WHY STUDENTS DROPOUT IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF ENROLLMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON THE BRAC'S EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Md. KAISAR ALI KHAN
AMR CHOWDHURY

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115

CONTENTS

i

116

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In mid' 80s. with the realization of educational crisis in Bangladesh. BRAC engaged itself with education program and developed two models for the rural poor children who had remained unreached by the formal system. First model was a three-year course for the children aged 8-10 years and the second model was a two-year course for the children aged 11-16 years. BRAC is now operating over 28,000 schools, enrolling over 8,40,000 students with minimum dropouts.

At the end of 1994, the researchers realized from a field visit that the dropout rate in NFPE seems to have increased and most of them occurred in the first six months of schooling. The programme was seriously concerned with this problem and felt to know the background of the learners and the dropouts, replacements, shortfall and attendance scenario of the programme along with the reasons for such dropouts.

For the purpose, the study selected 48 schools from five team offices of five existing Regions and categorized the learners into three categories (dropout, replaced and regular). Thus, a total of 450 (150 learners from each category) learners were selected as sample. It is to be noted that dropout learners were selected from them who had dropped out during first six month of schooling.

To achieve the objectives, guardians of the learners were interviewed through structured questionnaire and conducted focus group discussions, small group discussion meetings and individual discussions with the NFPE teachers, guardians and concerned BRAC staff. Data from secondary sources were also collected to know the proportion of dropout, replacement and attendance.

Data on socio-economic background of the learners reveals that, 19.8 % underaged and 11.5 % overaged children out of 450 learners

ii

were enrolled in NFPE and higher proportion of over aged children found in replaced category (18.3% boys and 27.8% girls). The study observed that, lack of proper survey some learners were enrolled in BRAC schools who did not meet the recruitment criteria. The study shows. 37.6% out of 450 learners were enrolled in NFPE schools from farming households which is higher than the day labourers' households (23.1%) followed by small traders' (15.3%). The tendency of dropout is higher among the learners who had come from farming households (boys- 27.5% and girls- 30.0%), followed by labourers household (boys - 30.0% and Girls - 22.7%). Some 63.3% boys and 70.0% girls of 150 regular category from illiterate households have successfully completed the three-years course. On the other hand, 57.5% boys and 27.4 % girls of 150 dropout learners from educated families have dropped out from BRAC school during the course. It was observed that, most of the educated parents are preferred formal schools over non-formal schools.

Data from secondary sources shows that, 16.3% of 1604 (total enrollment) dropped out during the course and the proportion is higher among boys (19.2%) than girls (14.8%). The dropout figure may vary from the dropout rate of NFPE programme. This may be due to the difference in the calculation methodology. In terms of replacement, 10.0% of total enrollment had been replaced during the course and the proportion was also higher for boys (13.1%) than the girls (8.4%). The study further revealed that 7.0% of 1444 (final enrollment) were not replaced and the proportion of boys and girls was same.

About 71.7 % of 1479 students (number of initial enrollment) had completed the three-years course curriculum from the beginning of school and the proportion of girls (74.9%) was higher than the boys (65.0%). Some 93.2% learners (from all categories) attended the NFPE schools and the rate of girls (94.7%) was also higher than the boys (90.6%). Data by seasonal variation on attendance showed, the highest percentage of learners (94.7%) attending school in the

month of 'April' (half of Chaitra and half of Baishakh), followed by January (half of Powsh and half of Magh) 94.3%. The attendance rate fell in 'July' (half of Ashar and half of Srabon) and December (half of Agrahayan and half of Powsh) to 92.0 % and 92.0%, respectively.

About the reasons for dropout, 26.7% guardians of 150 expressed that they withdrew their children due to misunderstanding about BRAC school. Some 24.0% guardians told that, their children were expelled by the school authority though they had intention to keep their children in BRAC's school. In this regards, most of the guardians said that due to underaged, overaged, or irregular attendance in school their children were expelled from school during the first three months of schooling. Sometimes the NFPE teachers also expelled some learners who did not perform well in class compared to other learners. Beside this, some of the learners left school willingly when they failed to perform well.

Guardians of 14.0% dropouts told that due to lower level of their household income they had to engage their school-going children to others' houses as labour. Higher proportion of girls (16.4%) than the boys (10.0%) were involved in earning for their livelihood. About 8.7% of dropout learners were withdrawn by their guardians due to religious reasons.

Guardians of 8.0% dropout learners told that they had to migrate temporarily to other places with all family members for seeking better employment opportunities. The researchers also found that, some of the selected households migrated permanently.

Last of all, the study would like to conclude that, the extent of dropout of learners from NFPE school mostly depends on the quality of learners survey and on the adherence to the criteria at the time of primary enrollment.

iv

119

List of tables

List of figures

v

120

I. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has one of the world's lowest literacy rates where only 33% of the population is literate for those 15 years and older. Over 85% of rural women cannot read or write. About 40% of the primary school age population never attend schools, and among those who enrol, 70% drop out before they reach the fifth grade and most of the drop outs are girls (Ahmed, M - 1993).

In 1984, BRAC initiated a primary education program with 22 experimental schools for the poorest rural children who had not attended any formal school system or dropped out before completing 3rd grade from any school (Lovell and Fatema- 1989).

The curriculum in BRAC's school are based on two models : The Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) is a three-year course for children aged 8-10 years and the Basic Education for Older Children (BEOC) is a three-year course for children aged 11-16 years.
BRAC schools have reached most parts of the country. BRAC is now operating over 25,000 schools, enrolling over 7,50,000 students. By the end of 1995, the targeted number of schools will be around 40,000 (NFPE, statistical unit - 1994).

The Research and Evaluation Division (RED) of BRAC has conducted a series of studies on NFPE program and is planning to conduct more studies on its various dimensions. It is believed that dropout and low attendance are the barriers that cause problem for the sustainability of the education program. BRAC has taken it as a challenge to keep the dropout rate to a minimum. The researcher has recently observed through visiting two NFPE area offices that the dropout rates in NFPE seemed to have increased.

In setting up a new school, the prospective NFPE students are picked up from the survey list and are kept in observation for a

1

period of three months before they are finally selected for enrollment. A significant proportion of them leave school within the observation period and are replaced from the survey list. It was observed, from the final enrollment, most of the dropouts occurred during the first three months of schooling. The programme is concerned about this and would like to know the enrollment status of the students and the reasons for such dropout. In view of the program's need this study was undertaken. The broad objective of the study was to identify, why a large number of NFPE learners dropout from school within the first six months of enrollment.

Some definitions

Dropout : Dropout in this study has been defined as, the students who were in school at the end of the third month but left it before a month of three years course completion.

Replacement : Replacement are those learners who were enrolled in school against the dropout learners.

Shortfall in replacement : The gap between the learners leaving school and students replaced.

Regular learners : The learners who completed the three years course from the beginning of schooling.

The specific research questions

With a view to achieve the above objective the study seeks to answer the following research questions :

1. What proportion of NFPE students have dropped out and been replaced during the three years of the NFPE curriculum and what proportion of children complete the course from the beginning of schools ?

2. What are the differences in socio-economic characteristics of these three categories of children ?

3. What proportion of students drop out during the 1st three months and during the full course after final enrollment and what are the reasons for dropout within first six month of enrollment?

4. What is the attendance rate of the NFPE students ?

5. Have there been any gender and regional differences in the dropout, replacement and attendance rate ?

METHODOLOGY

Area selection

The study was carried out in all the five administrative regions of the NFPE programme. One NFPE programme area was selected from each region where at least 15 NFPE schools (BEOC schools have not been included in this study) were started in the first quarter of 1992 and completed at the end of December 1994.

Sample selection

According to statistical theory, based on normal distribution which suggests, a sample size of 30 is enough to have an estimate tends to normal distribution. On the basis of the statistical theory, the students of all the schools in the areas were listed by their different categories (dropout, replaced and regular students). In each area, from each of the categories 30 children were selected at random. The learners from dropout category were selected from among the learners who had left BRAC's school within the first six month of enrollment and the learners of the replaced category were selected from the learners who had replaced against those of

3

124

dropout. The regular category learners were selected from them who completed the full course curriculum from the beginning of school. Thus, a total of 90 children were selected in an area. The following table shows the distribution of the sample students by Region and Sex.

Table 1: Distribution of sample students by sex and category

Name of Region	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		All		
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Total
Mymensingh	7	23	10	20	9	21	26	64	90
Dhaka	12	18	16	14	8	22	36	54	90
Comilla	3	27	7	23	6	24	16	74	90
Jessore	8	22	10	20	12	18	30	60	90
Rangpur	10	20	17	13	11	19	38	52	90
Total	40	110	60	90	46	104	146	304	450

Data collection techniques and material

The household heads of the sampled students were interviewed through a structured questionnaire to collect their socio-economic background information. The NFPE teachers were interviewed through separate questionnaire in order to collect information for identifying the reasons for dropouts. For the same purpose, in each area, the study conducted some focus group discussion (FGD) meetings with the household heads, sampled students and BRAC staff. Thus, in each of the areas three FGD meetings have been conducted through checklist.

In this a way 52 NFPE schools from five NFPE Areas of five Regions have been covered. A total of 450 household heads of the sample students, and 42 teachers of the selected schools were individually interviewed and 15 FGD meetings were conducted under this study. To know the extent of dropout, replacement and regular learners

4

related data were collected from secondary sources (attendance registers, survey list, selected students and list of students who completed the course).

RESULTS

Socio - economic background of the sample learners

According to the objective. the study attempts to show some comparisons among the categorized NFPE students on some selected socio-economic indicators as follows :

The age distribution of the sample students reveals that a significant proportion (19.8 %) of students of all categories fall below the age of 10 years. which can be considered 'under aged' according to the minimum ceiling for enrollment in NFPE schools. In NFPE. the minimum ceiling for enrollment is eight years and maximum 10 years. The study also reveals that the proportion of under aged students is higher at the 'replaced' category (18.3% boys and 27.8% girls) followed by 'dropout' category (boys - 10.0%, girls - 23.6%). On the other hand, the dropout girls constitute higher proportion (16.4%) in terms of higher age group (14 years) compared to regular girls (8.7%) (see Table - 3.1).

Table 2: Proportion of students by age, sex and category.

Age group	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
<10-10 Yrs	10.0	23.6	18.3	27.8	13.0	16.3	19.8
11 Yrs	35.0	36.4	26.7	18.9	41.3	30.8	30.7
12 Yrs	17.5	7.3	16.7	17.8	13.1	22.1	15.6
13 Yrs	30.0	16.4	30.0	24.4	17.4	22.1	22.4
14 Yrs +	7.5	16.4	8.3	11.1	15.2	8.7	11.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(No)	(40)	(110)	(60)	(90)	(46)	(104)	(450)
Average	10.9	10.7	10.9	10.7	11.0	10.8	10.8

Figures in parentheses indicate number of students

5

126

Distribution of sample students by fathers' occupation shows that a great majority of the fathers of sample NFPE students are engaged in farming (37.6%) followed by day labourer (23.1%) and small trading (15.3%) (see table 3.2). Among farming households the proportion seems to be higher (boys - 43.3. girls -47.8%) of 'replaced' category compared to the other categories.

Table 3:   Proportion of students by sex, fathers' occupation and category.

| Parents' occupation | Dropout | | Replaced | | Regular | | All |
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Farming	27.5	30.0	43.3	47.8	34.8	38.5	37.6
Day Labourer	30.0	22.7	25.0	16.7	26.2	24.0	23.1
Service	10.0	5.5	5.0	3.3	6.5	3.8	5.1
Small Trading	10.0	14.5	13.3	13.3	15.2	21.2	15.3
Rural Transport	7.5	12.8	6.7	7.8	4.3	2.9	7.3
Others	15.0	14.5	6.7	11.1	13.0	9.7	11.6
Total (Total Nos)	100.0 (40)	100.0 (110)	100.0 60)	100.0 (90)	100.0 (46)	100.0 (104)	100.0 (450)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of students

In the rural areas of Bangladesh the majority of the population have little access to education. They are practically the parents of the large majority of non-formal students. Of the total students in the sample, 64.7 percent come from illiterate families (both father and mother are illiterate), while only 9.8% learners come from literate (both father and mother) households. Table 3.3 shows an interesting findings. The majority of the (67.3% of both sex) students of the regular category have completed the three years course though both of their parents are illiterate. On the other hand, majority (57.5%) of the boys dropped out from NFPE school though their parents are from literate (considered only one parents literate) group.

6

Table 4: Proportion of students by sex, parents' literacy and category.

Parents' literacy status	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Both (father and mother) literate	12.5	9.1	15.2	6.7	10.0	10.0	9.8
Both (father and mother) illiterate	42.5	72.7	52.2	66.3	63.3	70.0	64.7
Father literate but mother illiterate	42.5	17.3	21.7	23.1	20.0	16.7	21.5
Mother literate but father illiterate	2.5	1.0	10.9	3.8	6.7	3.3	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Total nos)	(40)	(110)	(60)	(90)	(46)	(104)	(450)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of students

Distribution of learners by households' land size (table 3.4) shows that, 8.4% students come in NFPE schools from the families with 'Zero' land and 44.2% come from the families who have land between 0.01 -0.49 acre. That means, a total of 53.0% students comes from the households who are functionally landless. The Table also indicates that, average land of the dropout category (both sex) is lower (92.1 acres) than the other categories of households.

7

Table 5: Proportion of students by sex, households' land size and category.

Land size	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
"00" Decl.	10.0	11.8	8.3	5.6	6.5	7.7	8.4
1-49 Decl.	45.0	50.9	40.0	37.8	45.7	44.2	44.2
50-100 Decl.	15.0	12.7	20.0	23.3	23.9	22.1	19.3
101 Decl +	30.0	24.6	31.7	33.3	23.9	26.0	28.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Total Nos)	(40)	(110)	(60)	(90)	(46)	(104)	(450)
Average land (decl)	90.3	93.9	106.6	115.0	121.9	91.0	103.1

HH = Household
Figures in parentheses indicate number of students

To measure the socio-economic status of a family, family size is considered as an important variable in many research studies. In this study, it is observed that the average family size of the sample households is 6.4 which is far higher than the national average (5.6)[4] and majority of the households are over the range of national average (see table - 3.5). The Table also reveals that comparatively the average family size of the regular category seems to be higher than the other categories.

Table 6: Proportion of students by sex, households' family size and category.

Family size (no)	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
<2-3	5.0	7.3	6.7	4.4	4.3	1.0	4.7
4-5	42.5	33.6	31.7	27.8	37.0	30.7	32.7
6-7	32.5	33.6	33.3	33.3	28.3	38.5	34.0
8 +	20.0	25.5	28.3	34.5	30.4	29.8	28.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Total Nos)	(40)	(110)	(60)	(90)	(46)	(104)	(450)
Average	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.4

Figures in parentheses indicate number of students

8

To measure the economic status of the sampled learners, the study introduced some summary indicators which depict that a great majority (57.6%) of the sample households fall below subsistence level (table 3.6). That means, their annual income is inadequate to meet their family requirements. The Table further shows, that the majority households of the dropouts fall below subsistence level compared to the 'replaced' and 'regular' category.

Table 7: Proportion of students by sex, household's economic status and category.

Economic condition	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Always deficit	12.5	22.7	13.3	16.7	15.2	18.2	17.6
Sometimes deficit	42.5	42.7	38.3	40.0	37.0	38.5	40.0
Equal	25.0	20.0	30.0	25.6	32.6	27.9	26.0
Surplus	20.0	14.6	18.4	17.7	15.2	15.4	16.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Total nos)	(40)	(110)	(60)	(90)	(46)	(104)	(450)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of students

The study was keen to know whether the sample students were enrolled in any formal schools before enrolling in NFPE schools. Table 3.7 shows that 17.6% of 450 who were enrolled in formal schools before enrolling in NFPE school. The proportion seems to be higher among the 'replaced' category compared to other categories.

9

Table 8: Proportion of students by sex, pre-NFPE enrollment status and category.

Enrollment status	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Enrolled	37.5	11.8	21.7	18.9	19.6	9.6	17.6
Not Enrolled	62.5	88.2	78.3	81.1	80.4	90.4	82.4
Total (Total nos)	100.0 (40)	100.0 (110)	100.0 (60)	100.0 (90)	100.0 (46)	100.0 (104)	100.0 (450)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of students

Dropout, replacement, shortfall and attendance situation of BRAC's non-formal school

To find out the dropout, replacement, shortfall and attendance situation of NFPE schools the study examined the attendance registers (which were available in the team offices) of 48 schools from the selected areas and found that a total of 1604 students (525 boys and 1079 girls) (table in Annex 2).

According to the objective of the study attempts have been made to identify the extent of dropouts for the period of Preparatory part (first three months of schooling). But, due to some methodological limitations and time constraints, the study failed to identify the acceptable proportion of dropout rate for the period. Because, lead pencil is used in the attendance registers for initial enrollment of the learners during this period and the names of the replacement new comers are recorded by erasing the names of the dropout students. The study furnished in table (annex -1) shows that only 10.4% learners have dropped out during that period.

The Table in annex 2 and Figure - 1, present more information about the ongoing program which can be considered as its performance

10

indicators. The Figure and the table illustrate that 16.3% (261) out of 1604 (total enrollment) have dropped out during the course after final enrollment and the proportion is higher among boys (19.2%) than girls (14.8). The dropout figure may vary from the dropout rate of NFPE programme. This may be due to the difference of in the calculation methodology. In terms of replacement, the figure also reveals that 10.0% (160) of the total enrollment have been replaced during the course and the proportion is also higher for boys (13.1%) than the girls (8.4%). The figure further reveals that 7.0% (101) of the final enrollment (1444) have not been replaced and the proportions of boys and girls are same. The similar information by regions have been shown in the Figure of annex-1. The figure depicts that the proportion of dropout is higher in Jessore region (22.9%) and followed by Rangpur (19.8%) and Comilla (19.7%). The lowest proportion of learners dropped out was found in Mymensingh region (7.0%) during the course. The Figure also reveals that Jessore region has higher (19.1%) replacement of the dropout learners compare to the other regions.

Figure 2 indicates that 71.7% of 1479 students (number of initial enrollment) have completed the three years course curriculum from the beginning of school year and the proportion of girls (74.9%) is higher than the boys (65.0%). The figure in annex 2 shows that, proportion of regular students is higher in Dhaka region (83.4%) followed by Mymensingh (82.8%) and Rangpur region (71.8%).

One of the major objectives of the study was to investigate the attendance rate in NFPE schools. Regarding this, the Figure 3 shows that, the average attendance rate of NFPE schools is 93.2% and the rate of girls (94.7%) is higher than the boys (90.6%). The Figure in annex - 3 presents the attendance rate by region and it shows that higher proportion of learners are attending school in Mymensingh region (95.3), followed by Dhaka (94.7%) and Rangpur region (92.6%).

11

To show the seasonal variation of attendance of NFPE learners, the study furnishes the related data in figure-4 and the table in annex 7. The figure and the table indicate that higher (94.7%) proportion of learners are attending school in 'April' (half of Chaitra - half of Baishakh) followed by in January (half of Powsh - half of Magh) (94.3%). The Figure and table also show that the attendance rate falls in 'July' (half of Ashar - half of Srabon) and December (half of Agrahayan - half of Powsh), 92.0 % and 92.0% respectively.

12

Figure-1
Percentage of Dropout, Replaced and Short fall Learners by Sex
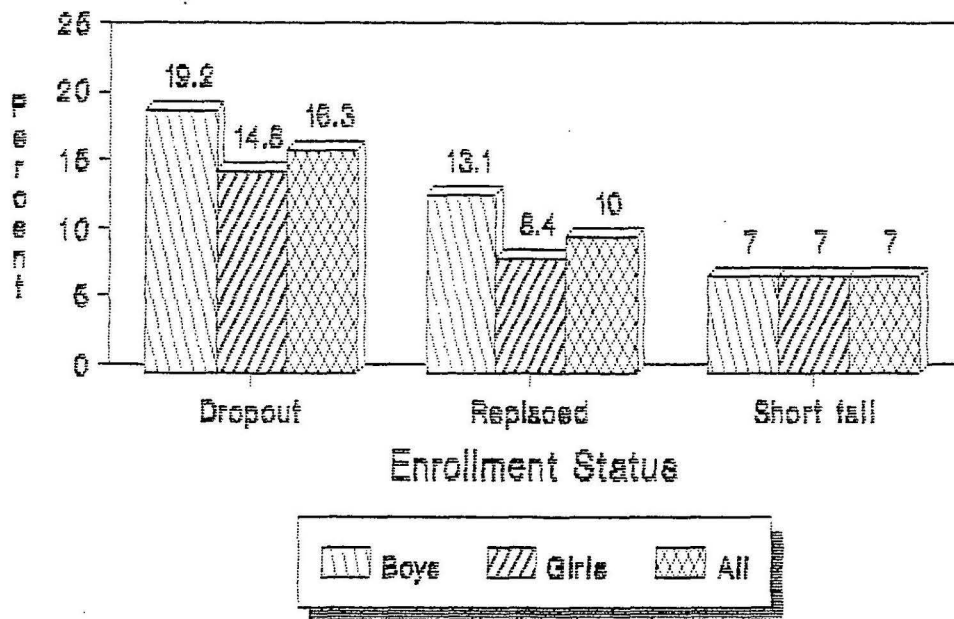
Dropout: Percent of total enrollment
Replaced: Percent of total enrollment
Short fall: Percent of final enrollment

134

Figure-2
Percentage of Regular Learners by Sex
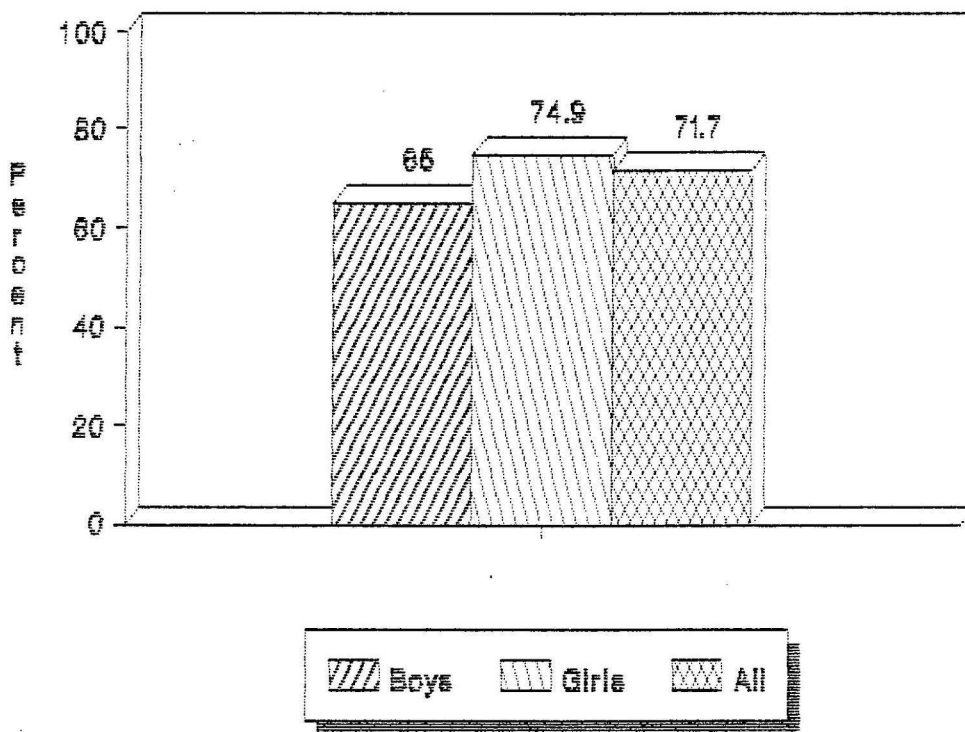
Percent of primary enrollment

Figure - 3
Percentage of Learners Attending
in the NFPE School by Sex
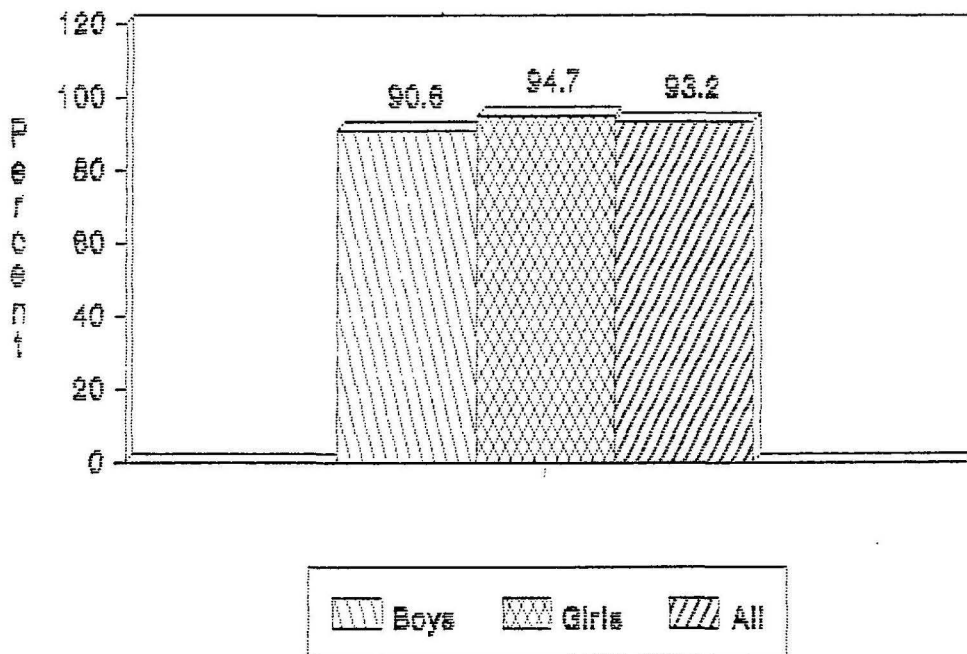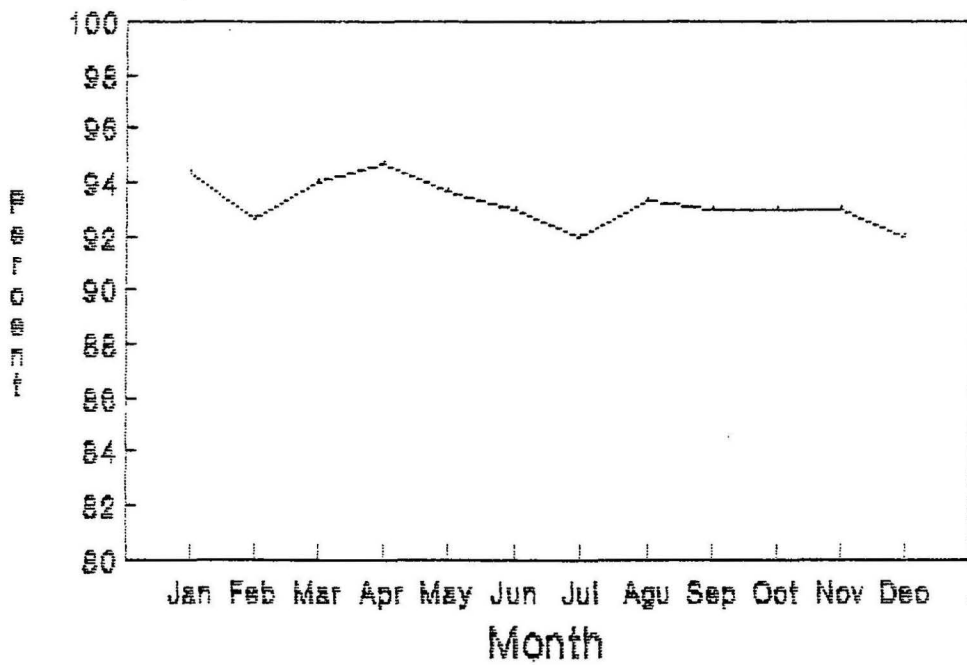
Figure - 4
Percentage of Learners Attending in the NFPE School by Month

Percentage of total class held in the course

Reasons for dropout of students from BRAC's NFPE schools

It has been mentioned in the earlier chapter (methodology) of this study that to identify the major reasons for dropout of NFPE learners from BRAC schools, data were collected following two approaches. First approach was direct, i.e, by asking the guardians about the specific reason(s) for dropout of the learners and the second approach was indirect, i.e through focus group discussion meetings, individual discussions and observations. The Table annex-4 presents the opinion of the parents on the specific reasons for dropout of their children. The Table indicates that, due to misconception about BRAC school, highest proportion (26.7%) of learners out of 150 dropouts were withdrawn from BRAC school by their respective guardians. The guardians told that they were confused, whether their children will be able to learn something from these types of schools. They thought that, the teachers of these school are not much educated ! and schools are not well constructed. Besides, during preparatory part, books are not supplied to the students but dancing, singing and playing are conducted in the daily classes. Most of the dropped out learners were withdrawn for this reason in the first three months and the remaining were withdrawn in the next three months of schooling.

The guardians of 24.0% learners out of 150 dropouts told that, though they had intention to enroll their children in BRAC's school but their children were expelled by the school authority. In this regards, most of the guardians expressed that due to underaged, overaged and some other reasons their children were expelled from school.

The guardians of 14.0% of the dropouts told that due to lower level of their household income they had to engage their school going children to others' houses as labour or on daily basis for earning cash or kinds for their family. The Table shows higher proportion of girls (16.4%) than the boys (10.0%) are engaged for earning.

17

The Table annex 4 also shows that, 8.7% of dropout learners were withdrawn by their guardians due to religious reasons. The guardians said that, the Mullahs (religious leaders) discussed in the mosques and at the Mahfeels (religious meetings) about BRAC being un-islamic and teaches christian activities to the children. So, it is forbidden for everybody to enroll children in BRAC schools.

Some of the guardians of (8.0 %) dropout learners told that they had to migrate temporarily at the other places with their family members for better employment opportunities.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

In mid '80s, upon recognizing educational crisis in Bangladesh, BRAC engaged itself with education program and developed two models for the rural poor children who had remained outside of the formal system. First model was a three-year course for the children aged 8-10 years and the second model was a two-year course for the children aged 11-16 years.

At the end of 1994, the researchers realized through visiting two NFPE team offices that the dropout rate in NFPE have increased. The researchers also realized that most of them occurred in the first three months (before final enrollment) and in the next three months (after final enrollment) of schooling. The programme was seriously disturbed by this problem and felt the need to study the causes of this phenomenon. It is to be noted that the programme does not consider the learners as dropouts, who leave the school during the period of preparatory part. So, the study not included those dropped out and replaced learners for calculation the dropout and replacement rate. It is further noted that the study selected as sample from among the learners who dropped out and replaced during first six months of schooling (including the dropouts during preparatory part) to investigate the basic reasons behind such

18

139

dropout.

For the above purpose. the study had categorized the learners into three categories (dropout, replaced and regular) and five team offices from five regions were selected. Based on statistical theory, 90 learners (30 from each of the category) from each team office were selected as sample. Thus a total of 450 learners have been studied. The study also included guardians of the learners, NFPE teachers and concerned BRAC staff.

The study indicates that of the 450 sampled learners, 19.8% underaged and 11.5% overaged children were enrolled in NFPE and higher proportion of over aged children were found in replaced category (18.3% boys and 27.8% girls).

In terms of household occupation, 37.6% of the sampled 450 learners were enrolled in NFPE schools from farming households. which is higher than the day labourers (23.1%) households and followed by small traders' (15.3%). The study shows that, the tendency of dropout is higher among the learners who come from farming households (boys- 27.5% and girls- 30.0%) followed by labourer household (boys - 30.0% and Girls - 22.7%).

Many studies indicated that the children from illiterate households have a very little access to education and the trend of dropout among them was higher as compared to literate families. But the result of the present study is interesting. The study shows that, 63.3% of boys and 70.0% of girls out of 150 regular learners have successfully completed the three years course from the beginning of schooling, though they had come from completely illiterate (both father and mother are illiterate) households.

It was also found that 57.5% of boys and 27.4 % of girls, out of 150 dropout learners, who had come from educated families (considered single parents literate) have dropped out from BRAC

19

140

school during the course (Table 3.3). It was observed that most of the educated parents prefer formal school rather than non-formal. The parents stated that, after graduation from NFPE, their children will have to enroll in formal school for further education. BRAC does not award certificates and does not teach arabic subjects, which will be needed when they will be enrolled in formal school.

Some earlier studies indicated that sustainablity in education entirely depends on economic well being of the concerned households. But this study shows (Table-3.4 and 3.6) that a large number of learners have successfully completed the NFPE course, though they were from the poorer households. It, however, does not mean that education has little correlation with economic well being. In this regard, the study would like to present a number of positive factors which are responsible for the success of NFPE. They are : (i) the number of student in NFPE school is limited to only 30, ensuring thereby personal attention; (ii) teaching in the school lasts only for three hours each a day, thus leaving time for the learners to help at home or in the fields; (iii) on each day 40 minutes are devoted to interesting extra curricular activities, which the rural children like very much; (iv) active community participation; (v) schools are very close to home; and (vi) all educational materials are supplied free of cost. Besides these, some other factors like, most of the teachers in NFPE are female who are more patience and understanding , no formal examination, low home work, etc.

Regarding the findings given in table in annex 9 and 10 prove that education is strongly dependent on socio-economic factors of the concerned households. The Tables show that among 150 dropouts, 59.3% are presently are enrolling in different educational institutions (govt. primary schools, arabic school (madrasha) or NFPE schools at the next sessions), though they had dropped out from NFPE schools. The enrollment rate is higher among the children who belongs to the families with good socio-economic

20

141

status.

Information obtained from secondary sources present some interesting aspects of gender issue with respect to the performance indicators of the programme (proportion of dropout, attendance and extent of course completion, etc.). The findings demonstrate that girls are performing better than boys in NFPE. While a study on the ex-NFPE learners in formal school (khan K.A and Chowdhury-'91) revealed that the girl dropouts were more than the boys, this study shows an opposite scenario. The dropout rate of NFPE girls is lower (14.8%) than boys (19.2%). With respect to course completion, 74.9% girls students out of 1007, have successfully completed the three years course which is much higher than the boys (65.0%). The attendance rate of the NFPE girls is also higher (94.7%) than the boys (90.8%). The reasons for this variance may be the same which have been discussed in the earlier section of this paper. It is worthwhile to mention here that, for the same reasons most of the guardians prefer NFPE school over formal school for their daughters' education.

Regarding the reasons for dropouts, the study found some other reasons which are discussed below. The study observed that, in the first three months most of the learners were expelled by the school authority, though the enrolled learners intended to study with NFPE schools. Due to improper surveys, some underaged, overaged and abnormal children were listed as eligible learners and thus enrolled in NFPE school. The study also observed that, during enrollment of the learners in some areas, the survey list were not properly followed. Beside this, some children listed in the surveys who were already enrolled in formal schools. So, before final enrollment, the respective programme personnel expelled them as they do not meet the recruitment criteria. It was also observed that, many of the NFPE staff were newly recruited who lack adequate communication skills and have little experience in their assignment.

21

In the first three months (preparatory part), the NFPE staff or teachers do not take any actions against learners' absenteeism and do not frequently communicate with the guardians. They just observe whether the guardians and learners are really interested to enroll. If they were found to be not interested, the learners were expelled from the school.

It was learnt from reliable sources that sometimes the NFPE teachers also expelled some learners who perform unsatisfactorily in classes compared to other learners, although, the teachers are asked to spend some time with the weak learners after school hour to overcome their shortcomings. Instead, most of the time they expel these weak learners without the knowledge of their supervisors and replace them by the most interested children who were previously enrolled in formal school. Beside this, some of the learners themselves leave school when they cannot perform well.

Migration has been identified as an another important reason for such dropouts. The study failed to meet 4.2% (19) of 450 learners due to their permanent migration from the area; none of the members of these households were available for interview either.

The study further confirms that the girls of the poorer households in rural areas are married at a very young age. Thus, education is given low priority. Most of the illiterate parents think that it is more than enough if their daughters can read and write letters, for it is considered as qualification for getting married. The study found that 9.1% of 110 sampled dropout girls got married during the first six months of schooling (Table annex 5). An earlier study (Khan,K.A. and Chowdhury, A.M.R.-93') showed that within one and half year of course completion, about 30.0% of the NFPE girls got married.

Based on the findings, the study would like to conclude that, the extent of dropouts of learners from NFPE school mostly depends on

22

the quality of surveys, on the extent of adherence to the criteria at the time of primary enrollment.

To achieve the objective of the programme, it is imperative to have greater communication between the rural people and the field level NFPE staff, which will help the rural community to understand the BRAC's education programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS :

- During learners survey for opening school, skilled surveyors should be assigned to ensure proper survey and it should be strictly followed during primary enrollment of students.

- The BRAC staff should establish personal contact with all level of community people before going to survey the learners and it should be accelerated when the school will start.

- BRAC staff should develop friendly relationship with the 'Mullah' (religious leaders) in the community. This may be helpful to solve many unpleasant problems.

- NFPE's Teachers should strictly supervised by the Programme Organizers and they must be prohibited to expel the learners without consent of the higher authority.

- Staff transfer should be minimized and during transfer, the staff should be given sufficient time to introduce the new comer with the beneficiaries and community people.

- To ensure regular attendance of the learners, the existing established steps should be followed from the beginning of schooling.

23

144

Annexure

Table 1: Proportion of students who have dropped out in the first three months of schooling by sex and region.

Regions	Drop out (%)					
	No.	Boys	No.	Girls	Total No.	All
Mymensingh	104	15.4	234	8.4	338	10.7
Dhaka	96	5.2	205	4.9	301	5.0
Comilla	100	16.0	204	15.7	310	15.8
Jessore	89	10.1	220	10.5	309	10.4
Rangpur	83	8.4	144	11.1	237	10.1
Total (Total nos)	472 (-)	11.2 (53)	1007 (-)	10.0 (101)	1479 (-)	10.4 (154)

Percent of primary enrolment

Table 2: Proportion of enrollment, dropout, replacement and shortfall students by sex.

Enrolment status	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary enrollment	472	1007	1479
Final enrollment	456	988	1444
Total enrollment	525	1079	1604
Total dropout (% of total enrollment)	19.2 (101)	14.8 (160)	16.3 (261)
Total replacement (% of final enrollment)	13.1 (69)	8.4 (91)	10.0 (160)
Course completed students (% of final enrollment)	93.0 (424)	93.0 (919)	93.0 (1343)
Short fall (% of final enrollment)	7.0 (32)	7.0 (69)	7.0 (101)

Figure in parentheses indicates numbers
Total enrollment = (Final enrollment + Replaced)

24

145

Table 3: Proportion of regular students by sex and region.

Region	% of Students					
	No	Boys	No	Girls	No	All
Mymensingh	104	69.2	234	88.9	338	82.8
Dhaka	96	79.2	205	85.4	301	83.4
Comilla	100	58.0	204	61.3	304	60.2
Jessore	89	52.8	220	62.3	309	59.5
Rangpur	83	65.1	144	75.7	227	71.8
Total (Total nos)	472	65.0 (307)	1007	74.9 (754)	1479	71.7 (1061)

Percent of primary enrollment

Table 4: Reasons for dropouts by opinion of the respondents and sex.

Reasons for dropout and expulsion	No of Dropouts		
	% of Boys	% of Girls	% of Total
High involvement in HH chores (own and others)	10.0	16.4	14.6
Illness	2.5	4.5	4.0
Absenteeism	5.0	7.3	6.7
Lack of fitness (over age, under age, abnormal etc.	12.5	28.2	24.0
Due to religious reasons	10.0	8.2	8.7
Due to marriage	-	4.5	3.3
Due to migration/transfer	10.0	7.3	8.0
Misunderstanding with BRAC school	40.0	21.8	26.7
Enrolment in government primary school	10.0	1.8	4.0
Total (Total numbers)	100.0 (40)	100.0 (110)	100.0 (150)

25

146

Table 5: Present involvement status of the dropout students by sex.

Present involvement status of dropouts	Proportion of Dropouts		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Study in formal primary schools	57.5	24.5	33.3
Study in madrasha (religious school)	2.5	7.3	6.0
Study in BRAC school (at the next session)	10.0	23.6	20.0
Household works	5.0	16.4	13.3
Work as bonded labour	5.0	6.4	6.0
Live with husbands	-	9.1	6.7
Small trade	5.0	-	1.3
Day labour	7.5	1.0	2.7
Do nothing	5.0	11.8	10.0
Not stated	2.5	-	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Total numbers)	(40)	(110)	(150)

Table 6 : Proportion of attendance in school by year of the course and region.

Region	% of students attended in NFPE school			
	Ist Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	All
Mymensingh	97.6	96.7	92.0	95.3
Dhaka	96.7	94.6	93.0	94.7
Comilla	94.0	93.3	87.7	91.6
Jessore	93.6	91.7	88.0	91.0
Rangpur	95.3	93.0	89.4	92.6
All	95.3	94.0	90.0	93.2

Percent of final enrollment

26

147

Table 7 : Proportion of attendance in school by month.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
94.2	92.7	94.0	94.7	93.7	93.0	92.0	93.3	93.0	93.0	93.0	92.0

Percent of final enrollment

Table 8 : Proportion of students by sex, HHs involvement status with any organization and category.

Involvement status	Dropout		Replaced		Regular		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Involved	55.0	47.3	46.7	47.8	50.0	54.8	50.0
Not involved	45.0	52.7	53.3	52.2	50.0	45.2	50.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Total nos)	(40)	(110)	(60)	(90)	(46)	(104)	(450)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of sample student

Table 9. Distribution of dropouts by sex, their present schooling status and parents' education.

| Parents' literacy	Present schooling status of the NFPE dropouts					
	Schooling			Not schooling		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Both literate	100.0	80.0	86.7	0.0	20.0	13.3
Both illiterate	58.8	53.8	54.6	41.2	46.2	45.4
Father literate but mother illiterate	70.6	52.6	61.1	29.4	47.4	38.9
Mother literate but father illiterate	100.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	100.0	50.0
Total	70.0	55.5	59.3	30.0	44.5	40.7
(Total numbers)	(28)	(61)	(89)	(12)	(49)	(61)

Table 10. Distribution of dropouts by sex, present schooling status and households' economic status.

Households' economic status	Present schooling status of the NFPE dropouts					
	Schooling			Not schooling		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Always deficit	20.0	60.0	53.3	80.0	40.0	46.7
Sometime deficit	76.5	53.2	59.4	23.5	46.8	40.6
Equal	70.0	54.5	59.4	30.0	45.5	40.6
Surplus	87.5	56.3	66.7	12.5	43.7	33.3
Total	70.0	55.5	59.3	30.0	44.5	40.7
(Total nos)	(28)	(61)	(89)	(12)	(49)	(61)

Table: Distribution of learners by gender and pre- NFPE enrolement status

Enrollment status	Dropout		Replaced		Regular	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Never enrolled	62.5	88.1	78.2	81.2	80.4	90.3
Enrolled but not passed any class	2.5	2.7	1.7	4.4	4.4	2.9
Class I	7.5	2.7	6.7	4.4	4.4	2.9
Class II	22.5	4.5	11.7	6.7	11.0	2.9
Class III	5.0	1.0	1.7	2.2	–	1.0
Class IV	–	1.0	–	1.1	–	–
Total	100.0 (40)	100.0 (110)	100.0 (60)	100.0 (90)	100.0 (46)	100.0 (104)

Figure Annex-1
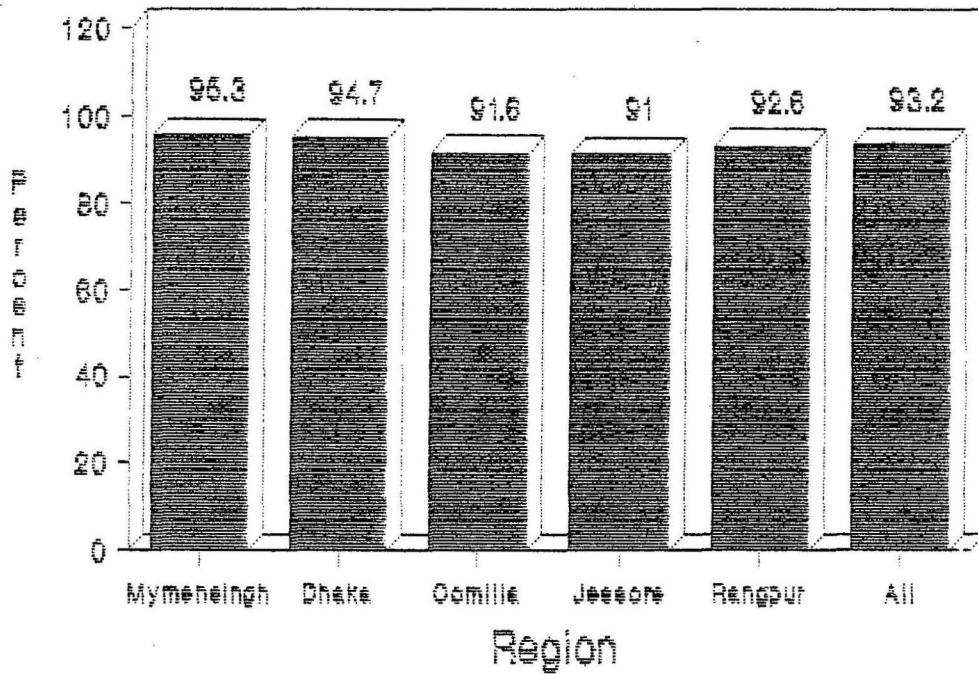## Percentage of Dropout and Replaced Learners by Region
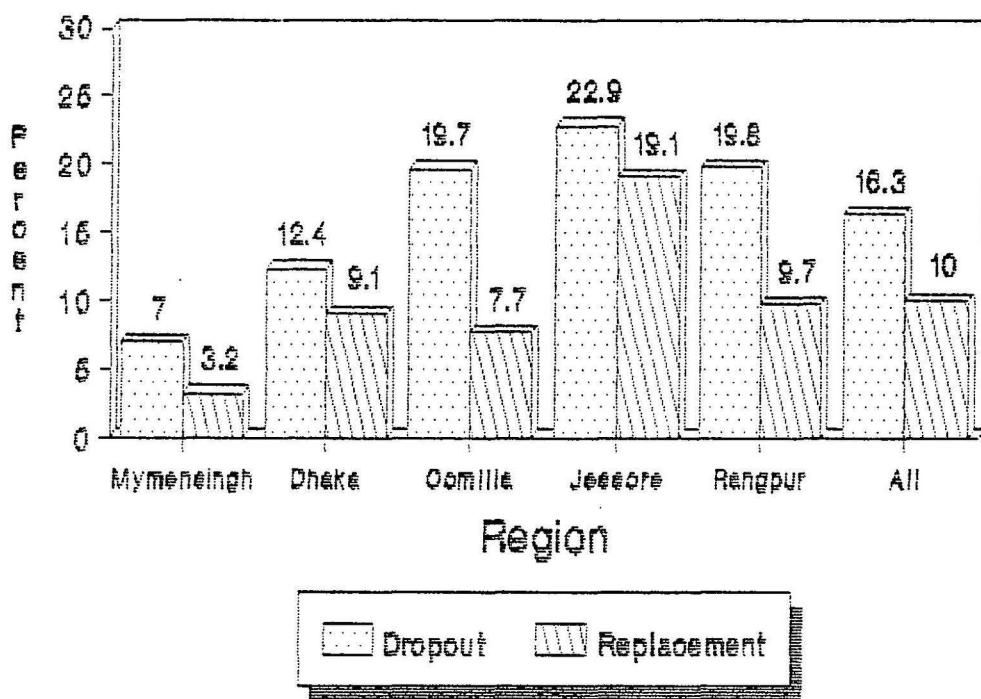
Percent of total enrollment

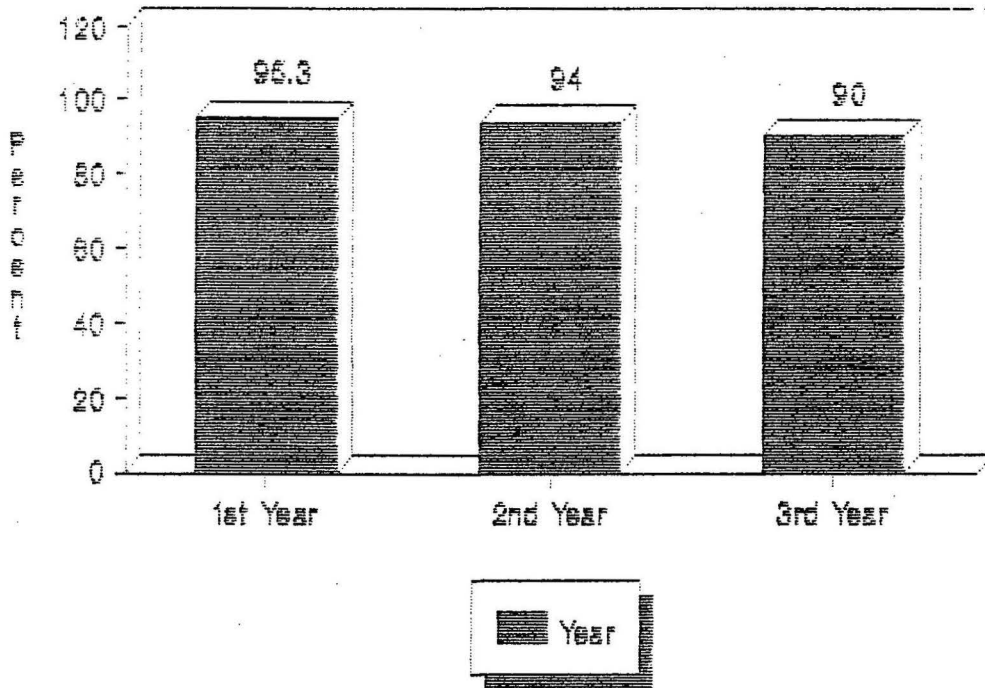# Figure Annex-2
Percentage of Regular Learners
by Region
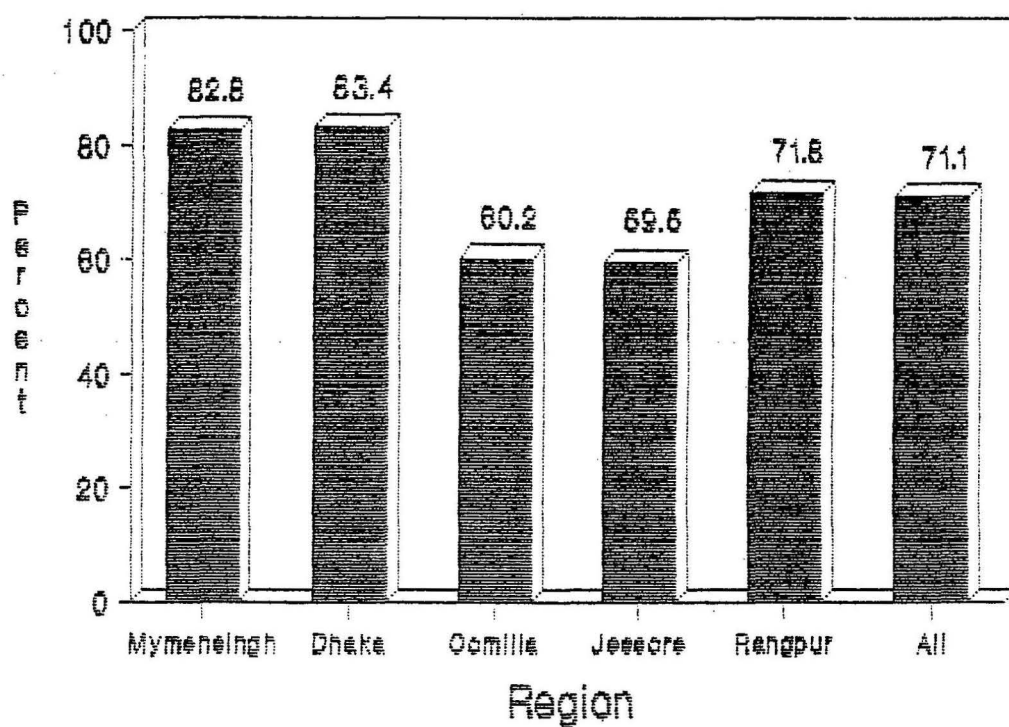
Note : Percent of primary enrollment

151

Figure Annex-3
Percentage of Learners Attending
in the NFPE School by Region

Note : Percent of total class held
in the course

Figure Annex-4
Percentage of learners Attending
in the NFPE School by Year

Note : Percent of total enrollment

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154