

Status Study of the Education of the Children in Coastal Areas

As per National Census 2011, the number of traditional fishermen in Kerala is a little more than one million. This constitutes 3.1% of the total population of the state. The vast majority of these fishermen live in the 222 fishing villages along the coastal region. Due importance is not given to the education of the children in these areas because of the hardships faced by their parents. It has almost become a tradition that the children of fishermen follow their parents occupation. It is seen that most of these children gain only primary education before they are diverted into the basic lessons of various activities related to fishing. In this context, SCERT decided to conduct a study on the education of the children in coastal areas. Aware that that education is the right of the child, the parents now express the wish to educate their children. It is necessary to give the parents proper guidance in the face of this change in their attitude. For this, it is essential to identify the education related problems faced by the children of traditional fishermen.

Objectives

1. To analyse the problems related to education faced by students in the fishermen community
2. To evaluate the various components that affect the education of students in coastal areas, in fields such as social, cultural, health, arts and sports, infrastructure facilities, learning and institutional systems.
3. To identify the reasons for the educational backwardness of the students
4. To note out the availability, adequacy and effectiveness of educational institutions
5. To provide suggestions for solving the problems related to education of students in the fisherman community.

Methodology

Method

Survey method was employed for conducting the study.

Sample

Selected students, parents, teachers and schools from the coastal districts of Kasaragod, Kozhikode, Ernakulam, Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram constituted the sample of the study. Ten regions from these five districts including one gramapanchayat and one municipality ward from each district were selected for the study. The sample consists of 80 students, 12 teachers and 12 parents.

Tools and Techniques

- Questionnaire for students
- Questionnaire for teachers
- Questionnaire for parents
- Questionnaire for collecting information about institutional system
- Evaluation process for identifying the achievement level of the students: The evaluation activities developed by SCERT were used to assess the learning standard of the students from pre-primary to higher secondary level who were selected as samples and their grades were collected. In the pre-primary classes, activities based on play way method were given and the active interventions of the students were assessed. In the lower primary section, the tests were conducted considering standard one and two as a single unit and standard three and four as another unit. The skill development in the areas of mathematics (numerical ability), environmental studies (tabulation and classification) and language (speaking) were taken for study. In the upper primary classes the ability in reading, maths and debate was assessed while in the high school, spoken English, reading and debate skills were scrutinised. In the higher secondary and vocational higher secondary levels, ability in speaking in English and Malayalam, reading, and skills needed for discussion and debate were tested.

Statistical techniques

Percentage analysis was used to analyse the data

Findings

The data collected from the students, teachers and parents were analysed. The major findings of the study are as follows:

I. Findings based on the data collected from students

- **Social conditions**

A study was conducted on social awareness inculcated in the learner through school interactions and also in the home environment. Analysing the same, it was found out that 57% of the learners could be classed as above average. Comparing cities and villages, 62% of village children had above average level of capabilities whereas only 52% of urban students could be classified as above average.

- **Cultural background**

Considering the learners' involvement in social media, libraries, clubs and school it was found out that only 37% of the learners were involved in such activities. Among them the LP children from village area were the best as 72% of them showed involvement in such activities. The study showed that 41% of village learners and 32% of town learners were actively involved in such activities.

- **Economic background**

The study of the economic status of the sample showed that 50 % of the learners have access to nutritious food and they partook in co-curricular activities and excursions.

- **Health**

When the health of the children were taken up for study it was found out that the availability of basic health care was available for 33% of learners. Moreover the parents of this group were not addicted to alcohol or tobacco, nor did they care for physically unstable dependents.

- **Arts and Sports Activities:** It is found that 53% of students at all levels got opportunities and support for participating in arts and sports activities conducted in schools.
- **Educational facilities:** Sixty three percent of learners had adequate support of lab, library, smart room, curricular interactions, counselling sessions for building confidence etc.
- **Institutional system:** Fifty nine percent of the students expressed the new school timing and, infrastructure facilities were quite satisfactory.
- **Learning system:** Forty nine percent of the students expressed that the new learning environment, medium of instruction and, teachers' approach were all favourable.

II. Findings based on the data collected from teachers

- **Social:** Forty eight percent of the students could not attend classes regularly and continue their studies.
- **Academic achievement:** Fifty two percent of the students showed good academic achievement
- **Health:** Sixty four percent of the students were aware about the ways to maintain their health and cleanliness.
- **Institutional system:** Sixty eight percent of the teachers considered the school timing and, infrastructure facilities to be conducive to learning.
- **Learning system:** Sixty eight percent of the teachers made use of multimedia facilities and library for teaching learning process.

III. Findings based on the data collected from parents

- **Cultural:** Data collected from parents showed that 64% of learners did not have regular reading habits, library memberships, and involvement in festival celebrations etc.
- **Social:** Studies show that 76% of learners were socially backward considering the social structure, and level of social involvement and intervention.
- **Health:** Studies indicate that there was scope for improvement in 73% of learners regarding methods of treatment of illness, and measures taken to maintain health and hygiene.
- **Socio economic status:** Studies indicate that 80% of learners faced financial difficulties due the economic situation at home, lack of assured source of income and other financial problems.
- **Sports:** Studies show that 71% of learners were backward in sports activities, that the sports environment was not at all healthy and that involvement in sports events was limited.
- **Institutional system:** Sixty seven percent of parents expressed that schools, hospitals, laboratory, local self government facilities, etc were available as required for the pre-primary section.

IV. Findings based on the information about institutional system

- **Academic**

In the schools in which survey was conducted libraries were active in 94% of schools, lab in 72%, bio-diverse garden in 86%, agricultural interventions in 89%.

- **IT**

Studies showed that 95% of schools have internet connectivity and 62% have sufficient smart class rooms.

- **Institutional system**

As 96% of schools are furnished with basic facilities like toilets, drinking water, playground, compound wall and auditorium, it would be say that they are self sufficient.

Case study: Govt. UP school, Valiyathura, Thiruvananthapuram is selected for case study. From the observations it is found that this school was a denigrated rescue centres at the time of disasters such as the tsunami and ockhi. The infrastructure facilities and the learning environment was rather poor in this school. So the parents in that locality were not willing to enrol their children in this school. In addition to that, there was a high rate of drop outs.

V. Regarding the achievement of children

- It is found that 35% of learners showed improvement in studies while 25% were backward.
- In LP section, 33 % had good numerical skills.
- Among the children traditional fisher folk families 38% of students in the LP Section showed interest in reading Malayalam books.
- In the UP section, only 24% of learners had good numerical skills.
- In n UP section 22% of learners were able to read English.

- In the high school section, 38% of learners were able to read Malayalam well.
- In the high school section, 21% of learners could handle English very effectively.
- In the higher secondary section, 48% of learners were proficient in speaking Malayalam, but 3% were rather backward.
- At higher secondary level 26% could read English, but 2 % were rather weak at this.
- In the VHSE section only 7% had a good standard of reading.
- In VHSE only 26% were able to read Malayalam well.

SUGGESTIONS

Social

- Ensure the school admission and attendance of -2 to +2 learners with the support of educational volunteers of the coastal area.
- Conduct personality development camps, workshops, and nature camps for the learners for ensuring social interactions.

Cultural

- There should be a number of social institutions like clubs, libraries, etc in the coastal areas.
- Conduct book distribution programmes to improve the reading habit and ensure the social interventions of parents.

Economic

- To familiarise the student coastal areas with other geographic areas, picnics and tours should be initiated by school and social institutions.
- Cooperative institutions and Public sector banks should be roped in to assure financial independence for fishermen by supporting them financially as required.

Health

- Steps should be taken to ensure nutritional balanced food by supplementing the conventional diet of fishermen with a variety of a variety of the items lacking in their diet.
- Higher Secondary Souhrida clubs run by the Department of Social Welfare should help in freeing the people in coastal areas from alcohol.

Sports

- Special physical training should be given to children of coastal areas by the State Sports council.

Educational

- Integrated academic package based on the theme ‘ sea, need to be developed by SCERT Kerala
- Career guidance and counselling classes should be conducted for inculcating awareness about higher studies and employment.
- New courses such as Aquatic Biology, Fish and fisheries, Fishing and Processing should be introduced in VHSE.
- Weightage should be given to the children of fishermen community in the NEET Exam for courses in Fisheries.
- The timing of Pre-schools should be rearranged considering the working time of the women of the community.

IT

- As the children of coastal areas are not open to other areas, they need to be exposed to such learning experiences through IT. All the necessary hardware and software should be installed in the schools in coastal area.

