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## Right to education and social disparities among girl's child

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### Abstract

Education is a powerful instrument for overcoming inequalities, accelerating social transformation and achieving economic progress and development. Right to Education Act 2009 ensure equitable educational opportunities and facilities and provides free and compulsory education to overcome the educational deprivation of the age old excluded and marginalized sections of Indian society – Schedule Castes, backward classes, minorities and women. Despite many constitutional safeguards, enabling policies, massive investment and preferential treatment given by government, these groups are still remaining stark. Even more than seventy years of independence, the question of how we educate these marginalized girl's children still remains highly sensitive? The main purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate the present status of girl's education specially for marginalized sections of society.

**Keywords:** Inequalities, marginalized, gender discrimination, awareness

### Introduction

India is amongst the fastest growing countries in the world today, with a GDP growth rate of Education is a basic human right granted to all citizens without any discrimination all over the world but, in India, it is not so. Girl's education is an essential starting point in establishing equality in the society. Despite a major improvement in literacy rates in India over the last many decades, the girl's education is still very poor and their numbers in schools are low. Gender disparities in education is still persist where the girls fail to complete even the primary education than boys. While girl's admissions in primary school are roughly equal to boys, the gap widens gradually and are forced to drop out either to help the family or to get marry. Though the law of land guarantee equal rights and no-discrimination on the basis of sex, yet they are discriminated. Girls are not receiving equal opportunities to access education. There are schools but most girls are not allowed to go to schools because of various religious, socio- cultural, economic and security compulsions.

In India, women have less access to and control over facilities, opportunities and resources. In terms of education, this needs to be understood in three perspectives. First the right to education [access and participation]; second, rights within education [gender-aware educational environments, processes, and outcomes]; and third, rights through education [meaningful education outcomes that link education equality with wider processes of gender justice] <sup>[1]</sup>.

### Conceptual framework and Research design

Educational disparities raise number of questions-why the girls have been kept away from receiving a complete education in comparison to boys and various social groups. If there is decline in educational disparities, is it consistent across different educational level or is it disproportionately concentrated at certain educational stages. The literature on educational stratification suggests that although social origins have an important effect at the beginning of the educational career, they become less silent at higher levels of education because of early dropouts reduce differences among students on unmeasured dimension of socio-economic status <sup>[2]</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Mare 1981.

The affirmative action program has also led to narrowing of the educational gap in college education. After 1992, affirmative action programs were also initiated to address the needs of economically and socially backward classes. Several schemes of government providing free education, midday meals, free textbook, dress and the provision of residential middle schools, reservation in higher education and scholarship instituted for SC, ST and OBC children have improved educational levels.

Further, question is - whether there is decline in educational differences/discriminations among the groups that are subject to affirmative action, the SC and ST or OBC or it is shared by other disadvantage groups such as Muslims? in an era of educational expansion, educational attainment increases for all groups from poor to marginalized. The nature of Indian compensatory discrimination programs provides us to analysis that although discussion on affirmative action policies for Muslim took many times but they have not provided preferential treatment or reservations <sup>[3]</sup>. Similarly, in literacy rates, Muslims are improving faster than the all-India average, with the gap narrowing over time <sup>[4]</sup>.

Two sets of independent variables are adopted--caste and religion and are divided into four category- General, SC, OBC and Muslims. We focus on the following questions:

First, Enrolment Rate of girl child in marginal sections in public, semi public and private schools and educational differences between general, Schedule Caste, backward and Muslims as minorities dominated class in Aligarh to assess whether educational inequalities have decline. We collected data from different government, semi government and private schools from class VI, VII and VIII in the age group of 10-15.

Second, their drop outs rate in various classes comparatively and their regularities in attending school.

Third, increasing importance of the private schools in elementary education is very significant. Nearly one in every five recognized schools at the elementary level is under private management <sup>[5]</sup>. The Private school's education has been recognized by the Right of Children School Act 2009 under section 12 which directs private unaided schools to take children belonging to the weaker section and disadvantaged groups subject to a maximum of 25% of their student intake.

Last, the evaluation of girl's capabilities and their awareness at essential and effective functional level.

### Area of Study

We have selected Aligarh city as area of study, governed by Municipal Corporation which comes under Aligarh Metropolitan Region. The Aligarh city is located in Uttar Pradesh state of India.

Aligarh city	Total	Male	Female
population	872,575	463,123	409,452
Literates	533,969	303,886	230,083
Children (0-6)	113,658	60,620	53,038
Average Literacy (%)	70.36	75.50	64.55
Sex ratio	884		
Child Sex ratio	875		

Sources: Census Report of 2011.

### Data and Methodology

To examine the conceptual framework and research design outlined, I personally visited schools and conducted survey and interviewed the 100 Students from class VI to VIII in different two government schools namely Poorve Madhyamik Government School, Alempur and Girls Junoir High School, Dodpur, one semi-government Tika Ram Girls Inter School and Private School DPS Civil Lines School in Aligarh City. Primary school in India consists of grades 1-5 and middle school consists of grades 6-8. The normal age for completion of primary school in India is 11 years and middle school is 14. Due to limited resources, study has confined to Aligarh city area.

Sample size in different social categories at different classes are not similar or equal because in government run schools there is no student in general categories or numbers of Minority students is negligible in comparison to other categories of students -general /SC/ OBC. For our studies we have selected students of SC/ OBC/Muslims in comparison to General Categories.

### Literacy Scenario

According to the Census 2011, India registered a literacy rate of 72.99%. The national literacy rate of girls over seven years is 54% against 75% for boys. In the Northern Hindi-speaking states of India, girl's literacy rates are particularly low, ranging between 33–50%. The national average shows that there are twice as many illiterate women as there are men. The overall female literacy rate has gone up by 31% from 224 million in 2001 to 328 million in 2011. While the literacy rate in rural India has increased to 58% from 46%, the literacy rate for urban females shows a growth from 73% to 79% in same time period. According to 2011 census the overall male literacy in India was 80.89%, whereas women literacy rate was just 64.64%.

In Uttar Pradesh, the most populated state in India with a population of 172 million, an average of only one out of four girls is enrolled in the upper primary school. Literacy rate in Uttar Pradesh has seen upward trend and is 67.68% as per 2011 population census. Male literacy stands at 77.28% while female literacy is at 51.36%. In 2001 literacy rate in Uttar Pradesh stood at 56.26 of which male and female were 67.30% and 43.00% literate respectively. Average literacy rate in Uttar Pradesh for urban region was 75.14 percent in which males were 80.45 percent while female stood at 60.96 percent. In rural area of Uttar Pradesh literacy rate for males and females stood at 76.33% and 48.48%. Average literacy rate in Uttar Pradesh in rural area was 65.46%.

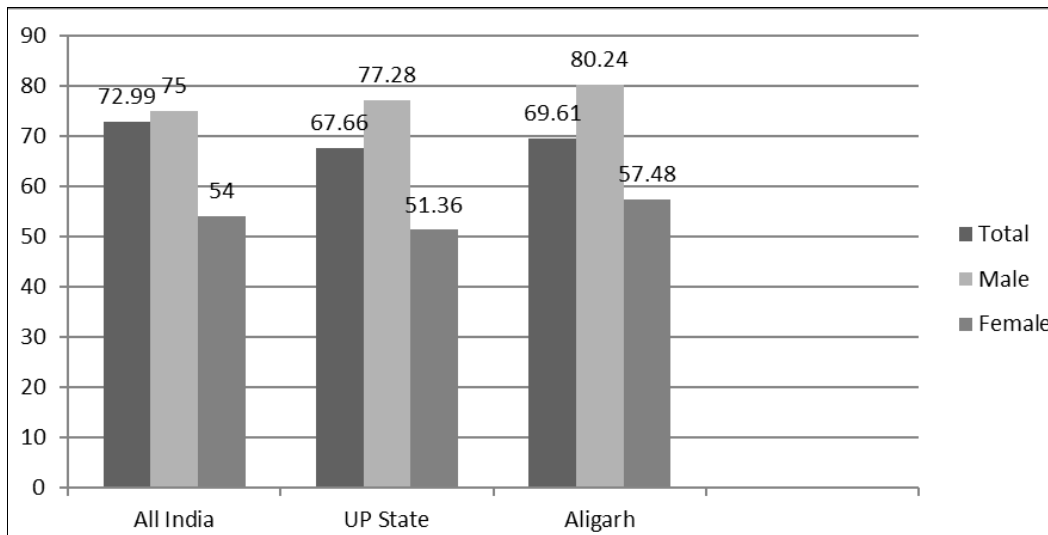
Total literacy rate in Aligarh District is 69.61% (Census of 2011). It means that 69.61 out of 100 persons of age more than 6 years are literate. It ranked 41 in terms of literacy rate out of total 71 districts of UP and 76 out of total 640 districts of India. Male literacy rate of Aligarh is 80.24% while female literacy rate stands at 57.48%. Sex Ratio of Aligarh is 876 females per thousand males.

<sup>3</sup> See Sachchar Committee Report on Indian Muslims, Government of India 2006.

<sup>4</sup> the difference between the national average and the Muslim average in literacy rates in rural areas was 6 percentage points and in urban areas 10 percentage points in 2001. Both fell to 3.5 percentage points and 8.5 percentage points respectively (although Muslims still continued to have lower literacy rates compared to the national average in 2008-08).

<sup>5</sup> see <http://www.dise.in/Download/Publications/Publicationspercent20200910/Flashpercent20statisticspercent202009-10.pdf>; 22nd August 2011.

**Literacy Rate**



**Fig 1:** Literacy rate in India

**Findings and Observations**

**Enrolment of Students**

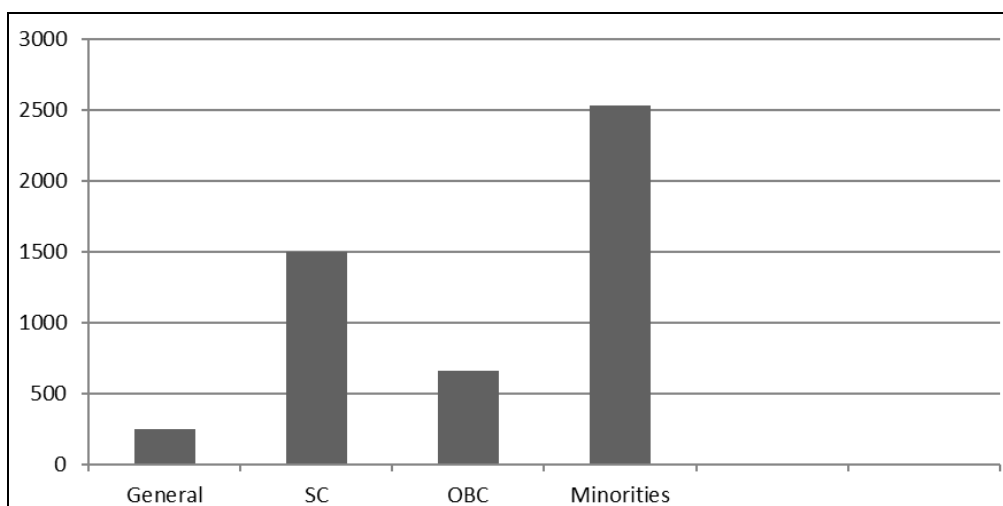
To investigate the educational advancement, this study first analyses the enrolment of girl’s children from the marginalized and excluded sections of society-the scheduled caste, OBC and Minorities girls in government schools. Data suggests that the enrolment of girls from various social categories is not in proportion to their population in the city/district. In the government schools, number of students from upper/ general category is nil in or only one or two; while in Semi- government school, they are in large number but less than OBC students. It is found that student from upper/ general category are mostly admitted in Private schools. Socio- economic backgrounds of children act as a determinant for access to schools which offer in terms of resources and quality. There are many well equipped private schools, mainly located in cities, catering to elite strata and

there has been a steady increase in enrolment in these schools. When we survey, it is found that these private schools are not maintaining any record of students admitted in different social category.

**Table 1:** Enrolment of Girl’s Students in Classes VI-VIII

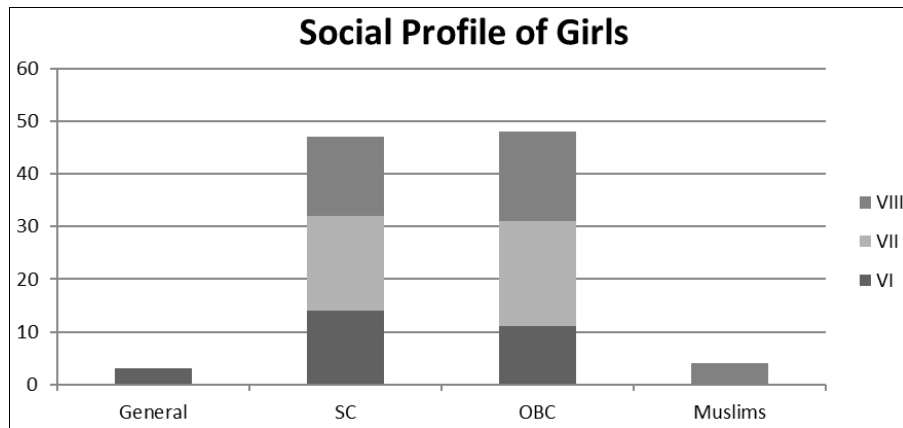
Category	Government schools						Semi-Govt.		
	VI		VII		VIII		VI	VII	VIII
General	03	01	00	01	00	00	94	104	110
SC	14	03	18	05	15	04	70	63	58
OBC	11	01	20	00	17	01	203	159	151
Minorities	00	23	00	17	04	17	17	17	12
Total	28	28	38	23	36	22	348	343	331

**Total Number of Girl’s student in Different Categories in Government schools**



**Sources:** District Basic Education Office, Aligarh.

**Fig 2:** Religion



Source: Poorve Madhaymik Government School, Alempur Aligarh.

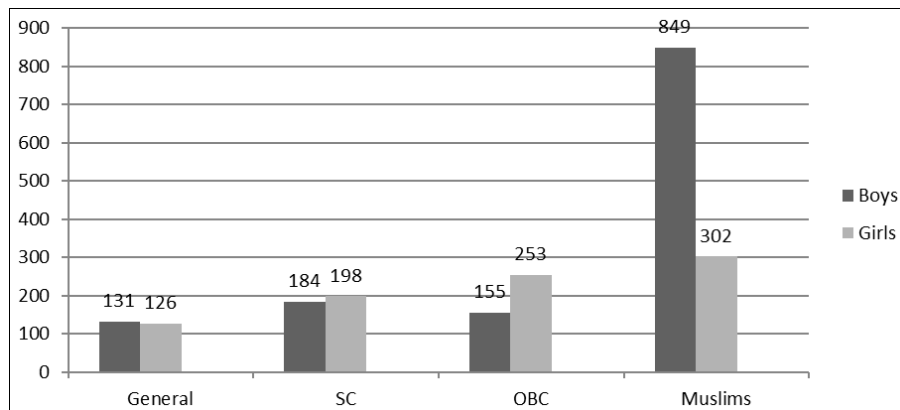
Fig 3: Social Profile of Girls

**Drop Out Rate of Girls**

Although the phenomenon of drop outs continue to be a serious problem in India’s education scenario, the dropout rates in elementary education have been on the decline, more sharply so for girls. Table-2 and Chart – show an overall dropout number of boys and girls in Aligarh City.

Table 2: Total Dropout Number of Boys and Girls in the city government schools.

Category	Boys	Girls
General	131	126
SC	184	198
OBC	155	253
Minorities	894	302



Source: District Basic Education Office, Aligarh.

Fig 4: Social Profile of boys and girls

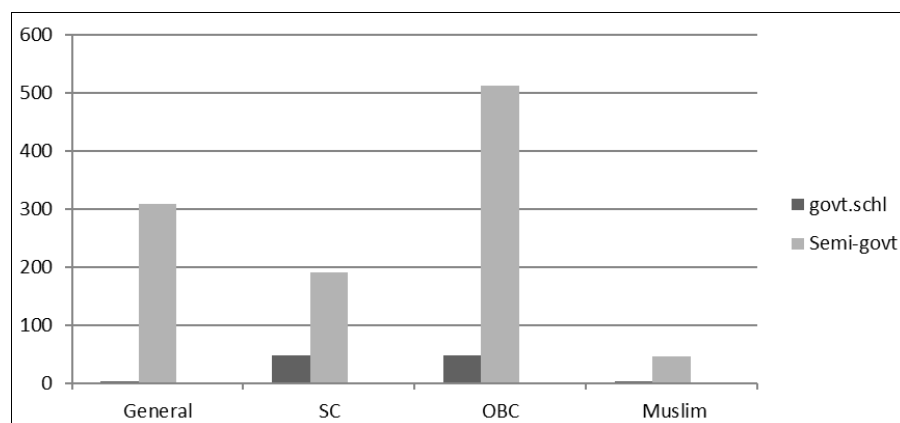


Fig 5: Dropout ratio of girl in all categories

The survey in government school found that the overall dropout ratio of girl is 22% in all categories. Dropout rate is highest in Minorities (Muslim) followed SC and OBCs. It is 50%, 25% 25% in Muslims, SC and OBC respectively. The dropout rates for Muslim boys point toward a trend of legging behind from other social groups and also from the Muslim girls.

**Attendance of Girl’s Student**

The study also found that the higher economic status is correlated with higher attendance and better learning level of children in all classes. Children are more likely to have regular attendance in schools where the parents either mother or father had completed primary education or more. The percentage of students who regularly attended class is

highest among the general category followed by OBC and SC and Muslims. Muslim children have the lowest attendance, once in a week on an average. Learning outcomes appeared too reflected in attendance.

Passing percentage of the student in all government schools and semi-government schools is 100% as it is the government policy to promote all students.

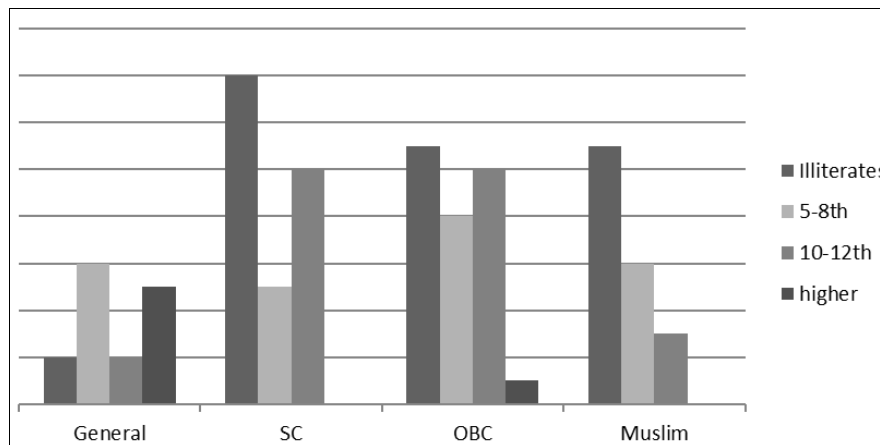
**Parent’s Education and Occupation**

This Study reveals the variations in the socio-economic characteristics of children’s household survey. The study reveals that 38% children are from the household where the father and mother had never been enrolled in school and

more than two-third had mother who had never been to schools; 25% had studied up to 5th to 8th class; 25% had education up to High school and intermediate classes and only 6% are highly educated graduate and post graduates in which 83% are from upper caste.

**Table 3:** Educational Background of Parents: Father and Mother

Category	Illiterate	5-8 class	10th-12th class	Higher class
General	5%	24%	8%	83%
SC	37%	24%	40%	-
OBC	29%	32%	40%	17%
Muslim	29%	24%	12%	



**Fig 6:** Education Background of Parents: Father and Mother

**Occupation Background**

In terms of occupational background of parent, more than half of the children came from labourers’ class where father is a casual wage labor. 70% of children are from labor or low-income groups; 20% are from the family running small business-like grocery shop etc. 10% are from service class and upper economic class of society in general category.

**Table 4:** Parents Occupation

Category	Labor	Business	Service
general	6%	60%	40%
SC	34%	10%	40%
OBC	34%	20%	20%
Muslims	26%	10%	00%

The variation in the socio-economic characteristics of the children’s household is closely related with learning outcome of the children. The overall learning levels of children in government run schools are found much below the grade appropriate for learning levels expected of them. The children are able to read but are not able to write correctly. Out of 52 girls 16 girls are able to read and write correctly. We found a systematic pattern in variation in learning level of children according to their social categories. Upper caste children have the highest learning levels followed by the OBC then SCs and Muslim. Muslim girls are at the bottom.

**Table 5:** Learning Capabilities of Students.

Category	100% correct	80%correct	50% and Below
General	71%	29%	00
SC	44%	44%	12%
OBC	31%	56%	13%
Muslims	59%	25%	16%

**Assessment of Capability and Awareness of the Student**

Education develops one’s claim to a good quality life entailed in the concept of capabilities. The capability approach draws upon education to ensure social justice, just as feminists pedagogy draws on conscientizations for awakening the individual’s understanding of society. Education by itself is necessary but insufficient input for individuals to take charges of their life choices. It would require policy and programmatic support as well as wide ranging of social transformation in order to build capabilities though not exclusively by education. The capability Approach is a theoretical model developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum<sup>6</sup> to interpret human well-being as freedom to function as individual may desire.

The capability Approach helps to highlight how conditions in the environment can limit individual freedoms or capabilities. For example, inefficient distribution of resources for schooling- not only lack of money, building or equipment but also lack of understanding regarding how to teach in gender equitable ways that are sensitive to class or race or regional difference might result in failure of capabilities. Similarly placing extra burden of domestic work on girls in families, prohibiting women from participating in decision making or discriminating against women at work and limit the intrinsic good of education for women etc. <sup>[7]</sup>

As regards the self-awareness and their importance, how girls valued themselves and are valued by their families, we asked whether they consider herself as equal as their brothers

<sup>6</sup> A. Sen, Capability and Well-being, in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya K. Sen(eds.),The Quality Of Life, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> E. Unterhalter, Education, Capabilities and Social Justice.efareport@unesco.org,2003

88% say yes, 14% say no, and 2% don't know. Whether they are appreciated by families on their performance when they ranked first in class or getting awards or prizes in sports or in any other competitions, 98% student says yes and only 2% say no.

The Capability of girls in decision making and freedom of choice, we asked whether they want to study further; and after study what they will do? 98% of girls want to study

further and do the jobs as shown in table-6 and chart. Can they go out alone to their friend's house or to markets etc. as their brothers? Apart from studies, what else they want to learn? All girl students are conscious about their hobbies and want to learn computer, dance, singing, cooking, stitching, and Beautician course as shown in Table-7 and Chart- and earn the money.

**Table 6:** Want to study further and to do job

Student	Teacher	Doctor	Police	Lawyer	ISA/IPS	pilot	nurse	B.Sc.
Total	52%	24%	6%	4%	6%	4%	2%	2%

**Table 7:** Want to learn in addition to education

Student	stitching	dance	computer	drawing	Eng. Lang.	beautician	cooking	More than one
Total	32%	22%	18%	2%	2%	8%	2%	14%

To assess their level of information and knowledge, we asked about the government's educational policies and schemes for the girl's education? 54% says yes and 46% say no but only 18% girls could not mention the name of schemes as free education, dress, midday meal, course books etc. Scholarship government is giving to marginalized section of girls, 88% girls know about it and mention the exact amount. We assess girl's understanding and liberal social attitudes about inter-castes marriages and untouchability. 99% of girls are against inter-castes marriages and 94% girls says untouchability is wrong. It is found that most of the girls are very conscious of their caste identity.

Girl's initiative to bring social change and their economic independence in larger social interests, they are ready to create social and economic space for themselves. Girls use education as resources and skills for income generation and will take care of the parents. 84% girls consider that it is not only the responsibility of son but they will also take care of their parents. About sharing financial responsibility to their family- 92% girl say yes and earn money by doing jobs while 8% say no.

To understand political participation and awareness about their own rights and responsibilities within the political systems, this survey asks the girls for their claim to political rights or join the political system to discharge their political duties in governance at local, state and national levels. Only 26% girls say they know about their political rights and 74% don't know but only 8 percent girls mention name Political rights-Rights to vote and contest election. About women's rights, 50% say yes and 50% say no. Some girl's mention the right to equality and right against exploitation and right to education.

As regards the political participation and contesting election, 50% are interested while 44% say no and 6% say don't know. What will they do after winning election? Their answered that they will work for development of its country, city and their local area. Only 34% students are aware about local development issues like making roads, cleanliness, security of women, violence against women, making toilets and education for girls and construction of schools, potable water supplies/ availability etc. 16% student wants to contest elections but have vision for development.

**Conclusion**

The observations and findings of this study have proved the hypothesis to a greater extent that educational inequality

among marginalized sections of girls remains unchanged. It is true that Educational attainment in the form of increasing number of enrolments and decreasing number of dropout rates in the marginalized sections society have been declining over period of a decade but it does not mean that educational disparities have ended. Inequalities still persist or even widen in spite of increase in overall educational levels but the overall educational development situations are still very poor. The empirical evidence has proved that that educational expansion does not lead to reduction in educational inequalities based on social caste and religion. The benefits of affirmative action are also percolating to OBCs and SCs but they are limited to the creamy layers of these sections. Muslim girls suffered from lower educational attainment than upper caste Hindu and other groups but their educational learning is higher than the SCs and OBCs girl students.

A number of factors contribute to these disparities:

- Government educational policies are faulty. The government is failed in both good public quality public educational provisions and in creating and sustaining an effective regulatory process.
- The existing policy of automatic promotion is expected to ensure that the children do not repeat the same grade and thus lose their motivation to learn. Children are to be promoted automatically up to grade eight under the RTE Act dispensation.
- Monitoring the children's regular attendance in schools as in private schools is essential and need to fix some demarcation line for promoting students in next class.
- Failure of government's schools to motivate families to send their children to school. Even in rural area, parents prefer to send their children in English convent schools.
- The failure of government to meet the need of millions of children has caused the loss of confidence in the ability of government to deliver quality education. The need is not to increase quantity but it should be qualitative.
- The existence of different forms of violence against girls has further eroded the positive correlation between education and status of girls in society.

The girls from marginalized sections require support from enabling policy environment, supportive social attitudes of the community and family, effective governance structures and inclusive economic environment. Education may help these girls build a better future for them but it is not known

how long these changes in girls own behavior and thinking will last in an unsupportive environment.

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