CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION
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Every citizen of the country should be able to participate in basic education and complete at least elementary education i.e. eight years of schooling. One of the most important goals in the education sector in India has been to universalize elementary education, and thus, it was expected that elementary education should be compulsorily provided to all children free of cost till they attain the age of 14 years. Constitutional directive and international commitments to achieve the goal of UEE mandated the Government of India and State governments to make provisions for all children of the country to have access to elementary education.

Whether it is the number of schools, number of teachers or number of children enrolled in the primary classes, the increment has been tremendous in India. The number of schools imparting primary education has increased almost by four times, the number of teachers has also increased by more than five times and enrolment in primary classes has gone up to almost seven times during 1950-51 to 2013-14. As far as participation of children in primary education is concerned, the number of children enrolled has increased by 7 times during 70 years after independence. However, this shows that the average annual growth rate of enrolment was 3.52 percent. But, it is worth mentioning that the growth of girls’ enrolment has been much higher as compared with the boys’ enrolment. As against the average annual growth rate of 2.97 percent for
boys, the girls' enrolment has increased with the average annual growth rate of 4.47 percent. At the primary level, the number of teachers has increased from 5.38 lakhs in 1950-51 to 26.84 lakhs in 2013-14. It shows that teachers have increased by more than fivefold and the average annual growth rate of teachers has been 2.64 percent during this period.

In India, during the half a century period after independence, literacy has increased to about three and a half time. However, the increase in male literacy accounts to less than three times while for females, it has increased by about six times. It may be noted that as a result of faster growth in female literacy rate, gender disparities have declined substantially during last 70 years. It may be noted that generally the source of spreading literacy is the increasing participation in basic education, and it is therefore clear that low literacy rate shows that the participation in basic education is also low. One of the reasons for low participation in basic education may be low access which means enough basic educational facilities were not available.

All kinds of disparities prevailing in the country have been a common feature in the Indian education system also and gender disparities are no exception to it. Gender disparities can be seen in terms participation of girls in education as against the participation of boys. In 1950-51, the percentage of girls in enrolment at the primary level was only about 34 percent of the total which has increased to about 48 percent in 2013-14 and it shows that gender disparities in primary enrolment are very low and equity has more or less been achieved. Further, the number of girls per 100 boys at the primary level has increased from 41 in 1950-51 to 103 in 2013-14 which not only
shows impressive progress in terms of girls’ enrolment, but also the fact that
the rate of enrolment of girls has overshot that of boys at the primary level.
In the case of students belonging to the SC community too, gender disparity
index has come down from 0.62 to 1.01 between 1986-87 and 2013-14.
This suggests that the among the SC community too, the number of girls
outnumber boys at the primary level at the end of 2013-14. Among the ST
students, while the parity index has improved from 0.61 to 0.98 in the same
period, still it lies below that of the unity level.

The dropout figures at primary level i.e., between grades I-V show
that good progress has been achieved in reducing the rate. The overall
dropout rate at the primary level was as high as 65 percent in 1960-61
which virtually means that out of every 100 children taking admission in
grade I, only 35 children were reaching grade V. However, in 2013-14, the
dropout rate has declined to the level of 19.8 percent in primary classes,
which means that out of 100 children enrolled in grade I, as many 80
children are reaching grade V. Thus, the retention rate at primary level has
increased from 35 percent to 80 percent during the period 1960-61 to 2013-
14.

There are differences in the rate of enrolment at the primary level
between Tamil Nadu and India. The percentage of girls’ primary level
enrolment in Tamil Nadu stands at 49.7 percent for all categories of
students vis-a-vis 48.1 percent in the case of all-India, in 2013-14. This
indicates that girls’ enrolment at the primary level falls short of boys’
enrolment, though only by one percentage point, while it is higher than the
national average. At the upper primary level, the proportion of girls’ enrolment falls, albeit only marginally to 49.6 percent in Tamil Nadu, as against 47.9 percent in case of all-India. In the case of SC and ST students, girls’ enrolment at the primary level is considerably better than that of all categories’ students, though it declines as the level of education progresses.

As far as the rate of dropout is concerned, the available data indicates that there is no dropout in Tamil Nadu especially upto the upper primary level, while at the secondary level, among all categories, boys report 41 percent dropout, which is 35 percent among girls, as against the national average of 48.6 percent and 52.2 percent among boys and girls respectively. And, dropout is much higher in the case of the ST students both in Tamil Nadu and all-India. In the former, ST boys’ dropout rate is 68.4 percent and 64.4 percent for girls and 64.4 percent and 67.6 percent respectively in the latter. Thus, dropout rate at the secondary level is quite higher especially among the vulnerable groups both in Tamil Nadu and at the national level.

Tiruvallur district boasts of higher level of literacy compared to the State average as per the 2011 Census data. The gender-wise enrolment in Tiruvallur district indicates that the proportion of girls’ enrolment has been more than 50 percent mark at the primary level throughout in the last 12 years, i.e., from 2002-03 to 2013-14, with a mean percentage of 50.08 percent. However, the mean share has declined to 49.43 percent for the girls at the upper primary level, as it has declined from 49.5 percent to 49
percent between 2002-03 and 2013-14 and at the higher secondary level, the mean percentage has further fallen to 46.53 percent for the 12 year period. Community-wise, the share of SC and ST students at the primary level has declined from 38.1 percent in 2002-03 to 30.3 percent in 2013-14 and at the upper primary level too, it has come down from 36.1 percent to 30.3 percent in the same period. This underscores the fact that the rise in the enrolment of non-SC and ST students has outcompeted that of the SC and ST students in the given period in this district.

India is on the cusp of exploding into a higher growth trajectory as it enjoys the highest proportion of youth population in the world currently, which is expected to contribute to the country’s output growth. However, mere number of persons or workers cannot fuel economic growth, since they need to be transformed into productive human capital, which is essentially achieved by the provision of education. In India, the efforts of the Government through its programmes like SSA, level of education has gone up over the years after Independence with more number of schools, teachers and students’ enrolment. The performance of Tamil Nadu is certainly better than the national average in terms of growth in enrolment and also in lesser dropout rate. There has been tremendous increase in the enrolment of girls and also other marginalised sections like the SC and ST students over the years. The proportion of girls in the total enrolment has gone up and also the gender parity index, in which again Tamil Nadu has fared better than that of the national average. However, data indicate that the rate of dropout increases at higher levels of education, not only all over
the country, but also in Tamil Nadu and also among different social groups. Also, the dropout rate is typically higher among the among SC and ST communities.

Equal opportunities need to be given to all concerned in order to bring them into the mainstream of economic and social development and also to achieve inclusive growth in the country. ‘Provision of education to all’ is the basic necessity in this endeavour along with quality of education. The declining share of enrolment and more dropouts particularly among the marginalised groups will only accentuate the degree of social and economic inequality among the population. In this background, it is quite necessary to understand the factors that influence the differing levels of enrolment and also dropout among different segments of the population, as it will throw more light in understanding the nature of the problem with the help of primary data.

It is important for any Government not only to make its citizens literate, but also to provide with better education, which will help them in climbing the social and economic ladder up. In due course of time, this also culminates in reducing the degree of inequalities among people, by improving the conditions of women, SCs and STs and also the religious minorities. Even though, this is the avowed goal of the Government, this has not happened with the data underscoring the discrepancies in the level of enrolment and also dropout among the social groups. As the economy has moved more towards the market in the last two and half decades, it has become even more important to be more affirmative in reducing the level of
inequalities in the society, as only that will help everyone to enjoy the fruits of faster economic growth. Hence, the present study seeks to examine the determinants of enrolment and also dropout among different segments of the population in order to understand the problems faced by them in attaining education and also the degree of inclusive development.

Review of the studies which have dealt with the factors influencing enrolment and dropout of students indicates that many attempts have been made to probe the same over the years. Efforts have been made to unravel the same in many countries including India. Studies have shown that economic factors, household factors, school related factors, individual factors and others all play a crucial role in influencing enrolment or dropout of students. However, there is no uniformity or similarity in the views of the scholars, since most of the factors are region-specific and / or time specific. Hence, there is a necessity to investigate the factors that affect enrolment and dropout among the households, especially in Tamil Nadu, which is attempted in this study. In this background, the objectives of the present study are: to understand the nature and growth in enrolment and dropout at the all-India level; to trace the enrolment pattern and trend in Tamil Nadu and also in Tiruvallur district during the study period; to examine the characteristics of the sample households in the study area; to analyse the nature of enrolment among the children in the sample households in the study area; to study the level of dropout among the children in the sample households in the study area; and to find out the determinants of both
enrolment and dropout among the children in the sample households in the study area.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Males consist of around two-thirds of the total sample, which is marginally higher in Tiruvallur and thus, the proportion of females is higher in Tiruttani taluk.

The level of education among the respondents is in general low, since more than 17 per cent are illiterate, which is higher in Tiruttani taluk than in the case of Tiruvallur taluk, while, the proportion of those who have degree or higher level of qualification is higher in the latter than that of the former.

The age level-wise educational levels of the respondents indicate that the level of illiteracy is higher among those who are above 45 years (73.7 per cent) than in the case of those who are less than 45 years (26.3 per cent), while the proportion of those who have degree level or above qualification is higher among the latter (52.2 per cent) than that of the former (47.8 per cent).

The vulnerable sections (MBC and SC and ST communities) are more rural based compared to others in the study area.

The proportion of respondents who live in nuclear families is higher in both areas, while the percentage of respondents who live in joint families is higher in Tiruttani taluk than that of Tiruvallur taluk, while the share of those who live in nuclear families is higher among the latter than that of the former.
The share of those who reside in thatched houses and tiled houses is higher in Tiruttani taluk than in Tiruvallur taluk, while the percentage of those who live in single storey and multi-storied houses is higher in the latter than that of the former. Thus, the living conditions of those who reside in Tiruvallur taluk are better than that of Tiruttani taluk.

The area-wise family size of the sample respondents suggests that among those who belong to Tiruvallur taluk, 59.6 per cent have upto four member families, which is 50.9 per cent among the respondents who belong to Tiruttani taluk, and 40.4 per cent of the former have five or more members in their families, which is 49.1 per cent in the case of the latter. Hence, the family size of the respondents who are located in Tiruttani taluk is higher than that of those who are located in Tiruvallur taluk.

The area-wise type of employment of the respondents indicates that the share of those who are engaged in the non-agricultural sector is higher in the urban based Tiruvallur taluk, while the proportion of those who are employed in the agricultural sector and as unskilled workers is higher in the rural based Tiruttani taluk. This suggests that the respondents who are located in Tiruvallur taluk are better employed than those who belong to Tiruttani taluk.

The area-wise monthly income of the sample respondents indicates that there is considerable difference in the income levels of the respondents in the study area. For instance, among those who reside in Tiruvallur taluk, 49.4 per cent come under the monthly income slab of upto Rs. 25000, which is 65.3 per cent in the case of Tiruttani taluk and thus, 50.6 per cent
of the former earn more than Rs. 25000 per month, which is only 34.7 per cent in the case of those who are located in Tiruttani taluk. This suggests that the earning capacity of those who are residing in Tiruttani taluk is less than that of those who are residing in Tiruvallur taluk, which is the manifestation of their differing levels of education and types of employment.

Among the sample respondents, more than 55 per cent of them do not own any land, which is marginally higher in the urban based Tiruvallur taluk than in the case of Tiruttani taluk. However, the extent of land possession is greater among those who reside in the former than that of the latter, since 19.4 per cent of them hold more than 2.5 acres, which is 14.5 per cent in Tiruttani taluk. Also, extent of land holding is not quite high among the sample respondents per se.

The level of education of mothers is quite low; since around one-fifth of them are illiterate and only 22 per cent has degree or higher level of qualification. And, the level of education of mothers belonging to Tiruvallur is higher than that of those who reside in Tiruttani taluk.

The area-wise asset possession among the respondents indicates that only around 22 per cent of the total respondents own more than Rs. 5 lakhs worth of assets, which is 26 per cent in Tiruvallur, but 17.1 per cent in the case of Tiruttani.

In the case of the respondents who are located in Tiruvallur taluk, 32.7 per cent spend up to Rs. 3000 per month, which is 41 per cent in the case of those who belong to Tiruttani taluk, while 67.3 per cent of the former spend more than Rs. 3000, which is 59 per cent in the latter. Thus, the
spending capacity of the respondents who belong to Tiruvallur taluk is considerably higher than that of those who belong to Tiruttani taluk.

As in the case of food expenditure, the spending capacity of the respondents who belong to Tiruvallur taluk is higher in the case of non-food expenditure as well. For instance, 28.7 per cent of the respondents who belong to Tiruvallur taluk spend upto Rs. 3000 per month, which is 38.3 per cent among those who are located in Tiruttani taluk, while 71.3 per cent of the former spend more than Rs. 3000, which is 61.7 per cent in the case of the latter.

Gender-wise, overall, 41.2 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of upto 45 years, which is 37.3 per cent among males and 48.4 per cent in the case of females, which suggests that female respondents are relatively young compared to male respondents.

The level of education of the females is especially low in the study area.

The gender-wise religion of the sample respondents indicates that among males, 64.4 per cent are Hindus, which is 56.2 per cent among females, while the proportion of Muslims is higher among the latter than that of the former.

The share of those who belong to joint family type is higher among the female headed households than in the case of male headed households, while the percentage of those who live in nuclear type of family is higher among the latter than that of the former.

The gender-wise type of house of the respondents suggests that the
living conditions of the female headed households are worse than that of their male counterparts, since a greater share of the former reside in thatched and tiled houses compared to that of the latter.

The gender-wise family size of the respondents suggests that among the male headed households, 58.6 per cent have upto four members, which is 49 per cent in the case of the female headed households, while 41.4 per cent of the former and 51 per cent of the latter have more than four members. Hence, the female headed households have more members in their families due to their joint type of family living.

On the basis of gender, 21.2 per cent of the male respondents are engaged in the agricultural sector, which is 39.2 per cent among the females; the share of those who are employed as unskilled workers is 26.8 per cent among the latter, which is only 17.5 per cent in the case of the former. This suggests that the nature of employment is quite worse among the female respondents compared to that of the male respondents, which is due to the differences in their levels of education.

Gender-wise, landlessness is quite higher among the female headed households and even among those who own land, extent of land holding is considerably low, since only 11.8 per cent possess more than one hectare, which is 18.8 per cent in the case of the male headed households.

Gender-wise, 48 per cent of the male respondents earn upto Rs. 25000, which is 75.1 per cent among the females, and thus, 52 per cent of the former and 24.9 per cent of the latter earn more than Rs. 25000. Thus, the earning capacity of the female headed households is quite less
compared to that of the male headed households.

The community-wise distribution of the educational levels of the sample respondents indicates that the proportion of illiteracy is the highest among the SC and ST respondents (36.1 per cent), which is 21 per cent among the MBC respondents and 8.1 per cent in the case of the BC respondents, while no one is illiterate among the OC respondents.

The share of those who dwell in thatched houses is the highest among the SC and ST respondents, followed by that of MBC, BC and OC respondents with nil; whereas the proportion of those who live in multi-storied houses is higher among the OC and BC respondents than in the case of MBC and SC and ST respondents respectively.

In the case of OC respondents, 84.4 per cent earn more than Rs. 25000 per month, which is 45.6 per cent, 29 per cent and 25 per cent among the BC, MBC and SC and ST communities respectively. Thus, the low earning capacity of the MBC and SC and ST communities vis-a-vis the OC and BC communities is the outcome of their differing levels of education and type of employment.

Community-wise, landlessness is the highest among the SC and ST respondents and similarly, land owning too is less among the vulnerable segments like MBC and SC and ST respondents compared to that OC and BC respondents.

Community-wise, the level of education of mothers is also less among those who belong to the MBC and SC and ST respondents than in the case of OC and BC respondents.
Chap 6

There is no enrolment in around 23 per cent of the total households, which implies the presence of dropout and it is 27.5 per cent in the rural based Tiruttani taluk and 18.4 per cent in Tiruvallur taluk. Similarly, the extent of enrolment too is less in the former than that of the former.

The gender-wise extent of enrolment in the sample households suggests that the extent of no enrolment is less in the male headed households compared to that of their female counterparts, while the level of enrolment is quite higher among the former than in the case of the latter.

Among the selected households, absence of enrolment is the highest in the case of the SC and ST communities, followed by that of MBC community, since most of them are engaged as landless agricultural labourers or unskilled workers with very low level of income; also, the extent of enrolment is also less among these vulnerable groups compared to that of others in the study area.

Parents expect the availability of good discipline, quality teaching staff and safety and security of girl students are the three top reasons for enrolment of children in the schools. Thus, they attach greater importance to the safety and security of the girl students in the schools before enrolling their children and also the availability of proper class room facilities with good maintenance. Thus, the basic infrastructural facilities are the most important reasons for enrolling children in schools. Moreover, the differences in the ranks given by the respondents are also statistically significant.
Family income is the most important reason among the economic health related reasons, since in the poor households, enrolment of children becomes a casualty.

Enrolment of children is chiefly influenced by the attitude of the parents and the importance they pay their children’s education are the two important reasons, which underscore the fact that parents take a greater responsibility in their children’s enrolment. In this case also, the differences in the ranks are statistically significant, as suggested by the chi-square value.

Among the three, family related reasons are the most dominant in explaining the differences in the level of enrolment among the households, as suggested by the value of Chi-square, followed by the economic and school related reasons. Hence, it indicates that family is the most important factor in determining the enrolment of children in the sample households.

Factor analysis clearly suggests that the eight components, viz., parent pay more importance to children’s education, good attitude of parents, safety and security of girls, family income, number of children, good academic performance, children’s health, children pay more importance to education play a crucial role in determining the extent of enrolment of children in the sample households.

The most important factors that determine enrolment of boys are family income, parents paying more importance to education, their good attitude and the good academic performance of the children. Hence, family
and economic related factors play a more crucial role in the enrolment of boys.

In the case of girls’ enrolment, the most important factors are parents pay more importance to children’s education, family income, safety and security of girls and number of children, which has an inverse relationship. Thus, in the case of girls, enrolment too, family and economic and family related factors are more dominant than the school related factors.

Out of the total households, around 23 per cent report dropout, which is 18.4 per cent in the urban based Tiruvallur taluk, but, 27.5 per cent in the case of the rural based Tiruttani taluk.

The gender of the respondent-wise extent of dropout suggests that the problem is more acute among the female headed households, since around 31 per cent report dropout, which is only around 19 per cent in the case of the male headed households.

The extent of dropout is the highest among the households which have illiterate fathers (63.5 per cent), and that declines continuously as the level of education of fathers goes up; and on the contrary, the proportion of households that do not have dropout increases with the level of fathers’ education. This underlines the role played by the educational levels of fathers in influencing the extent of dropout in the study area.

Mother’s education plays a greater role in determining the extent of dropout in the households, since with illiterate mothers, the percentage of dropout is 76 per cent, which is only 63.5 per cent with illiterate fathers, and
with higher education, more mothers motivate their children to enrol compared to fathers.

The number of dropped out children is higher in the rural bound Tiruttani taluk than in the case of the urban based Tiruvallur taluk, since 45.9 per cent of the former have more than one dropout child in its households, which is only 36.6 per cent in the case of the latter; moreover, in none of the household in Tiruvallur, there is more than two dropouts.

Among the households that have two dropped out children, none belong to the BC community, which is 40 per cent and 60 per cent among the MBC and SC and ST communities respectively, while the proportion of households with three dropped out children is 38.5 per cent and 61.5 per cent among the MBC and SC and ST communities. Hence, the number of dropped out children is higher among the MBC and SC and ST communities than in the case of the BC community.

The area-wise analysis of the gender of the dropout indicates that the share of girls is higher with 52.9 per cent, which is 54.1 per cent in the rural based Tiruttani taluk *vis-a-vis* 51.2 per cent in the case of Tiruvallur taluk. The share of boys’ dropout is also higher in Tiruttani, while overall, the proportion of girls’ dropout is much higher in both taluks.

The proportion of dropout of boys is higher among the households that have five members, while the percentage of girls’ dropout is higher even among the households that have only three to four members and the dropout of both boys and girls is higher in the case of the households that have more than six members in their families. Thus, girls’ education suffers
even in the families with less number of members, which does not happen in the case of boys.

The dropout of both boys and girls has taken place in those households in which there are three dropouts, while in the case of females, one fifth of them report even two dropouts. This underscores the fact that girls' education is the first casualty in the households in which dropout takes place.

The gender-wise stage of dropout indicates that among those who have dropped out even before completing the primary level, all of them are girls, while all boys have completed up to the middle school level. This suggests that not only there is greater female dropout, but they get dropped out even before the completion of primary or middle school level, which never happens in the case of boys.

The severity of dropout is quite acute among the low income households, since among the 23 households that report dropout before completing the middle school, all of them belong to the income level of less than Rs. 25000, while there is no dropout in the case of those who earn more than Rs. 50000 per month.

The opinions of the respondents indicates that poverty at the household level, followed by the number of children and death of the father are the most important economic and health related reasons for dropout. The Friedman test also suggests that the differences in the ranks assigned by the respondents are statistically significant.

The family related reasons for dropout suggest that in most of the
cases, dropout occurs due to the negligence and the indifferent attitudes of the parents rather than that of the children. When parents are more focussed and motivate their children to continue their education and when both parents live together, children are able to continue their education.

The top three reasons from the family side that lead to dropout among children are teachers’ absenteeism, lack of safety and security to girls in the school and distance to school.

The economic and health related reasons are the most dominant in influencing the level of dropout in the sample households, which is followed by family and school related reasons. Hence, the economic and the health conditions of the parents and children play a crucial role reducing the level of dropout.

Factor analysis suggests that the eleven components, viz., poverty, more number of children, father’s death, parents separated, parents’ health, lack of parents’ motivation, lack of safety and security to girls in schools, distance to school, mother’s death, children’s health and teachers’ absenteeism are quite pivotal in determining the level of dropout of children in the sample households.

In the case of boys’ dropout, the prominent factors are the rate of poverty, father’s death, parents’ separated, lack of parents’ motivation and children’s health among the sample households. Thus, the model as a whole explains around 65 per cent of the changes in the estimated dependent variable.

The important factors that determine girl’s dropout are more number
of children, mother’s death, and distance to school, lack of safety and security and parents being separated. Hence, in the case of girls’s dropout also, economic and family related factors are more dominant.

Testing of hypotheses underscores the fact that there is significant variation in the extent of enrolment among the sample households, since it is higher in the urban based Tiruvallur taluk than in the case of the rural based Tiruttani taluk.

There is significant association between the level of dropout and their area. For instance, the extent of dropout is quite higher in the rural based Tiruttani taluk than in the case of the urban based Tiruvallur taluk.

There is significant relationship between father’s level of education, the monthly income and the level of enrolment. The positive sign of the z-statistic indicates that level of enrolment is higher among those who are literate more and those who earn more compared to the reference groups in the study area.

There is significant relationship between educational levels and monthly income with that of dropout among the sample households. The negative sign for the test statistics suggests the fact that the extent of dropout is higher among the illiterate and less literate households and those who earn less compared to the reference groups.

**SUGGESTIONS**

The following suggestions are made on the basis of the information gathered from the respondents during field survey and also the analysis:
The government needs to set up a school in every village and/or upgrade the levels of the existing schools, since even in the urban areas, there is a tendency among the authorities to reduce the number of schools in the guise of poor enrolment. Such schools are either merged with other school or simply closed down. This directly results in increasing the distance travelled to schools by the students.

Parents attach more importance to the safety and security of their daughters and this directly influences the girls’ enrolment and also dropout. Hence, checks and balances should be created not only in the Government schools, but also in the private management schools to improve the safety of girl students.

Even though the Government has been providing many facilities in order to encourage and maintain attendance of students, still there is a need to reduce the distance travelled by the students, which is particularly true in the case of girls. Apart from providing bicycles, this will help girls to a greater extent;

The existing facilities in the government schools need to be enhanced enormously in order to retain the students, particularly the female students. This includes the provision of proper toilet facilities, water facilities, library and laboratory facilities. Moreover, steps should also be taken to maintain these facilities around the year.
 Dropout take place even at the primary and elementary levels among some segments, though the macro level data do not reveal it. Thus, the Government should find out the vulnerable groups at the grass root level, where the problem of dropout is quite severe and should take appropriate measures, which especially involves improving the earning capacity of the parents;

 Teacher absenteeism is a menace particularly in the rural Government schools and this also contributes to poor enrolment as well as dropout. Government can take steps to ensure better participation and presence of the staff members.

 The gender phenomenon of dropout should be given more attention in order to increase the literacy level of the female children. This is particularly warranted since incidents of mistreating girls in schools do take place, which leads to dropout.

 CONCLUSION

 The nature, pattern, extent and the factors of enrolment and dropout among the sample households in Tiruvallur district are examined in this study. The level of enrolment is certainly more than that of dropout; however, the level of enrolment is higher among the urban based, male headed, advanced social groups and high income households compared to the reference groups. However, the reverse is observed in the case of dropout. Also, the pattern of dropout indicates that more girls are dropped out than boys and the former are forced to dropout from schools earlier compared to boys. It is also noticed that the educational level of mothers
play a greater role in determining the rate of dropout than that of father’s education.

This study brings out the fact that family related factors play a more important role in determining the rate of enrolment, while economic factors are more dominant in the case of dropout. In the case of boys’ enrolment, the most important factors are family income, parents paying more importance to education, their good attitude and the good academic performance of the children. On the other hand, among girls, their enrolment is more determined by parents pay more importance to children’s education, family income, safety and security of girls and number of children, which has an inverse relationship. As far as boys’ dropout is concerned, level of poverty, father’s death, parents being separated, lack of parents’ motivation and children’s health play a crucial role. Among girls, more number of children, mother’s death, and distance to school, lack of safety and security and parents being separated play a more important role. While programmes and schemes like SSA and others have contributed in reducing dropouts, still the problem exists among some segments. Thus, the Government, which is the most important stakeholder in the provision of education as a public good, should ensure that both boys and girls get equal opportunities and this takes place in both the rural and urban areas. Since, the economy is going to be more knowledge driven, providing proper education to all alone will help reduce the lingering inequalities in the society.