CHAPTER V

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Based on the major findings of the study, the following suggestions are made. This chapter is organised into four parts that outline the suggestions towards various bodies. The first section provides suggestions to the government to address the problems of dropout children. The second section provides suggestions to school administrations, the third section provides suggestions to the civil society, and the last section provides suggestions to the parents. These suggestions will help agencies to support children’s education and to address the problem of school dropout.

5.1 The Government

i. **Anti-child marriage efforts**: One of the significant findings of the study is that prevalence of early marriage hinders the girl child’s education. The government has already established structures to address the child marriage issue under the leadership of District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO), but the effectiveness of the functioning of the system needs to be reviewed; the gaps need to be identified and addressed, and the mechanisms have to be strengthened.

ii. **Transportation facilities**: The high schools are located at distant places, meaning that the children have to travel a long distance to access high schools. Buses are not available according to the school timings. Improving the public transport facilities and increasing availability of bus according to the school timings can help to reduce the transportation issue. Secondly, the state government is providing bicycles to the girl
students from higher secondary; if they provide it to high school girls, the problem of dropout at high school can be reduced a lot.

iii. **Improving livelihood option:** Migration is another major problem identified in the study area. From the analysis, it was clear that around half of the respondent’s parents were landless labourers; because of monsoon failure and poor irrigation facilities many families are migrating outside looking for job opportunities. So, the district administration should take appropriate measures to ensure minimum land ownership for all as well as better water irrigation facilities. Secondly, The MNREGA was mainly implemented to provide rural employment and to curtail outmigration; however, failure in properly implementing the programme is another reason for the high levels of migration in the study area. Thirdly, in both the interviewed districts, industrialisation was less influential; by improving industrialisation in the districts, local employment opportunities could be enhanced.

iv. **Upgrading standard:** Many of the schools in the villages are providing only a primary level education. Parents are scared to send their young children over long distances to acquire upper primary education. So, by upgrading the primary schools to upper primary at the village level, and the middle schools to high school within a reach of 2-3kms, will certainly help to reduce the dropout of girl children at the high school.

v. **Boarding option for girls:** Government should open up good quality exclusive boarding schools for girls. The girl children who are living in hamlets in interior places and do not have accessibility to the main roads and bus facilities due to their geographical location will find this helpful.

vi. **Imparting skill training:** The children in rural areas lack soft skills and domain-specific skills. So, they have very low self-confidence and self-esteem. Kerala has
introduced Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) at the higher secondary and graduation levels. It provides both soft and domain-specific skills to improve the self-confidence of the students and make them employable. A similar kind of programme can be implemented in Tamil Nadu to impart skill among the youths.

vii. **Caring facilities for children:** The parents who migrate outside their village leave their children under the care of some relatives or elders, and sometimes even under the protection of elder sibling in the family. In such cases, the children who are shouldering the burden of the household chores are at a higher risk of dropout. The government should strengthen the existing Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), so that the elder siblings can continue their education without much problem.

viii. **Transit hostel facility:** When the parents migrate, the older children are left on their own without proper supervision and become highly vulnerable to engaging in socially evil activities such as drug abuse, love affairs, engaging with scandalous/disreputable peers, etc. The existing hostels are full-time hostels, but some of the parents migrate seasonally, and the students may need hostel only for a specific period of the year. They do not want to put their children in a regular hostel as they would have to stay away from the children even when they are at their village. Hence, the government can open transit hostels to address this issue.

ix. **Improving Teacher’s quality:** Majority of the students said that the teaching quality is poor. A few respondents, during informal talks, mentioned that, due to poor teaching quality in the primary schools, they found it difficult to cope with upper primary and secondary levels. In order to improve the performance of the children, it is important to improve the quality of teaching. So, on one side, the government should take measures to improve the quality of teacher training institutions; they should adopt more recent technology and educate teachers on how to use different
methods in the classroom to make teaching more interactive and to improve the quality of education.

x. **Infrastructural development:** Most of the schools do not have proper infrastructure. Basic infrastructure facilities are very important in providing quality education. One of the commonly reported issue, as well as expectation, from the parents during FGD was regarding working toilets for children. Going out of school for nature calls can become a safety issue for children. Hence, the government should allocate required resources for the development of infrastructure in the school. All the schools should have usable toilet and exclusive toilets for girl children.

xi. **Improving the quality of essentials given free of cost:** Except for school books and notebooks, all the other provided things, such as bags, uniforms, and footwear, were reported as not being of good quality. The aim of the freebies is to reduce the incidental costs of schooling, and to enable the children from disadvantaged sections to continue schooling. It was revealed by both parents and respondents that, due to low quality, the materials didn’t last for long; so, they either had to buy new ones or use damaged ones. Hence, the government should take appropriate action to ensure good quality of materials provided.

xii. **Mid day meals:** Overall, the demand for mid-day meals seems to be very less, and even among those who ate the food, the likingness expressed was very marginal (17%). During the FGD with parents, the concerns regarding mid-day meals were clearly noticeable. The SC parents in particular expressed complaints such as food not being enough, eggs not being provided properly etc. This could be either due to a high dependency on mid-day meals among the SC children or due to unequal distribution. Mid-day meal was one area in which social and community issues invariably surfaced (Ramachandran and Naorem, 2012). Without improving the quality and equitable
distribution, the purpose of giving mid-day meals cannot be achieved. Hence, the government has to take appropriate measures to ensure the quality as well as equity.

5.2 School administration

i. **Conducting regular SMC meeting:** As per RTE Act, 2005, Parent Teacher Associations have been restructured and renamed School Management Committees. Schools should take care to see that the SMC functions properly and should organise SMC meetings regularly. This will help the teachers to update the progress of the students, and to provide concrete suggestions to help improve on their weak areas. The parents will get to know more about the performance of their children and how to guide them further, so that they can produce adequate education output.

ii. **Teacher’s responsibility:** One of the key concerns of parents is regarding teachers’ discipline in maintaining timings at school. Many parents complained that the teachers were coming late and leaving early. In between, the children were given breaks and the children’s return to class on time was not ensured or checked appropriately by the teacher. It has raised concern not only regarding education quality but also regarding safety. Secondly, the teachers’ absenteeism is a major concern in the schools. Hence, the parents feel that there is no actual learning happening at school, which is one of the key factors for perceived less importance for schooling. So, the school administrations should take appropriate measures to ensure that teachers perform their duty. The block and district level education officers, should make timely visits to ensure teachers’ regularity and performance.

iii. **Teacher’s evaluation:** Normally, our education evaluation system is student-centred. The current system puts the focus on children in evaluating the learning. But it should be other way around; it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that every single
child in the class is getting properly educated. To quote an example, the school run by Reaching the Unreached (RTU), an NGO, in the Dindigul district, exclusively for underprivileged children, has a system of teacher evaluation. When the children are not able to answer the question or perform better, it is considered as a lack on the part of the teacher who didn’t impart appropriate knowledge to the child. School administrations should do a similar sort of teacher auditing and evaluation; this will improve the responsibility of the teachers and also the learning of the children. It is the responsibility of the teacher to enable appropriate learning achievements by every child at each level.

iv. **Creative pedagogy:** Our current system is modelled on lectures in which the student is a passive learner and is not involved actively in the process of teaching and learning. Further, the model followed in school is a rote learning model. Innovative methods need to be used to teach the students. A happy learning method will improve the student interest in education as well as in schooling. For example, storytelling could be used as a method of teaching, or more visual illustrations could be deployed to attract the students. School administrations should evolve a child-friendly teaching-learning practice. It should promote a child centred learning approach with measurable outcomes.

v. **Extracurricular activities:** Our education system gives more focus to academic outcomes, and extracurricular activities are not treated as equally important. But the involvement in extracurricular activities helps the students who have varied talents to showcase. Being appreciated for their talents can indirectly motivate the children towards schooling as well as academic engagement. Further, these activities could be potentially used to create a ‘we feeling’ among the peers and can improve the socialization between various social groups which have differential social status. So,
the school should organise extra-curricular activities so as to help the children to exhibit their talents.

vi. **Child-friendly schools:** School authorities should promote a child-friendly environment. The children should never feel scared, should not be subjected to corporal punishment, and should not face humiliation by teachers or peers in the premises of school. Such a child-friendly environment will create social relatedness among the students and between student and the teacher. It is important that the teacher should have a better awareness about the socio-economic background of the student, so that they can understand the children’s problems and serve them better. Teachers should be more approachable so that the students can freely share their problems and get them sorted out without many difficulties.

vii. **Nurture positive school relationship:** Next to the teacher, peers play an important role in creating a friendly environment in school. Acceptance and equal treatment by the peers will enhance the likingness towards schooling. Another important finding from the study is that children of different social groups show restricted mingling with each other. In such cases, the school can work, by levelling the field, to create harmony among social groups of different statuses. The school should nurture positive social contact between various social groups by initiating common places for having lunch, engaging everyone in curricular, co-curricular activities, and sports activities etc. This will encourage positive peer group relationship irrespective of social background.

viii. **Discrimination-free school:** In many cases, the discrimination practiced by teachers could be unconscious, and further, it is accepted to be a part of societal interrelation existing outside the school. So, it is important to give special training to upper caste teachers to make understand the dynamics and manifestations of discrimination, and
enabling them to be facilitators of inclusiveness in class. An adequate number of teachers from disadvantaged communities should be appointed, as this can create an enabling school environment for the disadvantaged sections of the society. These teachers would not only understand the socio–economic situations of the children, but also could be a positive role model for children to derive motivation from.

ix. **Promote inclusive school model:** The school authorities should promote an inclusive school model where all the children are treated equally irrespective of class, caste, religion, gender, and ethnic background. The school is seen as the ideal place for imparting learning and building the future of the nation; so it should be an inclusive place.

5.3 Civil society

i. **Supportive education:** During FGDs, many parents expressed the need for supportive education. Most of the parents are less educated; moreover, they migrate outside looking for job opportunities. So, the children do not get the required support to clarify their doubts and to perform better in education. So, the civil society should make appropriate measures to provide supportive education especially for the low academic performers.

ii. **Improved social relatedness:** Social relatedness is one of the important factors in increasing children’s academic performances. However, there is very less interaction between and relationships among children from different communities. Mostly, children have close friends from their own communities; this is mainly because of the rigid social system in the villages. The civil society should sensitise the community on the ill effects of unequal treatment and its implications. Social cohesion among children should be improved.
iii. **Child marriage reporting system:** The issue is very sensitive, and is not being reported by the community. It is important to create an effective reporting system to address the issue. Kishori Sakthi Yojana and SABLA programmes implemented through ICDS aim to empower adolescent girls. As part of these programmes, an adolescent committee was formed in each village; these committees can be strengthened and made into vigilant committees for reporting of child marriage. Incentivising or rewarding this committee can improve the reporting of child marriages so as to take timely actions.

iv. **Inclusive school model:** During the field visits, the researcher found some that schools have good practices for encouraging non-discriminative attitudes in the school premises. As a qualitative study, such model schools could be studied to explore the factors which contribute toward the inclusive practices, so that the same can be tested in other schools for replicability. Civil society organisations can undertake this study and create an inclusive school model and promote this model in all the schools.

v. **Healthy interaction approach:** A ‘Healthy Interaction Approach’ for improving the student-teacher relationship and peer relationship is the need of the hour. This will surely improve the academic outcomes of the students, as well as create motivation among the children to perform better. Civil society organisations can conduct regular programmes at school to promote such a healthy interaction approach.

### 5.4 Parents

i. **Sensitisation of Parents:** Lack of parental interest was one of the key reasons for girl child dropout. Overall, attitude change is needed in the society because the girl children do not feel owned by their parents; the parents feel that the girls
belong to someone else’s house, so investing in them will not yield any return. Also, girls are symbolized as carriers of caste through adherence to endogamy. Prevailing cultural norms pose potential threats to the mobility of women which restrict both education and economic opportunities. So, parents should be sensitised, since without changing the parents’ attitude, gender equity cannot be achieved.

ii. **Child marriage and Endogamy:** The parents prefer endogamy. They want to marry their girl children within their caste. They are scared that if they send their girls for higher education, they will fall in love with someone from another caste and marry them. So, they carry out child marriages to preserve the endogamy system. Parents should be sensitised regarding the ill effects of this practice. Creative and innovative visual IEC materials should be developed to educate the people on the ill effects of child marriage. Documentaries on real life stories of children who got affected due to child marriage can be made and used as IEC material. Such real life situations will help the people directly to connect to the situation and realise the seriousness of the issue.

iii. **Improving parents’ participation in school:** First, parents should be educated regarding the importance of education through awareness programmes. Parents play a vital role in motivating children to pursue education. Efforts should be made to enforce the parents to participate in the activities of the school, whereby the child will derive encouragement from parents for their education.

iv. **Addressing Low Academic Competence:** Low academic competence was reported as one of the main reasons of dropping out. This demotivates the parents from sending their children to continue their education. However, parents should try to understand the reasons for the low academic performance of their children.
They should motivate them and also provide required support to enhance their academic outcome. Moreover, the poor academic outcome of the students affects their peer relation and the support received from teachers.

To improve the education attainment of children, it is important to create a holistic model of development. There should be coordination and understanding between the different players involved in the process of education of children: Parents, School, Government, Civil Society and the civil society organisations. So, by building better relationships among the players, the prevailing identified gaps can be bridged; and thus, the educational experience of the children can be enhanced. The education system should focus on the learning experience of the children, which not only improves the academic outcomes but also can help in retention and upward mobility in education.

5.5 **Key Recommendations**

I. **The Government**

  **Transport Facility**

  To improve access to high school and higher secondary schools in the rural areas, enhancing transportation facility is vital. Till upper primary most of the schools are within 3Km distance but to access high school and higher secondary the children have to travel longer distance. One of the common mode of travel used is bus, therefore the govt has given free bus pass to all the school going children. However during data collection lack of govt bus services during morning time was expressed as a one of a key concern of accessibility. Already transportation facility is available, timing of the bus and frequency was the issue. In order to ease access the timing of the bus service
can be altered according to school timing and no of bus service during school time can be increased.

**Transit hostel facility**

From the data it can be seen that in 63% of the respondent’s family both the parents migrated. When the parents migrate, the older children are left on their own without proper supervision and become highly vulnerable to engaging in socially evil activities such as drug abuse, love affairs, engaging with scandalous/disreputable peers, etc. the parents who are seasonally migrating may not want to put their children in the existing full time hostel children as they would have to stay away from the children even when they are at their village. To address this issue the government can identify the areas prone for migration and can open transit hostel. Providing transit hostel facility will be useful.

**Inclusive teaching models**

To address any issue first its presence need to be acknowledged. Ignoring the practice of any social evil cannot deny it presence and prevalence. Caste discrimination is one such issue which is practiced but overlooked. In order to make the schooling a better experience it is important to make the school a place of inclusion and free of discrimination. Therefore inclusive teaching models need to be included in the teacher training curriculum.

**Improving quality of essentials given by the Govt**

The government is providing all the necessary essentials to the students going to government school to fulfill their basic needs of schooling. However the respondents complained that the quality of the things provided was not good. Therefore the very purpose of giving such essentials is wasted. Hence the government has to ensure the things provided are of good quality through proper supervision.
II. **School Administration**

**School Management Committee**

In every school as per RTE 2005 school management committee is constituted to ensure proper functioning of school. The school should organise meeting regularly this will enhance the ties between school and parents. The more the parents have say in the school the more the ownership will be. This can be used as one of the effective way to address dropout issue.

**Parents teacher meeting**

Schools should organise parent-teacher meetings regularly. This will help the teachers to update the progress of the students, and to provide concrete suggestions to help improve on their weak areas. Further the teachers also will get to know about the family situation of the student which can be useful in understanding the student. The respondents informed during interview that they were asked to bring their parents in case of any issue but the teacher is not aware that the parents were migrated. In order to get adequate education output from every student it is important that the parents and teachers should have proper communication between them.

**Career guidance**

One of the major concerns identified by the researcher was lack of knowledge on the career option for educated youth among both the parents as well as respondents. Hence it is important to provide career guidance at school for the students to motivate them to continue education and also to pursue higher education.

**Nurture positive school relationship:** Acceptance and equal treatment by the teachers and peers will enhance the likingness towards schooling. Another important finding from the study is that children of different social groups show restricted mingling with each other. In such cases, the school can work, by levelling the field, to
create harmony among social groups of different statuses. The school should nurture positive social contact between various social groups by initiating common places for having lunch, engaging everyone in curricular, co-curricular activities, and sports activities etc. This will encourage positive peer group relationship irrespective of social background.

III. Civil Society

Supportive education: During FGDs, many parents expressed the need for supportive education. Most of the parents are less educated; moreover, they migrate outside looking for job opportunities. So, the children did not get the required support to clarify their doubts and to perform better in education. Low academic performance makes school less attractive to both parents and children. Hence, the civil society should make appropriate measures to provide supportive education for children hailing from disadvantaged families.

Sensitization of parents

Parents should be educated regarding the importance of education through awareness programmes. Parents play a vital role in motivating children to pursue education. Efforts should be made to enforce the parents to participate in the activities of the school, whereby the child will derive encouragement from parents for their education. The next important issue needs sensitization is girl child dropout. Lack of parental interest was one of the key reasons for girl child dropout. Prevailing cultural norms promotes child marriages to preserve the endogamy system. Parents should be sensitised regarding the ill effects of this practice. Creative and innovative visual IEC materials should be developed to educate the people on the ill effects of child marriage. Documentaries on real life stories of children who got affected due to child marriage can be made and used as IEC material. Such real life situations will help the
people directly to connect to the situation and realise the seriousness of the issue. Gram sabha meeting, women self help group meetings and meeting organised by the ICDS for mothers and adolescents can be utilised for creating awareness.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

In understanding the discrimination experienced, studies were so far always focussed on the receiving end of the discrimination; the source of discrimination is never discussed much. When we speak of discrimination experienced by disadvantaged sections, there is always focus on how the SC children are treated, but the perspective of the other caste peers is a less explored area which needs much attention, so as to address the issue appropriately.

Various studies mentioned the prevalence of prejudice among the upper caste teachers. So, it is need of the hour to assess the teacher training components related to inclusive practices, so that effective training for the teachers can be planned to make the school a more inclusive place and to ensure inclusive practices in class.

The problem in the system is acknowledging the prevalence of caste discrimination. As of now, there are no robust studies conducted among the teachers to understand their perception of caste; there have been a few qualitative explorations, but they cannot be considered adequate representation of all teachers. Hence, the government should initiate nationwide studies, so that the policy-level measurements could be addressed and a proper redressal system in case of practice of discrimination could be evolved.

During the field visits, the researcher found that some schools had good practices for encouraging non-discriminative practices within the school premises. As a qualitative study,
such model schools could be studied to explore the factors which contribute to inclusive practices, so that the same can be tested in other schools for replicability.

5.6 Conclusion

Economic instability or incapability of the parents/guardians cannot be taken as the sole reason for school dropout. Social and cultural factors play a determining role in the decisions to discontinue education. Therefore, it is important to understand the links between the social, economic, and cultural factors in determining the decision of discontinuing education and entering into the labour market. This will help us to develop meaningful measures for improving the retention rate in schools, as well as to stop child labour. From this research, it is clear that the demand of education shown by parents at primary enrolment was not retained. The demand for education among parents should consistently thrive to ensure better education for the children. The data analysis and the qualitative observations of the study indicated that learning achievement of the children and employability of the educated persons make a greater impact on the desire for schooling.

Societal constructs play a great role in the education attainment of girl children. In order to improve education of girl children, and to ensure gender equity, there is an urgent need to reconstruct the prevalent social constructs. Parental decisions on continuing the education of girl child are highly influenced by the community’s perception of the role of women in the society. Further, the study results indicate the unequal distribution of household chores among the male and female children. Gender equity sensitization needs to focus not only on educating parents but also the male siblings. A voice of concern from the male family members can ensure an enabling environment for gender equity at home.

Next to parents, the school plays an eminent role in the retention of the students. The results indicated that teacher support is one of the key factors for felt comfort in going to school as
well as in the sense of school membership. Based on the results of the study, it can be said that participation in the classroom process, comfort level in approaching the teacher for clarifying doubts, healthy correctional practices, and non-discriminative attitudes were found to be the key factors of teacher support. Therefore, there is a need to review the classroom processes; the pedagogy used should not be a lecture model alone but should also provide ample space for participation of students in the learning process in the classroom. Results of the study indicated that better academic performers enjoyed greater teacher supportiveness. The culture of providing extended support only to the better performers needs to be redefined. Rationally, more the deprivation, the more support is required. Hence, the children who struggle more need greater support and encouragement to continue education. Irrespective of the academic performance, healthy and friendly interaction between students and teachers is essential increasing conducive classroom climate.

The inferences from the study indicated that the socialization between students of various social groups was limited. Peer relations are highly restricted even within the same social group, and there is very less interaction and support received from peers of other social groups. School education should not only confine itself to academics but should also create a healthy future generation with morals and values, and play a key role in the socialisation process and developing healthy interpersonal relationships among the students. The prevailing differences between social groups should not be encouraged inside the school premises. Schools have the possibility to build various spaces where the distance between the students of various social groups can be reduced, and can develop positive social contact between the groups. This will not only help to create a healthy school atmosphere but will also help to build an integrated community with equality at large.

Our existing education policies focus on the material aspects of the education but not on the quality of education received. From the study, it was clear that the social group to which the
student belongs plays a key role in determining the school climate of the children. Though our constitution and laws prohibit discrimination, in reality, it still prevails in its own forms. Unless such discrimination is addressed to achieve inclusion, equitable education attainment will not be possible.

The very purpose of education is creating an inclusive society to ensure equal social and economical growth across all sections of the society. A school should always be a place of learning equality. It should neither indulge in nor encourage discriminative practices based on caste, sex, religion, academic efficiency etc. If any child gets discriminated on any grounds, it will not only affect the education attainment of the child but also the overall self-image of the child. To address the issue of drop outs from schools, more than the availability of schools, meaningful and positive learning experience has to be ensured.