attainment of Primary Education are basically economic and social. This is also supported by the empirical result of our basic discrimination model.

The problem of low rate of spread of education is exaggerated by disparities across different groups and region. Going by the simple logic of average, overall spread of education cannot approach 100 per cent so long as a substantial gap between male-female exists, the gap between rural and urban will exist. The male-female gap in attainment of primary education in the state slightly is lower than that in India as a whole. The gap is more in rural areas than in urban areas. Over the last few decades both male and female attainment in primary education has increased, and the rate of increase even accelerated quite a bit in the past three decades. However, the reduction in the gap between male- female has been rather small. The two trends show a remarkably similar pattern with a remarkably stable vertical distance between the two.

A people's movement for education for all may prove useful for bridging all social and gender gap with the active participation of the community in all-round educational development. To achieve universal elementary education for all and as far as the policy implication of our study is concerned, we argue for more allocation of resource for the development of infrastructure of Primary Education and for the enhancement of the social consciousness of the people.

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