CHAPTER-VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The major thrust of the present study is to investigate and identify the socio-economic determinants that influence households' decision of children schooling at the household level of Muslims families of Barak Valley of Assam.

The data for this study were collected from 338 households of rural and urban areas of the three districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The collected data have been analysed on the basis of Mean and SD values of the selected socio-economic variables of children's schooling and attainment. OLS and 2SLS techniques have also been used for drawing inferences on the basis of estimation of regression equations. Large number of tables are also constructed to understand the problem of gender disparity, rural-urban disparity in schooling attainments of children and also the impact of dilution of familial resources on it. The important findings of the study are represented below.

1. Schooling Achievements of Children:

In district Cachar, out of the total of 408 children of age 5 years and above, 67.89 percent are found enrolled at the time of survey [Table-5.2]. The enrolment percentage is highest (97.28 percent) in the age-group of 5-14 years. The percentage of enrolment of students has declined rapidly in the higher age-groups. The table figures reveal the fact that the children belonging to primary school going ages are almost universally schooled whereas non-enrolment of children to schools is
Significantly high in the age-group of 18-19 and 20 and above years. The drop-out/discontinuation of schooling starts in the age-group of 15-17 i.e., middle, high and higher level of schooling and the process intensifies thereafter.

The picture of students' enrolment is more or less similar in Hailakandi district (Table-5.3). However, the overall enrolment percentage is found to be better in Hailakandi in comparison to Cachar district. One important difference is that while 97.28 percent of children of 5-14 age group (primary and upper primary level of schooling) are found enrolled in Cachar district, the corresponding percentage is only 92.15 percent in case of Hailakandi district. The percentage of children 'not enrolled' gradually increases in higher age groups.

In Karimganj district, the percentage of children found enrolled in educational institutes is 95.76 percent in 5-14 age group, 79.66 percent in 15-17 age group, 71.05 percent in 18-19 age group and only 24.42 percent in 20 and above age group. The observed general trend of higher non-enrollment percentage in higher age groups is found true in case of Karimganj district as well. The common features of enrollment of students in the three districts of Barak valley are (i) there is almost cent percent enrolment in 5-14 age group of students. Comparatively, Cachar district is ahead of other two districts of the valley in this regard. This points towards the fact that parents are aware of the benefits of schooling and they want to school their wards. (ii) The drop out from school/discontinuation of study commences at higher level of schooling among children belonging to higher age groups. This is true for all three districts of Barak Valley.

The overall picture (of the entire sample) of the status of enrolment of students is shown in Table 5.5. Out of 1212 number of children of age 5 years and above in the
sample, 71.62 percent are found enrolled in educational institutions at different levels at the time of survey. Only 4.91 percent in the age group 5-14 years are found ‘not enrolled’ at the time of survey. However, the disturbing fact is that the percentage of such ‘not enrolled’ has steadily increased from a meager 4.91 percent to 21 percent in 15-17 age group, 38.39 percent in 18-19 age group and 75.65 percent at 20 and above age group of children. The figures clearly establish the fact that large number of children drop out from study after primary and upper primary level of education.

2. Rural-Urban Divide and Gender Disparity:

No definite trend emerges to indicate a clear rural-urban divide so far as enrolment of student is concerned. Among the rural areas of the districts, enrolment of students in the age group of 5-14 years is highest in the Cachar district. The urban area of this district is also ahead of other two districts in this category. In higher age groups, Karimganj is best achiever in rural areas in 15-17 and 18-19 age groups; in the same age groups Hailakandi is best achiever in the urban area. However, enrolment percentage in 20 and above age group is relatively better in the urban areas of the districts. The overall picture suggests a marginally better enrolment of students in each of the groups in the urban areas of the districts.

The gender classification of number of children found enrolled age group-wise for rural and urban areas of the districts of Barak valley is shown separately in Table-5.8 and Table-5.9. In rural areas of Karimganj district, out of 65 male children of 5-14 age group, 61 children are found enrolled at the time of survey. The corresponding figures for females are 51 out of 53. In percentage term, females have higher percentage of enrollment in 5-14 age group in Karimganj district. For this district, similar picture emerged for children of higher age groups except children belonging to 20 and above
age group. In this age group in Karimganj, only 22.22 percent females (2 out of 9) are found enrolled whereas this percentage for male children is high at 34.62. Taking all districts (combined), for males the percentage enrolled in 5-14 age group is 94.83, in the age group 15-17 it is 70.83, in the age group 18-19 it is 48.48 and in 20 and above age group it is only 17.92 percent. The corresponding percentages for respective age groups in female category are 93.92 percent, 87.80 percent, 72 percent and 20 percent respectively. In rural areas of the districts, there is no clear indication of gender disparity in the educational attainments of children of different age groups.

In urban areas of the districts, the noticeable point is that the female enrolment picture is relatively better than the males in the higher age groups. In the lowest age group of 5-14 years, both males and females show very high enrolment in schools. In the highest age group, the female enrolment percentage is much better in urban areas than the females in the rural areas of the districts. In terms of percentage, while percentage enrolment among females belonging to 20 and above age group in the rural areas of districts Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar is only 22.22, 18.19 and 20 percent respectively. The corresponding figure in urban areas is 40, 36.37 and 50 percent respectively. This is probably because early marriage of women in rural areas is a constraint for enrolment of women for higher studies.

The overall picture suggests that there is no perceptible rural-urban and gender disparity in educational attainments of children in the three districts of Barak valley. The male and female enrolment in rural and urban areas in the early stage of education is very high. In rural areas, female enrolment in higher level of education (of children belonging to age group 20 and above) is very low. In urban areas also, it is low but better than that in rural areas. In general, the enrolment percentage falls in
both rural and urban areas for both males and females among children of higher age groups. The percentage enrolments gender and place of residence wise are also shown in Table- 5.10 and Table-5.11.

The identification of the nature of disparity in educational achievements of children, both in terms of their gender and place of residence, are attempted in the thesis by estimating average completed education of male and female children in rural and urban areas. These are shown in Table-5.12. The figures in Table 5.12, however, clearly point towards prevailing gender and rural-urban disparity in average completed education of the children. The male children have distinct advantages over females both in rural and urban areas of the districts. The average completed education of male children in the entire sample is the highest in the Hailakandi district (7.6 years) and lowest (4.22 years) for females in the same district. Comparatively, the schooling achievement of children when measured in average completed education year is better in the district of Cachar than the district Hailakandi and Karimganj.

3. Dilution of Familial Resources and Its Impact on Schooling Achievements:

It is found that as the category of Households changes from ‘small’ to ‘very large’, there is a steady fall in the values of variables ‘Income’, ‘Asset’, Educational expenditure’, ‘Rooms’, and ‘Health’ available per child. This indicates that as the number of children in a family increases, there is further and further dilution of familial resources. The quality per child also falls, being highest in small families and lowest in very large families.
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The issue of dilution of familial resources and quality of child is also addressed from another angle. A regression equation is constructed with ‘average schooling per child’ as the dependent variable and which is arrayed against a set of explanatory variables GFI (yearly gross family income), ASSET (money value of family asset), GYEE (gross yearly educational expenditure), ROOM (number of rooms available in a household), HEALTH (general condition of health per child) and LER (last examination result scaled per child). The general hypothesis is that if value of an explanatory variable increases it should have positive impact on schooling attainments of children since more of these resources should mean, for given number of children, more share per child of it leading to higher schooling attainments per child.

Table 5.21 shows that three variables have turned up statistically significant, GYEE and HEALTH at 1 percent level of significance, ROOM at 5 percent level of significance. All these three statistically significant variables have positive impact on average schooling per child. A one unit increase in the value of GYEE, for example, will increase ASC by (8.702E-5) units. The result supports the hypothesized causal connection between average education of children and familial resources. The households providing additional resources particularly in the form of learning materials such as books, pen, pencil, school uniforms, school fees, transportation charges etc., space for reading and learning and healthcare, food etc., will experience an increase in the average level of education of the children of the household. The limited proxy variables for household resources explain 23 percent variation in the dependent variable.
4. Household Background Characteristics and Socioeconomic Variables in Determining Schooling Attainments:

The regression results (Table-5.22) show the deterministic role of household background characteristics and socioeconomic variables in determining schooling attainments of children. As many as eight variables have turned up statistically significant in the result. The variables are Number of Earning Members in a Household (NEM), Number of Children Below Age Five in the Household (NCB5), Distance of Nearest Educational Institution (DNEI), Age of Father (AF), Number of Times Father and Mother Moved Out of locality (FMMO), Socioeconomic Status Index (SESI), Expectation of Parents regarding Help in Domestic Work from Female Children (EHDWFC) and Expectation of Parents to Live with Male Children after They Marry (ELMCAM). Out of the statistically significant variables, the variable NEM is found to be exerting negative impact on the schooling attainments of children. An increase in the number of earning members in the family will reduce schooling attainments of children. Generally with an increase in the number of earning members, the household income would increase. In that case it is expected that schooling attainments of children would improve. However, in a low income society like the present one, the children are also forced to join low paid jobs early without completing their education. In such situations, number of earning members shall have a negative impact on the schooling attainments. Therefore, the result found in the present study is in expected line. The number of children below age five is a factor that determines the need of child care at household level. In low income backward areas, the older siblings provide childcare services at household level. It is, therefore, expected that with an increase in the number of children below age five in the household, the educational attainments of elder siblings will suffer. The negative
causal connection of NCB5 with ASC can be viewed and explained from that point of view and is expected in the present case of study. What is unexpected is the observed statistically significant positive impact of DNEI on ASC. According to this, as the distance of nearest educational institution from household increases, the schooling attainments of children of that household will increase. The data set has carefully been examined to find the reason this phenomenon. It is observed that for almost 90 percent households, the nearest educational institution lies within a distance of 5 KM. It is possible that distance of educational institutions is not considered as a problem by the households for sending their children to schools rather, it may have instigated positive impulses in the mind of parents to school their wards. The age of father is found to be exerting a positive impact on the schooling attainments of children. This is expected since in a household where father is old, children are expected to be at higher classes in schools. Moreover, older fathers are expected to be more attentive to the studies of their wards. The other variable FMMO is found to be having negative effect on schooling of children. Literature suggest that if parents visits places out of their locality, like the state capital, the capital of the country, other big cities and places, it will expose them to alien values and culture and this will increase their awareness about the benefits of education. In the present case no such impact is visible from the result. On the contrary, it is found that when parents move outside locality more frequently, the educational attainments of children declines. It is possible that the absence of parents from home has cast a negative effect on the schooling attainments of children. In the line of expectation, the variable SESI is found to be exerting a very strong positive and statistically positive impact on ASC. Higher the socio-economic status of the household, higher is the educational attainments of children. The result of variables representing the category of parents’
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expectation is interesting to note. EHDWFC has negative effect on ASC. Therefore, the educational attainments of children would be lower in cases where parents expect help from female children in domestic work. On the other hand, in households where parents expect to live with their male children after they marry, the children’s educational attainments would be higher. The result of both these variables together indicates parents’ implicit preference for son, a sex bias against female children. In this context, it may be pointed out that in the sample there is not even a single case where parents have expressed their desire to live with female children after they marry. The gender preferences in these areas are quite pronounced. None of the dummy variables representing area of residence (RESIDE, Urban=1, Rural=0), Region (DR1, Cachar=1, 0 otherwise; DR2, Karimganj=1, 0 otherwise) is found to be statistically significant. Some important variables (as the literature suggest) such as father’s education, grandfather’s education, parents’ expectation regarding help in domestic work from male children, age of mother etc could not be included in the regression model for reason multicollinearity.

5. Impact of Quantity of Children on Quality of Children

While OLS result fails to establish any significant connection between the two, the corrected estimates of 2SLS point towards a statistically significant positive impact of NCEB on ASC. This implies that an increase in the number of children leads to an increase in the average schooling attainments of children. The result does not support the famous Quantity- Quality hypothesis which states that larger number of children will result in lower quality of them. In this connection it may also be pointed out here that larger number of children actually results in lower share of familial resources per child in the household in the present study as found vide Para 5.2, Table-5.20. It is
also observed in the regression result presented in Table-5.21 that an increase in some familial resources will increase the average schooling attainment of children indicating that availability of increased share of familial resources per child in the family will have a positive impact on their schooling attainments. Since more number of children means more division of familial resources and hence lower share of it per child, it is expected that children’s educational attainment in larger families would be lower. The 2SLS result does not confirm this connection. The results presented in Table-5.20, Table 5.21 and Table 5.24 indicate that although there is depletion of familial resources per child as size of family increases, larger number of children will have, on the contrary, a positive impact on the educational attainments of children. This is possible where the society is motivated to educate children overcoming all constraint. In fact all the results obtained and presented in this section, including the tabular presentation of data leave the impression that the Muslim society in Barak valley is an educationally motivated, developing emerging society of the region where almost 96 percent of the children of primary school going age group are schooled and parents’ expectation from children (with male-female variation) to complete higher grades of education is also very high.
Suggestions:

- Since the Socio-economic status index (SESI) of the parents made up of the variables ASSET, HT, ROOMS, ELC, PHONE, WHEELER, COMPUTER, SLH, GFI, has been found to be positively associated with the demand for children’s schooling, programs aiming at helping the household to enjoy greater level of economic certainties would lead to a growth in the demand for children’s schooling. The impact of SESI on ASC is found to be very strong. Therefore, special efforts should be made to improve the socio-economic overall condition of the households which will have profound positive impact on household demand for children’s education.

- Provision of Special incentives for the education of female children may contribute to decline in the latent impact of gender preference on the schooling prospect of the female child.

- Modernization of Madrasa curriculum by introducing Science, Mathematics, Social Studies and Languages along with Theological studies in Maktabs and Madrasas will have positive impact on attainments of children in Muslim families.

- NGO should take up measure to establish and expand schools, purchase scientific equipments, construction of Girl’s hostel and strengthen vocational training institutes.

- Parents’ expectation of children’s help in farm and domestic work should not come in the way of children’s aspiration for education. Parents have a positive
role to play here since education is the most important social capital that can transform the future of a society and a country in a better way.

- As it is found that enrollment in higher age-groups decrease, the Govt. should provide special incentives like reduction in Admission fees, Scholarship and other suitable measures in this regard.

- Encouragement of women to participate in economic activity will definitely help in raising the household income. It will also indirectly help in acquiring higher education.

- Early marriage in Muslim society affects enrollment in higher education. A definite marriageable age should be framed in order to enable acquiring higher education.

- Children's participation in workforce for nominal wages should be discouraged. NGOs may launch awareness programme to motivate children to continue with their study in the school.

- Small family norms will help in improving the educational attainment level of children since, as found in the study, presence of larger number of children of 0-5 age group in the households have negative impact on schooling attainments of children.

- Although distance of school from the households is not found as an impediment for children's schooling attainments, more schools in the locality (neighbourhood schools) will be a welcome development.
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- Old age security utility of educating children is found to be a motivating factor for parents to educate children. However, not a single parent expressed desire to live with female children after they marry. This indirectly points towards presence of gender bias in the mind of the parents against daughters. Steps should be taken to eliminate such gender bias from the society. Parents should be encouraged to treat both sons and daughters alike.

- High rate of drop outs among higher age group children is a matter of serious concern. Further research and investigation should be carried out in this area to identify the causes of such a phenomenon for remedial measures.

The overall picture emerged from the study is positive. All kinds of administrative and policy supports should be extended to this community for the educational development of its future progenies.