

# **Quality of School Education in Kerala: Dimensions and Determinants**

**Kerala Research Programme on  
Local Level Development**

Centre for Development Studies  
Thiruvananthapuram

**Quality of School Education in Kerala:  
Dimensions and Determinants**

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Dr K. N. Nair, Programme Coordinator,  
Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development,  
Centre for Development Studies,  
Prasanth Nagar, Ulloor,  
Thiruvananthapuram 695 011

Tel: 550 465, 550 491

Fax: 550 465

E-mail: [krp@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in](mailto:krp@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in)

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Educational development is an essential component of, and key to, social development. The findings of a few studies made with the support of KRPLLD on the status of school education and the factors that account for expansion of schools and improvement in school performance are presented in this volume.

The most important acknowledgement is due to the researchers who completed these studies, carefully implemented intervention programmes, and submitted the reports on time. I am thankful to Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad under whose banner studies in different panchayats were carried out.

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K. N. Nair  
Programme Coordinator



## **Executive Summary**

The school education system in Kerala is well developed. However, the level of its performance is considered poor. The articles included in this volume report the results of a few micro-level studies on the factors of educational growth and performance as well as of a few experiments for improving the quality of education in schools. The studies have looked into home-related, school-related, and community-related factors. Some of them had an action component too.

Of the several factors identified, intervention by the local public and institutions is found the most important. In areas in which such intervention has been strong, educational performance is observed to be relatively of a high order. Apart from interventions, there are other internal factors that determine performance: Infrastructure, school leadership, teachers, methods of teaching, evaluation, etc. However, it is possible to improve these internal factors also through external, local-level interventions.

Infrastructure, which includes school premises, buildings, playgrounds, furniture, laboratory, library, latrine, and drinking water facilities, is found adequate in most of the schools. There is of course great scope for improvement. Schools in Kerala have, in general, well-qualified and experienced teachers. However, the intensity of involvement of teachers in their duties varies with the schools.

Performance levels of students are low in general at the different stages of school.

The majority of parents pay scant attention to the curricular and extra-curricular activities in schools. They are unaware of the importance of active intervention in school affairs by associations of parents.

The vast majority of the teachers are of the view that the curricula, syllabi, and prescribed textbooks for the various stages of school education in Kerala are inappropriate or irrelevant.

Methods of evaluation of the performance of students require improvement; at present, evaluation gives undue importance to the memorising ability of students. Remedial teaching, special tuition, and greater attention to students with learning disabilities are practised in some schools with great success.

Local-level leaders and people's representatives are found grossly ignorant about the functioning of schools in their localities. Even those who have some degree of awareness are interested only in promoting the physical facilities of schools.

Experiments in a few schools show that intervention by local organisations can improve curricular and extra-curricular performance levels of schools. This is possible even in government schools in which students come from poor and educationally backward households, teaching is indifferent, and infrastructural facilities are meagre.

Interventions in educational matters by progressive local elements of socio-religious movements have triggered off educational expansion in conservative communities and backward regions. Localities that experienced such interventions in the past have forged ahead of their counterparts and the process is still on.

Educational development schemes imposed from outside are not enough for spreading education in an indigent and indolent society. Levels of awareness about, and utilisation of, such schemes remain low even after half-a-century of experiment, as is in the case of the tribesfolk of Wayanad. Success in implementation of the schemes would only follow elimination of the basic socio-cultural and economic impediments to development and change in attitudes on the part of the target communities.





## Foreword

The constitutional goal of universal schooling is still a distant dream in most parts of India; but in Kerala it is part of a remarkable reality. School enrolment is universal, or nearly so, and the phenomenon of dropout, rampant elsewhere, is negligible here. This is not the result of some recent well-designed 'crash' programme: It has been so for years, the outcome of public effort over many decades of recent Kerala history. The State, always ahead of others in literacy, now has several regions in which the whole population, including the old, is literate.

No doubt, successive governments have played a vital role in the educational development of the State. Education has always received priority, and currently as much as 40 per cent of the State budget goes to finance education. Kerala perhaps holds a world record in this respect. Government expenditure almost entirely goes to payment of salaries, but it has also contributed to the development of educational 'infrastructure.' In terms of school buildings, furniture and other essential facilities, Kerala is, once again, the leader in India, although there is great need for improvement. However, even as we recognise the role of the government, we should not forget that the social milieu - that fostered reform movements, organisations devoted to the welfare of specific communities, and radical politics - has played an even more significant part in the promotion of education in Kerala.

Literacy, as measured in statistics, may merely connote the ability to put a signature instead of a thumb impression. It is not so in Kerala. Literacy here has led to a cultural transformation (it is equally possible that a radical evolution of society has brought in its wake education as a bonus). People read newspapers, magazines, and books; and they engage in informed social discourse, ever willing to engage in 'active' politics. What is perhaps a unique experience in India is that in Kerala the gap between measured literacy and education, in some real sense, has narrowed.

But, unfortunately, not so in every sense. The ability to do sums right, and acquisition of formal knowledge and skills that schooling provides, are also essential attributes of education even at the school level. Moreover, such formal knowledge facilitates upward mobility within the education system itself, apart from giving the school-leavers some scope in the job markets. It is here that scholars of the Kerala miracle in education see a dark lining in the silver cloud. Kerala is almost at the bottom among Indian States in terms of academic performance of students at the different stages of school, despite - or, may be because of - its very liberal grade promotion policies.

The Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development had initiated a few studies to understand this paradox of high literacy that co-exists with poor levels of educational performance. In particular, the studies address the question how the already 'socially aware' public can play a role in improving the quality of education. It is seen that both what is taught in schools, and how it is done, have contributed to the sorry state of affairs. The studies that follow describe the state of school education and its successes and failures as well as the hopes for a future in which the people of Kerala would themselves contribute to the furtherance of education in its true and complete sense.

N. Krishnaji  
Honorary Fellow  
Centre for Development Studies



## Chapter 1

# School Education in Kerala: Performance and Problems

*P. R. Gopinathan Nair\**

### Introduction

The school education sector in Kerala has expanded impressively and now stands ahead of its counterparts in the rest of the country. Active and sustainable public action and generous governmental support were the hallmarks of the educational scene of Travancore and Cochin during the colonial period since the mid-19th century. In the Malabar region, popular involvement in educational efforts was rare and the government support for educational development lukewarm. After independence, under the aegis of popular governments, school education has become mass-based, the regional disparities in educational achievements have narrowed down to a great extent and the growth of the higher stages of general, vocational, and professional education has been phenomenal. Kerala has achieved universal literacy, reduced school dropout rates to extremely low levels, and bridged the gender gap in school education almost entirely. The State has also succeeded in reducing inter-community differences and differences based on socio-economic status in school enrolment. Kerala is the only State that has achieved the goal of universal, free school education envisioned in the Constitution of India.

Kerala has an impressive array of school education statistics: More than 12,000 schools, 54 lakh students (constituting 18 per cent of the population), and 1,80,000 teachers. The State has at present one lower primary school for every square km, and one secondary school for every four square km. It is also widely acknowledged that the physical facilities (school buildings, furniture and equipment, sports facilities, toilets, drinking water, etc) in the Kerala schools are much better than anywhere else in the country. Underqualified and untrained teachers constitute only a minuscule proportion.

School education in Kerala is avowedly free. However, the cost of such 'free' education borne by the households is significant and rising over time. Owing to dispensation of 'free school education' the burden on government is also heavy, particularly since the government is footing the recurring expenditure bill of school education imparted by private sector agencies under the 'aided' system. Consequently, the State expenditure on education has been hovering around 40 per cent of its annual budget for several decades.

According to a study conducted by National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Kerala ranks below 17 other States in respect of the levels of learning achieved by school students. Even though the SSLC examinations annually record a pass percentage of around 50, the actual percentage is reported to be less than 20, the rest consisting of pupils pushed into the pool of the successful candidates through a process which is euphemistically called 'moderation'. It should be mentioned that in absolute terms the number of failed candidates at the SSLC examination comes to about 2,50,000 every year.

Thus, despite the availability of several favourable factors, the quality of education imparted and the levels of achievement of the students are steadily on the decline during the past few decades. This has caused widespread discontent among educationists and other social scientists. Despite overall progress in school education, there are specific communities (such as the tribesfolk and the fisherfolk) in different parts of the State among whom the progress is not satisfactory. Further, even within the same community and within the same region, significant differences are observed in respect of educational achievements from

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*\*The author is an Honorary Fellow, Centre for Development Studies, and Programme Advisor to Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development.*

locality to locality. Studies on the qualitative aspects of school education and its inter-community, inter-local, and regional differences are, however, rare in Kerala.

The factors that underlie the dismal performance of the school education sector in terms of quality are of three types: (a) household-related, (b) community-related, and (c) school-related. Studies undertaken in the past focussed more on household-related and societal factors than on school-related factors. It would seem, however, that school-related qualitative factors such as the quality and content of education and performance of teachers, as well as physical facilities of school, play the most important role. Studying these factors is particularly important in any attempt to evaluate qualitative performance of school education. On the other hand, if the enquiry were for understanding the educational problems of particular communities that remain educationally backward, the societal and household-related factors would have to be given special importance.

It is against this background that the Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development (KRPLLD) initiated a few studies on school education in the State. They fall into two broad groups: Studies (a) on the qualitative aspects of school education in general, with or without an action component, and (b) on the socio-cultural and economic factors that account for the educational performance of particular social groups and regions. In this latter category fall the studies by C Krishnan (on tribesfolk of Wayanad) and A Abdul Salim (on evolution of education in two Muslim-dominated villages of Malappuram district). The study by M Haridas is on educational performance at the high school level and the strategies necessary to improve the level of performance. Typical of the studies on the quality aspects of school education in the State coupled with action for its improvement is the one led by C Ramakrishnan under the aegis of Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP). The study covered six panchayats selected from the three regions of the State (Onchiyam and Mayyil in Malabar; Madakkathara and Padiyur in Cochin; and

Kumarakom and Mezhuveli in Travancore). Besides highlighting the major problems confronting the education sector in the State, the enquiry concentrated on collecting information from school authorities, teachers, students, and knowledgeable persons and representatives of the people. Apart from collection and analysis of data and preparation of the report, the local teams of the project initiated several intervention programmes for improving the quality of education, which were conceived, designed, and implemented taking into account the locale-specific requirements. In addition, a couple of experiments taken up by two concerned scientist-educators to improve educational quality at the middle school level and to improve the quality of science teaching at the high school level, had also been supported by the KRPLLD. At a one-day seminar organised by the KRPLLD at Centre for Development Studies on 9 October 1998, the reports of these studies were presented and discussed *in extenso*.

In his presentation, Abdul Salim pointed out the importance of strong agencies of social change in bringing about social progress, particularly in education. Examples of rapid educational development in a locality exist side by side with educational stagnation in a nearby locality. His enquiry was therefore focussed on the micro-level factors that accounted for differential educational development in two Muslim-dominated villages in the same district. According to Salim, a progressive socio-religious movement supported by local community efforts and the government's favourable intervention brought about desirable attitudinal changes in the community and triggered off a process of educational expansion in the locality. This process was accelerated during the period since independence by several facilitating factors such as strong political processes and inflow of remittances from migrants to the Gulf countries. In contrast, in another Muslim-dominated village of the same district, educational progress has remained insignificant due to religious orthodoxy. Abhorrence of secular education, devotion to religious instruction, and opposition to women's education have reigned supreme in this village. Government action to

promote education was insignificant and weak. Even Gulf migration has not brought about any significant change in the social attitude towards education and change in this village.

C Krishnan discussed the educational scene in one of the tribal villages of Wayanad. This district is the home for more than 70 per cent of the tribesfolk in Kerala. The educational status of the tribesfolk in the State as a whole is lower than that of even the Scheduled Castes, not to speak of the general population. It is from one of the villages of the Wayanad district, Panamaram village of Mananthawadi taluk, that Krishnan collected his data. The researcher notes that the different tribal communities in the study area - though backward in general - stand at different levels of educational achievement and that the differences are accounted for mainly by variations in levels of poverty and access to school. Poverty compels some of the enrolled students to drop out from the early stages of the education system.

One of the significant observations in the study is that tribesfolk have come a long way from their tribal modes of thinking and attitudes to life and living, significantly in respect of acquisition of institutional education. They are also keenly interested in educating their girl children. But the sad fact remains that despite the efforts by governments for their rehabilitation and development, the tribesfolk remain economically deprived, educationally backward, and socially ostracised. Many are not even aware of the benefits and subsidy schemes available for them.

Haridas examined the performance of two sets of high school in the Thiruvananthapuram district - both of which showed very poor performance some years ago but performed in markedly different ways in the recent past. While one type continued to perform badly, the other has made rapid strides, in terms of SSLC examination results. The researcher has identified a few factors which account for such differential performance, the most important being the active intervention by the local public, including parents and guardians of the students (through agencies such as parent-teacher

association, school complexes, and mothers' clubs), local government (panchayat) personnel, and people's representatives. In those schools where such public intervention is active, results have improved while the other schools lag behind and stagnate.

A study which was more action-oriented than academic is the one undertaken by Mohan Kumar and Sasi Kumar. They start from the premise that in Kerala, in general, government-run schools admit poorer children, teach indifferently, and produce poor results. The attempt by these researchers has been therefore to help the students in two government schools - one an upper primary school and the other a secondary one - in their educational efforts, with better learning facilities, such as books and other teaching aids. The upper primary school was lacking in infrastructural facilities such as playing grounds and separate classrooms. The researchers were able to arrange for partitioning the school hall into separate classrooms, supply essential teaching aids such as maps, reference books and a two-language dictionary, and make the school library operational. On the basis of their experiments in the upper primary school, the researchers observe that, left to them, the teachers are averse to make serious efforts and parents unwilling to take active interest in the functioning of the school. They strongly disagree with the prevailing notion in certain quarters that students with poor economic and academic backgrounds are poor in intelligence, analytical powers, and academic aspirations. They perform badly only because of the drabness of curriculum, indifferent teaching, and inadequate facilities at home and school.

They came up with a similar conclusion in their experiment for improving science teaching in a government high school, but with some differences in detail. In the school that they selected, infrastructural facilities (ie school buildings, furniture, equipment, laboratory and library facilities, playgrounds, and toilets) were adequate. Yet the SSLC results were dismally low with a pass percentage of 25. Failure rates were high not just in Mathematics and other science subjects,

but in languages as well (Malayalam, English, and Hindi).

The researchers encountered some initial resistance from the teaching community to any attempt from outside to improve the teaching-learning environment in the school. The teachers put the blame for poor performance in the SSLC examination squarely on the students and their parents, on the defects of the curriculum, and on the promotion policy. After a while, the school authorities and teachers became more amenable to persuasion and accepted the promotional interventions by the researchers. The atmosphere in the school began to show signs of qualitative improvement with the better use of library, laboratory and computer facilities, revival and reactivation of the parent-teacher association, and supply of laboratory materials, resource maps, and atlases. Remedial teaching sessions were held for those students lagging behind and talks were organised for students on various subjects of topical interest by eminent scientists and scholars. Results in the public examination also began to look up. These positive changes suggest that sustained intervention in the school affairs by the local community as well as the parents and persons with scholarly background and right motivation would wipe out the stigma of inefficiency from the face of the government school sector in the State.

The study organised by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) under the leadership of C Ramakrishnan has been the largest project in the area of education supported by the KRPLLD. The

reports pertaining to different study centres and their interventions in the functioning of the schools of their respective localities were presented at the seminar by the researchers of study centres. Ramakrishnan presented a summary report of the major findings and the conclusions of the study as a whole. Interestingly, the individual reports showed considerable variation among themselves in the evolution of the educational sector, local leadership, and local participation in educational development, educational environment, and current educational performance. In consequence, the intervention strategies that KSSP followed also differed from one locality to another.

All the studies were conducted on the basis of a common approach. Information was collected on all schools in the study areas on the basis of the same set of schedules. The respondents selected were students, teachers, parents, and people's representatives mostly comprising members of the local panchayat. The major focus of enquiry was evaluation of the prevailing conditions in schools and schooling. The possibilities of people's intervention to improve the school system at the local level were investigated in this context.

Only the results from 5 panchayats and 59 schools were reported at the seminar though 17 panchayats and 200 schools had been covered by the survey (Table 1.1).

Most of the schools in these panchayats that began functioning during the British period are found to have been established as a result of the initiatives

**Table 1.1 Distribution of Schools by Level in the Reported Panchayats**

District	Panchayat	Stage of School			Total
		Lower Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	
Kannur	Mayyil	12	3	1	16
Kozhikode	Onchiyam	13	1	2	16
Thrissur	Madakkathara	2	1	2	5
Kottayam	Kumarakom	7	3	3	13
Pathanamthitta	Mezhuveli	6	2	1	9

by local people who came from both forward and backward communities as well as all religious groups - Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Governmental efforts to establish educational institutions in large numbers were, however, a phenomenon of the period since independence, particularly in the Malabar region. In Travancore and Cochin areas, the history of active governmental initiatives in establishing schools and supporting private efforts for educational development stretch as far back as the beginning of the 19th century.

At present, interregional differences in educational status have been eliminated almost completely even though schools in Malabar continue to be at a comparative disadvantage in terms of available school facilities like land and buildings, equipment and furniture. The net enrolment ratio has risen to almost 100 per cent in the case of both boys and girls, though the proportion of the never-enrolled is marginally higher for girls.

Two distinct tendencies regarding enrolment are, however, observed in all the study areas. First, enrolment of children in standard I is falling steadily due to the fall in birth rate. However, the fall began in the Malabar region much later than in Travancore and Cochin due to the head start of the latter area in the process of demographic change in Kerala. The second phenomenon observed is the increasing trend of the dropout at the higher stages of school education; more so among boys than among girls. This phenomenon has to be explained in terms of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the Kerala society.

The focus of the enquiry has, however, been different. It is aimed at examining the academic performance of schools, the factors accounting for the performance, and the scope and constraints in local public intervention for improving performance. As a rough and ready yardstick of academic performance, the researchers chose the SSLC examination results. The pass percentage in the

**Table 1.2 SSLC Results in Selected Panchayats, 1994-1997**

Panchayat	School	1994 March	1995 March	1996 March	1997 March
Mayyil (Kannur)	Govt. Higher Secondary School	36	33	44	45
Onchiyam (Kozhikode)	GVHSS Madappally and GHS for Girls, Madapally	42	29	44	47
Madakkathara (Thrissur)	KAUHS Vellanikkara	100	98	96	95
-do-	Govt HS, Kattippuram	43	38	94	43
Kumarakom*	Govt HS	47	44	59	39
	SKM HS	61	64	56	54
Mezhuveli	PHS Mezhuveli	46	49	40	54
State Average		49	57	48	57

\* The pass percentages mentioned are those at the internal, half-yearly examination  
KAU HS = Kerala Agricultural University High School; Govt. HS = Government High School; SKM HS = Sree Kumaramangalam High School; PHS = Padmanabhadayam High School

high schools in five panchayats under study from March 1994 to March 1997 is given in Table 1.2.

The figures in Table 1.2 show that in all the schools, with the sole exception of Kerala Agricultural University High School, Vellanikkara (in Madakkathara panchayat of Thrissur district) the pass percentages have hovered around the State average of about 50 per cent. Even in the KAU HS, the percentage has been steadily on the decline since 1994. It is necessary and would be of interest for policy formulation to find the factors underlying the exceptionally high performance of this school in the SSLC examination. Some preliminary enquiries revealed that this is a recent institution, established in 1981, catering to a special category of students - ie the children of the staff of the Agricultural University; and that it is endowed with excellent physical facilities and experienced and highly qualified teachers. The high performance of this school is therefore an exceptional case.

Another school in the same panchayat that has recorded an exceptionally good and unusual performance in 1996 is the Government High School, Kattippuram. On enquiry, it was understood that this was the result of the brilliant efforts by the headmistress. This is perhaps proof enough of the fact that leadership quality is a crucial factor in determining the fortunes of a school in its academic performance: With the transfer of the person from the school next year, examination results reverted to the earlier low level.

What are the factors that account for the poor average performance of schools in the SSLC examination? There could be many reasons: Poor coaching, poor facilities for studies at the high school stage or poor studies at the primary level. It is therefore necessary to examine the academic progress profile of the specific cohorts of students across the entire school career from lower primary to the secondary stages. Examination results turned from bad to worse along the educational ladder. This is evident from an analysis of the results of examinations conducted in the terminal years of the lower and upper primary stages ie

standard IV, standard VIII, and standard IX, the penultimate standard at the high stage. For instance, the percentage of children who secured less than 40 per cent marks was 43 in standard IV. It rose to less than 50 in standard VII and in standard IX, it was 70. The profiles of marks secured in other subjects (such as Hindi, English, and Malayalam) also look similar.

School authorities and teachers attribute the progressive deterioration of student performance over different stages of school to the practice of 'whole' promotion of students. According to the existing instructions of the educational authorities, students cannot be detained in a standard - beyond a certain small percentage prescribed - on the ground of failure in examinations. While the intention of the State to minimise detention of students is laudable, this practice has led to a state of indifferent teaching and uninterested learning. Ideally, the laggards in every standard should have received adequate remedial teaching to lift them to the level of their brighter standard-mates. This had seldom happened.

It is in this context that the different panchayat survey teams in the study set out to examine the shortcomings of the school education system in some depth. The major issues examined were, (a) quality and content of the curriculum and syllabus, (b) methods of teaching and evaluation, (c) competence of teachers, (d) teaching time and length of the academic calendar, (e) place of extra-curricular activities in school education, and (f) interventions by parents and people's representatives in the affairs of the school. Incidentally, opinions were sought from students, teachers, parents, and the knowledgeable public also on questions such as organisations of students and teachers, loss of working days due to strikes and public demonstrations. The consensus that evolved from the enquiries conducted in the different study centres is summarised below.

1. Classroom teaching has failed to achieve the desired results in respect of physical and social services as well as in languages, mainly due to the following shortcomings:



- a. at present, the contents of most textbooks and the instructional strategies followed by the majority of teachers serve only to douse the interest in learning on the part of the students;
  - b. the students seldom find anything revealing or challenging in what is being taught to them; and
  - c. education is designed and planned with scant regard to the physical and mental growth of the student and to the unfolding environment.
2. The techniques of instruction followed by the majority of school teachers fail to rouse enthusiasm for learning in the students. Teachers should be provided with retraining and periodic in-service training keeping in view of the fact that instruction in school should improve knowledge, understanding, analytical powers, and enthusiasm among students. Obviously, the teachers' instructional strategy should be more appropriate and effective than is the case at present.
  3. Methods of evaluation at every stage of the school being followed at present are outmoded, unscientific, and meaningless. They seldom serve to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student; nor do they bring out his/her educational achievements.
  4. While the current policy of discouraging detention is desirable, it is becoming counter-productive in the absence of remedial teaching to the poorer strata of learners.
  5. The comparatively good performance by some schools should be subjected to further in-depth scrutiny so that the positive aspects of their teaching-learning strategies and the educational environment that prevails in them could be understood and introduced elsewhere too.
  6. The number of annual working days in schools is much less than what is planned for and therefore the assigned teaching and learning load becomes unrealistic; steps to reconcile the two are essential.
  7. Intervention in the educational process by the local people and their representatives, on the basis of the factual situation and the locale-specific requirements, is desirable, necessary, and essential.
  8. Finally, the educational system calls for constant monitoring. It has to become much more adaptable and malleable to suit the prevailing requirements. It should become accountable to the society at large that invests a great deal of its resources on educational development.
- In short, the consensus has been that the scene of school education today, looked at from the qualitative point of view, is dismal and that it requires radical improvement through appropriate restructuring, revision of content, strengthening of management, and democratisation through active local intervention and participation.
- The specific tasks that panchayats might be able to undertake in this context fall under three categories viz (a) academic, (b) teaching-related, and (c) democratic. It is necessary for the panchayat personnel to acquire necessary competence in order to carry out such responsibilities. Institutions such as the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) and the State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERT) could play useful role in this context.
- In addition to collection of data and analysis

of the educational situation at the micro-level, the study teams also initiated a process of promotional and correctional interventions in the functioning of schools. Such interventions had some inter-local variations depending on the specificities of the situation. However, the interventions consisted of (a) raising funds for schools for improving their physical conditions, (b) remedial and extra teaching (through school teachers themselves or through volunteers from the locality), (c) extra-curricular activities (such as art festivals, sports competitions,

and study tours), (d) improving the capability and competence of teachers (through organising teachers' associations and seminars and symposia), and (e) monitoring the functioning of schools.

All the papers evoked active response from the academic community and the seminar concluded with the unanimous view that more micro-level studies, in the genre of the ones already initiated, are required for improving school education in Kerala.

## Chapter 2

# Differential Performance of Secondary Schools

*M.Haridas\**

### Introduction

Kerala has the unique distinction of being the only totally literate State in India. There are three categories of schools in Kerala - government, private aided, and private unaided. Government schools and aided private schools follow, in general, the same syllabus and curriculum and the same examination practices. Unaided private schools, mostly English medium schools, account for about four per cent of the total number of schools. This category of schools is permitted to levy tuition fees; and the qualifications of teachers and their terms and conditions of service are not bound by government rules. They also coach students for the common secondary school leaving examination.

The average levels of academic performance of government schools are considered to be lower than those of private aided schools, not to speak of the level of private unaided schools. However, the level of performance of schools undergoes changes over time. For instance, some schools that performed very poorly, reckoned in terms of SSLC examination results, a few years ago, have made substantial improvement while some others have continued to remain unchanged. It would be interesting to examine the factors for such differential performance.

### Objectives

The major objective is to identify the factors behind performance and changes in performance of schools, performance being defined as the SSLC examination result. We also hope to develop a workable plan for improving the performance.

### Methodology

We propose to conduct a detailed analysis of a few selected high schools in order to examine the

physical, academic, and community factors that have a bearing on performance.

### Sample Selection and Data Analysis

The study is confined to Thiruvananthapuram district. There were 242 high schools in this district in 1991-92. The SSLC examination results of May 1992 show that 32 schools remained at the bottom (15 per cent). The corresponding 15 per cent in May 1996 included 20 of these 32 schools while the rest had moved up.

Two schools were selected from these 20 - one from the government sector and the other from the private aided sector. From among those schools that had shown poor results in 1992 but improved by 1996, two other schools - again one from government sector and the other from private aided sector - were selected. Thus the total sample consisted of four schools.

The case study of these four schools was made on the basis of information collected from the schools and the local community, through field survey and personal interviews. Physical factors of performance were calculated on the basis of facilities in schools such as extent of land, buildings, playgrounds, and library and laboratory facilities. Academic factors included qualifications of teachers, supervision by the head of the school, arrangements available for remedial teaching, enrichment programmes, functioning of school complexes, parent teacher associations (PTAs), and utilisation of community resources.

Five sets of survey schedules were used after due pre-testing, one each for headmasters, teachers, parents, and students. Interviews were also conducted with community leaders and educational experts. The survey covered 4 headmasters, 35

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*\*The author is former Field Advisor, NCERT, Thiruvananthapuram region. This paper is extracted from his study under KRPLLD, 'Local-level planning for improving educational standards'.*

teachers, 135 parents, and 20 retired headmasters and educational officers.

## Findings

### *Physical Facilities and Staff*

All the four schools are located in an area of about one-and-a-half to two hectares each. Built-in area for classrooms, office, staff room, laboratory and library, etc is adequate. Buildings are permanent with RCC roof and cement floor except in one that has tiled roof and uncemented floor. Latrine, drinking water (through pipes and overhead tanks), and electricity facilities exist in all the four schools. Playground facilities for games and sports are also available.

Members of the teaching staff are, in general, qualified and experienced. Teachers in languages - Malayalam (first language) and Hindi (third language) - are also fully qualified except in the case of English that is taught by graduates in Science or Arts. It is observed that a vast majority of students do not attain the minimum expected standard in English language. Graduates in English language and literature should teach English, as in the case of other subjects.

### *Evaluation and Follow-up*

All the four schools conducted monthly tests in

each subject and maintained their mark lists. Follow-up action is, however, practically absent. Two terminal examinations are held each year and the marks obtained are entered in the progress cards of the students. Their guardians sign the progress cards. The system of keeping personal files of individual students in the form of cumulative records does not exist. However, a close scrutiny of the mark lists for the quarterly, half-yearly, and the annual examinations in standards VIII, IX, and X showed that nearly 95 per cent of the students who failed in the SSLC examination of March 1996 were those who had been continuously scoring poor marks in the lower classes as well, ie in classes VIII and IX.

### **Analysis of SSLC Results (1992 & 1996)**

Government High School, Bharathannur and St. Augustine High School, Murukkumpuzha are found to have had pass percentages below 28 in both 1992 and 1996 SSLC examinations. The other two schools, Government High School, Karakulam and Vrindavan High School, Vlanthankara, improved their results from 29 per cent in 1992 to around 56 per cent in 1996. Subject-wise pass percentages for four schools are given in Table 2.1.

English and Mathematics are the two subjects in

**Table 2.1 Subject-wise Distribution of Pupils Who Scored Less than 20 % Marks: 1992 & 1996**  
(*per cent*)

Subject	Government High School Bharathannur		St. Augustine's High School Murukkumpuzha		Vrindavan High School Vlanthankara		Government High School Karakulam	
	1992	1996	1992	1996	1992	1996	1992	1996
Malayalam	34.8	28.8	20.9	22.7	29.9	8.0	14.0	4.0
English	65.5	71.5	68.0	69.9	67.0	41.0	57.0	35.0
Hindi	44.6	49.5	31.0	38.5	31.9	12.7	18.0	11.8
Social Studies	41.0	50.9	47.6	46.9	36.0	15.0	24.0	16.6
Science	56.8	62.0	55.0	65.0	48.9	26.0	39.0	29.0
Mathematics	63.5	70.5	64.6	65.0	59.8	28.9	56.6	36.8

which the percentages are extremely low; even the State average is very low in these subjects. It seems that the better performance of pupils in unaided schools has, to some extent, helped in raising the State average.

### Comparison of School and State Average

A comparison of the results in 1992 and 1996 reveals that while the number of students who scored low marks (0-9) in the two schools that improved their results declined drastically, in the other two schools, the numbers remained unchanged. Conversely, the number of those in the higher ranges (18-30 and 30-50) increased significantly in the former two schools. It is clear that English and Mathematics account for most of the failures as students who secure poor marks (less than 10) would not come under the category of students who get the benefit of moderation. Only those who score at least 20

per cent in any subject would come under this category.

The school averages and the State averages of marks obtained at the SSLC examination in the two years are furnished in Table 2.2.

### Remedial Teaching

Regular assessment of the progress of students in each subject is being done through monthly tests and term examinations in all the four schools. But remedial measures were found lacking in the two schools - St. Augustine's High School, Murukkumpuzha and Government High School, Bharathannur - the two schools in the sample, which have remained at low levels of performance during 1992-96. A scrutiny of the mark lists in standard VIII, IX, and X shows that the students who failed in the SSLC examination were those who had been laggards. Curiously enough, a few students failed in all the subjects while most of the failures are due to miserable performance in one (or two) of the subjects such as English and Mathematics.

**Table 2.2 School and State Averages of the SSLC Examination Marks: 1992 and 1996**

Subject	Max. Marks	Vrindavan High School Vlachankara		St. Augustine's High School Murukkumpuzha		Government High School Karakulam		Government High School Bharathannur		State Average	
		1992	1996	1992	1996	1992	1996	1992	1996	1992	1996
Malayalam I	50	19	23	21	19	20	26	17	19	25	24
Malayalam II	50	16	23	17	20	17	26	15	18	22	23
English I	50	9	10	9	7	10	12	8	6	15	11
English II	50	8	14	8	10	10	15	7	8	14	15
Hindi	50	16	20	14	12	15	19	12	11	19	18
History	50	15	16	14	13	17	21	15	13	20	21
Geography	50	15	19	14	14	15	19	14	11	20	20
Physics	50	16	18	15	10	16	19	14	10	23	14
Chemistry	50	11	16	10	9	13	15	11	8	18	16
Biology	50	12	16	11	12	13	17	11	11	14	20
Maths I	50	12	16	10	10	12	16	11	9	18	16
Maths II	50	10	18	9	10	10	14	10	9	16	17

Teachers of English and Mathematics reported that most of the failure cases were students from feeder schools, admitted in standard VIII. In Mathematics, the standard of these students was reportedly so low that they could not do even the four fundamental operations in arithmetic which they should have mastered at the lower primary stage itself.

The two schools that improved their results had arranged extra classes for remedial teaching during school timings. They recorded the marks obtained by students who undergo remedial teaching and monitored their progress. The teachers also took special care to diagnose their learning disabilities. Homework done by the students was promptly checked and corrected by the concerned teachers. Parents of these students were also enthused to provide facilities at home for study. Private tuition was also arranged in some cases.

The performance of students is also found to have had positive relationship with the following:

- (i) special tuition and attendance in tutorials;
- (ii) economic status of the household;
- (iii) educational status of the parents;
- (iv) occupational status of the parents;
- (v) involvement of parents and the local community in teaching and learning quality in the schools; and
- (vi) co-curricular activities and inter-school programmes for students and in-service training for teachers.

PTAs exist in all the four sample schools. However, in the two poor-performing schools - St. Augustine's High School and Bharathannur High School - they exist only on paper. In the other two schools, they are more active; regular meetings were held and campus development projects were undertaken. PTAs raised funds and met the expenditure for carrying out developmental activities.

At their meeting, the PTAs discussed the educational performance of the students in each class and made arrangements for improving the standards of the laggards through remedial teaching. Interviews with the parents and the community leaders in the vicinity of these schools revealed their interest in the progress of the schools. The interviewees expressed confidence that with the new system of panchayat-level planning with people's participation, the quality of the teaching-learning environment in schools could be raised.

### **Co-curricular Activities and Inter-School Programmes**

Co-curricular activities by their very nature do not form part of the existing scheme of evaluation of students. Nor are participation and performance of students in various inter-school competitions (such as competitions in essay writing, music, drama, athletics, sports and games) for which they

**Table 2.3 In-service Training for Teachers**

Name of school	Number of training courses attended				
	Once	Twice	More than two	Never	Total
Govt. High School Karakulam	3	2	1	1	7
Govt. High School Vrindavan	6	1	1	2	10
Govt. High School Bharathannur	1	3	1	4	9
Govt. High School St. Augustine's Murukkumpuzha	-	2	4	3	9
Total	10	8	7	10	35

are encouraged by giving incentives, considered for class promotion. The students have not suffered from such neglect since students who are talented in such activities happen to be, in general, brilliant in curricular activities as well.

### **In-service Training for Teachers**

In order to upgrade the competence of the teachers and to keep them abreast of the latest developments in content and in methodology, DIET (District Institute of Education and Training), SCERT (State Council for Educational Research and Training), and NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) conduct in-service training courses in various subjects. Circulars are sent to schools inviting teachers to participate in such courses. Teachers from all the four sample schools have undergone training in in-service courses (Table 2.3).

### **Suggestions by Educational Experts**

Suggestions by educational experts and former heads of secondary schools were collected through personal interviews and questionnaire on three major areas, ie academic, supervisory, and organisational, including participatory role of the community. The consensus emerging from the data is presented below.

#### ***(a) Academic***

The teaching staff is fully qualified. Teachers are not, however, dedicated to the job. Those who are truly sincere, seldom receive recognition or encouragement. Cash incentives to such teachers (ie teachers who have helped in raising SSLC examination results by 10 per cent or more over the previous year in a subject) are to be introduced. Penal action may be taken against indifferent and irresponsible teachers (eg teachers in whose subject the pass percentage fell by five per cent or more over the previous year).

Periodical in-service training, at least once in five years, should be given to all teachers by agencies such as DIET, SCERT, and NCERT.

It should also be examined whether heads of high

schools should be given the discretion to admit students in standard VIII after due screening in subjects such as Mathematics and English.

Remedial teaching is a must. One cannot afford to ignore individual difference among students in the learning process. The teachers concerned should identify poor performers and give them remedial instructions in the school. The progress of the slow-learners should be carefully monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

Associations of parents and teachers should form committees of their representatives to monitor remedial teaching and suggest improvements. In case of financial constraints, poor students should be given assistance from the PTA fund.

Regular homework and strict follow-up are essential to supplement classroom teaching. Teachers should encourage peer-group learning among students particularly for doing homework and for correcting compositions.

#### ***(b) Academic Supervision***

The head of a school is both an administrator and a supervisor. He is the guide and supervisor of the progress of academic work in the school. He is expected to ensure that all teachers prepare their annual plans as well as lesson plans for day-to-day teaching. List of slow learners in each subject prepared by individual teachers should be checked periodically and the progress of remedial instruction should be evaluated.

Annual inspection by District Educational Officers (DEOs) is at present confined to checking accounts and administrative matters. Inspection of academic performance has stopped almost entirely. The creation of a panel of subject experts from among experienced teachers to assist the DEOs in inspecting academic performance in the various subjects should be considered.

#### ***(c) Organisational Matters Including Utilisation of Community Resources***

A school cannot afford to remain isolated from

the community. It should interact with the community actively and continuously in all school-related matters such as strengthening school complexes and PTAs, formation and functioning of school management committees, and organisation of co-curricular activities.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The major findings of the study are summarised below:

1. Land, buildings, and teaching staff in all the four sample schools are adequate. Sanitation and drinking water facilities are also adequate.
2. Special training for teaching English and periodical in-service training for teachers in all other subjects do not receive, however,

the adequate importance that they deserve. Service conditions of teachers are reasonable; the private aided school teachers have an additional advantage since they have some privileges for political activity not enjoyed by teachers of government schools. The sample schools are large, each with about 180 students in standard X. Parents belong mainly to lower middle class and poor sections of society and are literate with the majority having education up to the secondary level: Quality of teaching and community intervention are better in the improving schools than in the poor, stagnant schools. Supervision and monitoring of the work of teachers by heads of schools and of the performance of schools by higher level officials such as the Educational Officer are found to be inefficient and require considerable toning up.



## Chapter 3

### Educational Environment of Schools

*C. Ramakrishnan\**

Social intervention in education has been quite prominent in Kerala. Sustained efforts for raising educational standards, given the constraints of economic inequality and caste barriers, are features of the recent history of the State. Thanks to social reform movements and the positive action by successive governments since independence, now every child has physical access to school. Kerala is the only State in India that has fulfilled the constitutional directive of universal and free school education despite being economically backward.

The State has more than 12,000 educational institutions, nearly 54,00,000 students and more than 1,80,000 teachers. The State has one lower

primary school per square km and one secondary school per four square km. In these respects, Kerala is far ahead of other parts of India.

Almost the entire population of the school-going age is enrolled in standard I and almost all of them complete the primary school, the proportion of dropout from this stage being minimal. Dropout rates at the upper primary and secondary levels also are extremely low (Table 3.1).

Kerala spends about 40 per cent of its annual budget on education. The per capita expenditure per annum for a primary school student which was Rs. 85.91 in 1970-71 rose to Rs. 2,265 in

**Table 3.1 Expected Percentage Rates of Dropout from Different Stages of School Education: 1994-95 (of Students Enrolled in Standard I)**

Gender	Stage of school								
	Lower Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST
Male	1.32	2.14	9.54	5.53	9.22	13.27	17.67	24.28	26.58
Female	1.36	1.96	8.68	3.54	6.54	10.68	11.24	16.86	18.71
Combined	1.34	2.05	9.13	7.93	7.93	12.12	14.46	20.56	22.71

Source: Director of Public Instruction; SC= Scheduled Caste, ST= Scheduled Tribe

1996-97; the corresponding hike per secondary student has been from Rs. 176.25 to Rs. 3,413 during the same period (Table 3.2).

The Sixth All India Educational Survey (1993) has noted that in terms of infrastructural facilities in schools, Kerala is way ahead of all other States in India. Yet, there is need for further

strengthening of the facilities. The survey found that as far as urinal and latrine facilities are concerned, Kerala schools have achieved, in general, a state of adequacy (Table 3.3).

In respect of infrastructural facilities, proportion of trained teachers and organisational and administrative structures, Kerala is undoubtedly

*\*The author is a high school teacher and is working at the Education Research Unit of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad. This paper is extracted from his study under KRPLLD, 'An action research project to improve the teaching-learning environment and number of working days in schools in Kerala through a participative intervention strategy'.*

**Table 3.2 Educational Expenditure per Student: 1970-1996 (Selected years only)**

Year	Expenditure per student (Rs.)	
	Primary	Secondary
1970-71	85.91	176.25
1975-76	170.02	361.02
1980-81	265.24	454.25
1985-86	479.23	906.91
1990-91	872.69	1500.00
1995-96	1965.14	3084.56
1996-97	2265.00	3413.00

Source: Economic Review, 1997-98, State Planning Board, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

in the forefront of other States. However, several studies have indicated that the State has not succeeded in translating these favourable factors into real achievement.

It was observed in a study by NCERT in 1994, that Kerala stands 18th in the list of States in educational standard at the school level. The pass percentages reported at the annual SSLC examinations also tell a similar story. The minimum percentage of marks prescribed for a pass at the examination is fixed at as low as 35 and 'moderation' is made liberally by granting grace marks to raise the actual marks secured by

the student. Despite these measures, about 50 per cent students - which comes to more than 2.5 lakh students - fail in the examination (Table 3. 4).

The question arises as to why Kerala performs so badly despite the presence of numerous favourable factors. The causes could lie at three levels (a) household, (b) socio-economic, and (c) school.

The present exercise is an attempt to discuss the school-related factors.

The major objective is to make a critical assessment of the teaching-learning environment of the

**Table 3.3 Infrastructural Facilities in Schools: Drinking Water, Urinals, and Latrines**

School stage	Total number of students	Percentage of schools having				
		Drinking water facilities	Urinal	Urinal exclusively for girls	Latrine	Latrine exclusively for girls
Secondary	12,84,398	80.85	84.20	55.30	45.53	15.30
Upper Primary	17,61,098	89.87	94.86	79.18	65.47	27.47
Lower Primary	23,49,666	95.47	98.89	91.78	88.04	68.20

Source: VI All India Educational Survey

selected schools. For this purpose, information on the number of actual annual working days, the quality of teaching, and the relationship between the two would be examined.

The possibilities of intervention in the functioning of schools through Panchayati Raj institutions with active participation of people would also be discussed. It is hoped that these discussions will yield suggestions for improving the functioning of schools in the State.

**Table 3.4 SSLC Examination Results, 1994-1996**

Year	No. of students appearing	Percentage of students passing
March 1994	5,70,011	49.12
March 1995	5,38,707	50.55
March 1996	5,36,617	48.38

Source: Director of Public Instruction

### The method

An extensive survey of the schools was carried out in 17 panchayats and one municipality, selected from different parts of Kerala, in order to give the enquiry a representative character.

The following are the selected panchayats:

Kayyur-Chimeni, Pilicode, Mayyil, Kalyasseri, Onchiyam, Naduvannur, Thariyode, Vallikunnu and Akanalloor (Malabar region), Madakkathara and Padiyani (Cochin region) and Vazhoor, Kumarakom, Nedumkandom, Kalanjoor, Mezhuveli, Klappana and, Vellnad (Travancore region). The only municipality in which the study was conducted is Kothamangalam (Idukki district) in the Travancore region. Besides, a survey was completed in Madakkathara village panchayat (in Cochin region) and another in Alappuzha municipality in Travancore region. Analysis of the surveys conducted in these two areas is not

included in this report for some technical reasons. In all, surveys were conducted in 200 schools - 167 primary schools and 33 high schools (Table 3.5).

**Table 3.5 Schools Covered in the Survey**

	Govt. schools	Private schools	Total
Primary	68	99	167
High	21	12	33
Total	89	111	200

Based on a detailed interview schedule, information and opinions were collected from a sample of students, teachers, parents, and people's representatives. A special intervention programme was carried out in the educational institutions of Padiyur panchayat (Thrissur district) to find out the extent to which local self-government institutions would be able to intervene in educational matters in the locality and the difficulties such interventions might encounter. A major handicap that the survey team had to face was the haphazard manner in which school records and accounts, particularly information on academic activities, was maintained.

### Infrastructure

School buildings are available to a reasonably satisfactory level in all the schools surveyed. About 79 per cent of the classrooms are housed in permanent buildings and 19 per cent in semi-permanent buildings. The proportion of classes held in temporary structures is as low as two per cent. However, it was found that in many schools, particularly in the Malabar region, buildings conform to the pre-Kerala Education Rules (1959) specifications and are unsuitable for effective and comfortable classroom teaching. In such schools, different classes are held in a hall, un-separated by partitioning, either temporary or permanent.

The situation is not bad with regard to essential infrastructural facilities such as urinal, latrine, and

drinking water, but it has to be improved considerably to make the facilities adequate. Urinals are reportedly available in 80 per cent of the schools, but only in nominal terms. It would be necessary to compare this finding with those of the Sixth All India Educational Survey (1993). The situation leaves much to be desired in terms of maintenance and upkeep of the available facilities.

In the case of classroom furniture also, there is gross inadequacy. Though library facilities are reported to be available in 80 per cent of the schools under survey, the proportion of schools that make effective use of the library is extremely low.

As far as the availability of teachers is concerned, the situation is reasonably good since only 20 per cent of the available teaching posts are found vacant.

### Working Days

The survey has revealed that there is a wide gap between the number of working days reported and the effective number of teaching days in the surveyed schools. While the number of working days for schools is reported to be around 190 in an academic year, the effective teaching days come only to an average of 137 (Table 3.6).

The number of effective teaching days in primary

schools are in fact a little higher, about 141 (74.2 per cent) since student agitation is uncommon in them.

### Learning

A scrutiny of the marks obtained by students in the half-yearly (second terminal) examination showed that the performance (invariably in all the standards) has to be improved significantly, especially in subjects like Malayalam, English, Hindi, and Mathematics. In standard IV, more than 43 per cent of the students secure only less than 40 per cent of marks. In the case of languages, little difference exists between Malayalam and English in respect of marks scored. In standard IV, evaluation of students for English learning is done through oral tests.

In general, the level of performance of students, as revealed by the internal examination results, deteriorates as they move to higher standards (Table 3.7). Progressive deterioration is observed in all the subjects. At the lower primary level, the percentage of students with less than 40 per cent marks for English, Malayalam, and arithmetic remains in the range of 29-43. The range rises to 40-50 at the upper primary stage (see figures for standard VI and VIII in Table 3.7) and to 55-78 at the secondary stage (see standard VIII in Table 3.7). In the case of Hindi, while the percentage of students obtaining less than 40 per cent marks at the upper primary stage is around 45, the corresponding figure for

**Table 3.6 Working Days and Effective Teaching Days in Schools**

No. of working days	Average for the schools in the survey areas						Net No. of teaching days
	Number of days of teaching lost on account of						
	Student agitation	Declared holidays	Other holidays	Festivals	Exams	Teachers' leave	
190	4	4	1	3	21	20	137
100%	2.1%	2.1%	0.5%	1.6%	11.1%	10.5%	72.1%

standards VIII and IX are 71 and 65. However, the degree of deterioration is the highest in the case of English, followed by Mathematics, and Hindi, in that order, as the percentages of students getting less than 20 per cent marks in the different standards clearly show.

### SSLC Examination

Results of the SSLC examinations during 1993-

94 to 1996-97 (Table 3.8) show that they hover around the State average in the majority of schools except in two or three cases. A surprising observation is that the extremely low performance in different standards including standard X, in the internal examinations, is not reflected in the performance in the SSLC examination. Obviously, the pass percentages

**Table 3.7 Percentage Distribution of Students by Marks Obtained at the Half-yearly Examination**

Subject/ Marks	Percentage of students				
	Std IV	Std VI	Std VII	Std VIII	Std IX
Malayalam					
More than 80%	20.4	10.2	11.4	3.6	5.8
40%-80%	50.5	49.8	50.0	41.9	50.4
20%-40%	17.3	27.6	25.0	35.9	27.2
Less than 20%	11.8	12.4	13.6	18.6	16.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
English					
More than 80%	27.8	6.8	6.7	1.8	2.8
40%-80%	46.4	38.9	41.3	19.8	25.9
20%-40%	17.2	28.4	25.8	33.4	29.1
Less than 20%	8.6	25.9	26.2	45.0	42.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Hindi					
More than 80%	-	11.9	11.3	4.0	4.6
40%-80%	-	43.4	42.6	24.6	30.2
20%-40%	-	23.4	22.6	28.5	30.5
Less than 20%	-	21.3	23.5	42.9	34.7
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Arithmetics/ Mathematics					
More than 80%	13.4	7.4	7.5	2.8	3.5
40%-80%	43.2	42.7	41.7	23.5	25.1
20%-40%	27.6	29.6	27.1	27.5	27.4
Less than 20%	15.8	20.3	23.7	46.2	44.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 3.8 SSLC Examination Results in the Survey Area, 1993-94 to 1996-97**

<b>Panchayat in which the school is located</b>	<b>Pass percentage</b>			
	<b>1993-94</b>	<b>1994-95</b>	<b>1995-96</b>	<b>1996-97</b>
Kayyur-Chimeni	58	59	54	56
Pilikode	80	79	75	81
Mayyil	30	33	44	45
Kalyasseri	-	-	-	62
Onchiyam	41	29	44	48
Naduvannur	29	23	28	29
Thiriyode	25	18	34	54
Vallikunnu	32	28	28	26
Alanalloor	31	30	21	25
Padiyur	71	62	60	70
Kothamangalam	-	69	77	75
Nedunkandam	-	56	44	30
Mezhuveli	46	49	40	54
Kalanjur	40	37	29	40
Vazhoor	73	66	63	58
Kumarakom	58	61	58	47
Klappana	40	42	43	42
Vellnad	48	51	54	53
State (March Examination)	49	51	48	51

at the latter are ‘inflated’ ones as a result of liberal valuation and award of unearned marks through what is euphemistically called ‘moderation’.

Another aspect covered by the survey has been the attitudes and points of view of the major concerned groups in the field of education such as teachers, parents, students, and people’s representatives at the local level. Information on these aspects was also collected through interview schedules.

## **Parents**

Our enquiry has shown that parents select schools for admission of their wards more often on the basis of physical accessibility (eg nearness of schools, transport facilities for reaching school) rather than of educational standards maintained by them. Most parents are seldom conscious of, or keen to know about, the various curricular and extra-curricular activities in schools. Lack of spare time, economic problems, and lack of initiative

are reportedly the major reasons for such an attitude. But the parents agree that school activities should be strengthened and that schools would definitely improve if services of experts and specialists of the localities concerned were made available for initiating and energising curricular and other activities in schools. The majority of parents expressed their inability to monitor, guide or assist in the learning processes of their children at home. Awareness of the existence of, or the need for, associations of parents or guardians or of their activities is confined to an extremely small proportion of the parents.

The desirability of organisational activities on the part of students elicited no unanimous opinion from the parents. While one section favoured freedom for students to organise themselves into associations for protecting their rights and fighting for their claims, the other totally opposed the idea of student organisation. The majority opinion was that organisational activities of students, which do not impede learning activity at school and home, are necessary and need to be promoted. Their view was similar on the question of teachers' rights to organisational activities.

Private (household) expenditure varied from Rs. 302 to Rs. 2,258 per annum at the primary school stage and from Rs.750 to Rs.3,000 per annum at the secondary school stage. Obviously, school education is not effectively free and expenditure varies widely depending on the economic status of parents, type of school, and the distance of the school from home.

## **Teachers**

Teachers are a dissatisfied group so far as the prevailing curricula, syllabi, and textbooks are concerned. Most of them are of the view that the structure and content of textbooks for different standards need immediate revision and improvement. In the case of language teaching,

they find that the present method of teaching grammar is obsolete, uninteresting, and destructive of students' enthusiasm in language learning. The present system of re-training is counter-productive though regular re-training of teachers is essential. Re-training, to be meaningful, should be capable of imparting new information and improving teaching methods and techniques. Teachers are unanimous that the methods of evaluation being followed require immediate change. An ideal evaluation system should be capable of assessing the capability of children in diverse areas of activity, not in memorising alone. The teachers, however, stopped short of suggesting alternative approaches or criteria for evaluation.

While recommending revision of evaluation methods, the teachers argued for continuance of the system of unit tests and terminal examinations. Teachers were, in general, hostile to the idea of evaluation of teachers' performance by students. They were more amenable to the idea of peer evaluation. They were not, however, sure as to how peer evaluation could be carried out objectively and comprehensively and for what purposes such evaluation should be put to use. A frequent complaint raised by teachers, particularly at the primary level, was about the inadequacy of class room space and lack of partitioning between classes as well as about the delay in the supply of textbooks. They also complained about over-crowding, even though, paradoxically enough, apprehension about falling strength and closing down of class divisions was also haunting the teaching community. The teachers in government schools reported that the practice of wanton transfer of teachers during different stages of the academic year and of letting vacancies remain for a long period affect their performance. Teachers expressed different views about the ideal school timing; while some were of the view that a school day from 9 am to 2 pm would be ideal, others said the present timings should continue unchanged. Obviously there has to be

sufficient flexibility with regard to the timing and the length of the school day depending on local conditions and requirements.

### **Students**

Students have serious difficulties in learning English and Mathematics, primarily due to what they perceive as unfriendly and drab teaching methods. They find fault with the practice of teachers teaching languages such as Hindi and English in the Malayalam medium. School libraries are seldom made accessible to them. Even secondary school students hardly know what a reference text means. Crude corporal punishment practices still exist in some schools. Students complain that there would be, on an average, about seven to eight classroom hours in a week that go without teachers and teaching.

### **People's Representatives**

People's representatives at the local level are, in general, totally in the dark about the goings-on in schools. They showed some interest in improving physical facilities in schools. The different aspects of the functioning of an educational institution and the scope of intervention by the local-level democratic institutions in the new atmosphere of people's participatory planning and development have yet to get the attention of the people's representatives. It is necessary now to formulate an appropriate approach to intervention in, and evaluation of, school-related matters by parents and people's representatives.

### **Findings**

1. The available data indicate that the different dimensions of school education in the State should be reconsidered seriously. In the present situation, students seldom acquire the capabilities expected of them at each stage in any of the subjects taught in class, including the mother

tongue. In other words, the curriculum goal is not being attained by the system. (Here we are not unaware of the fact that a clearly stated curriculum does not exist for the upper primary and the secondary stages of school.) Interestingly enough, this failure does not signify the lack of native intelligence of the students, a fact strongly underscored by their high levels of knowledge about games (eg football, cricket) and sports, cinema, and fashion goods, as well as their capacity to translate information into activities in everyday life. Students supposedly poor in arithmetic show little difficulty in displaying their arithmetical acumen in business transactions, and students who have been branded dull and muddle-headed, have proven themselves to be quite imaginative and constructive in practical life situations. All these suggest that (a) the content of school text books and the instructional strategy followed in schools are quite out of tune with the abilities and aptitudes of the majority of students; (b) they seldom help enthuse students in learning; (c) learning hardly appears challenging to the student in any way; and (d) the teaching-learning scheme for schools is prepared with scant regard for linking it to the physical and psychological development of the children and their environment.

In consequence, the student gets alienated from school and the reflection of this process is found in the marks he/she secures in the different subjects at various stages of schooling.

2. The instructional techniques being employed by teachers fail to enthuse children. It is the realisation of this fact



that has compelled teachers to indicate that re-training of teachers should not be allowed to continue in the present form and that it needs to be made more informative and based on appropriate instructional technology and strategy.

3. Evaluation methods need to be so revised as to make them suited to an assessment of the different types of capabilities of students, not merely examining their ability for memorising. Further, scientific enquiries are required for making such revision. Such enquiries should be made by a team of teachers and educational experts rather than by experts alone, as is the current practice.
4. The fact that students find it impossible to attain the goals of education despite the medium of instruction being Malayalam, has to be viewed with due seriousness. In standard IV, about 29 per cent of students score less than 40 per cent marks. At higher levels, the performance is worse. The reasons for the poor standards have to be examined. A major factor could be that the teaching techniques followed and the contents of textbooks in use are not designed properly. It is evident that the educational system has not yet succeeded in developing a clear-cut approach to learning the mother tongue. Nor has it been decided by the system as to what level of proficiency in the mother tongue should the student possess at different stages of school education.
5. The general impression is that learning English language is a difficult task for the students. However, our analysis of the marks obtained by the students for

Hindi and English shows that there is no perceptible difference in performance. The lesson to be drawn from the analysis is that the method adopted to handle languages other than the mother tongue, such as Hindi and English, should be an appropriate one. The response of students in this regard has been uniform across all regions covered by the survey. Quite contrary to common understanding, we found that the performance of students in the examination has been exceptionally poor in the case of Hindi. This may be because of the 'translation' method that is employed to teach Hindi and English in almost all the surveyed schools. If a language is viewed as a medium for communication of ideas, then this method is not at all suited to learning and assimilation. This finding therefore is a pointer to the need for developing a new approach to the learning of other languages.

6. The percentages of marks obtained by students in examinations at the lower levels of school and in the SSLC examination are not consistent with each other. In some schools the percentages remain extremely low throughout. The reasons for the observed inconsistency may be the following:
  - (i) real attention to effective teaching is given only in the terminal standard (X standard); and
  - (ii) the pattern used for assessment in the SSLC examination might be different from that is followed at the lower standards.
7. In designing the syllabus for students at

each level of school, the educationists appear to have given scant attention to the number of effective days of teaching in an academic year. It is found that the syllabus is prepared for an academic year of 200 working days, whereas teaching activities take place only for an average of about 147 days.

8. It is observed that teaching seldom takes place during March while SSLC examination is on. A realistic syllabus should be one that is prepared taking into account, and making allowance for, the number of days spent on non-teaching activities in schools. Otherwise students are made to 'learn' in about 100-115 days a syllabus intended to be taught in 200 days. Such learning would obviously be self-defeating; the students 'learn' without assimilating; and the teacher 'covers' the syllabus without really imparting knowledge. Consequently, the students reach the higher class without acquiring skills expected of them. In our study, this consequence manifested itself in two forms.

(i) the percentage of students receiving high marks (ie 80 per cent and above) progressively declines while moving up to the higher classes; and

(ii) the percentage of students securing poor marks (ie 40 per cent and below) progressively increases as we move up to the higher classes.

Ideally speaking, examinations should not merely help in identifying the relative strengths and weaknesses of students, but also promote their strengths and rectify their weaknesses, if necessary, through remedial teaching activities.

9. Such remedial activities are seldom taking place at present. Students are prepared for the next examination without any remedial action for improving the standards of those who had performed poorly in a given examination. Further, the present system of examinations only evaluates the ability of students to memorise and learn by rote. Dismal performance is observed as a general phenomenon even in the case of the mother tongue, with 50 per cent of the students having performed badly. There is need to study the underlying factors for improving the teaching-learning techniques specific to the regional environment, and for allowing the students to learn at their own pace and style determined by their native talents. Instead, the present system rolls on mechanically, debilitating their learning faculties.

10. Teachers' views are found, in some cases, to be inconsistent. While suggesting radical changes in the learning and evaluation methods, they also favour increase in the curriculum load. While it may appear paradoxical, this view only reflects the absence of a clear understanding on the part of teachers of the educational goals required for moulding a new generation. It should be noted that the education system in Kerala has not yet succeeded in developing a well-defined curriculum for schooling beyond the lower primary stage. Naturally, therefore, teachers form their views on the educational process on the basis of propaganda appearing in the media.

11. Teachers are of the common view that serious monitoring of the educational activities in schools seldom takes place.

Arrangements for academic monitoring do not exist. Mechanisms should be developed for group discussions of the teaching-learning problems encountered by teachers in classrooms.

12. There seems to be a consensus that public intervention in education is essential. The nature of such intervention required for improving the physical facilities in school is also clear. In academic matters, its scope is not, however, fully understood. Serious thought should be given to the nature, extent, and type of intervention in the affairs of schools including academic activities by the local community. Since the responsibility of such local intervention vests, according to Constitutional amendments 73 and 74, with the local self-government institutions, it is necessary to evolve different models of such interventions. The educational activities taking place under the leadership of the local self-government institutions in different parts of Kerala and the school-complex activities in the Padiyur panchayat (Appendix to this chapter) represent preliminary steps in this direction.
13. According to official statistics, the Kerala Government spent Rs. 2,265 and

Rs. 3,413 per student per annum at the primary and the secondary levels in 1996-97. In addition, the households incur sizeable expenditure on the education of their wards. The Kerala society is thus spending a significant share of its income on educational investment annually. However, the State has reached a critical juncture where it fails to realise commensurate returns from its educational investment.

14. Institutional leadership has to play a crucial role in linking the institution with the society. Since, in several cases, the leadership has failed to discharge this responsibility, the educational institutions have tended to get alienated from the society which they are intended to serve.

The preceding notes highlight the need for comprehensive discussions on the rigidity, lack of accountability, and inefficiency of the present educational structure and its methods. On this basis, fresh insights should be incorporated into the structure and management of the educational system and into the scope of further democratisation of educational activities. A better understanding of economic dimensions and magnitudes of education is also required.

## Appendix

### Local Interventions in Improving School Performance: The Padiyur Experience

Padiyur village panchayat, in the Vellankallu block of Thrissur district is 18.57 square km in area and has a population of about 20,000. The history

of modern education in the Padiyur village panchayat began in 1920 when the St. Mary's Lower Primary School was established under the

aegis of the St. Mary's Church. In this area in the erstwhile princely state of Cochin, education had been earlier under the indigenous system. Except one, all the schools in this panchayat - four lower primary (LP) schools, two upper primary (UP) schools, and one high school - had come into existence before 1956, the year in which the present State of Kerala was formed. All these schools are of the private, aided type.

The total number of school students in the panchayat during 1996-97 was 3205 - 1773 boys and 1432 girls. Table 3.A.1 furnishes information on the total number of school children in this panchayat from 1990-91 to 1996-97.

**Table 3.A.1 Total Number of School Students in Padiyur Panchayat, 1990-91 - 1996-97**

Year	No. of School Students
1990-91	3057
1991-92	3093
1992-93	3217
1993-94	3322
1994-95	3624
1995-96	3197
1996-97	3205

Source: Development Plan, Padiyur Village Panchayat.

Of this, 13.6 per cent belongs to the Schedule Castes. Dropout rates are relatively low. During 1996-97, only 41 children - 25 boys and 16 girls - constituting only 1.3 per cent of the total enrolment - has dropped out. The reasons for dropout should be studied carefully at the micro level. Since adequate school facilities do exist in the panchayat, 100 per cent enrolment has been achieved. The panchayat is in an advantageous position in respect of physical facilities of schooling. However, further action to strengthen the facilities is needed in several aspects (Table 3.A.2).

In respect of teaching facilities, all schools in the panchayat are in a comfortable position. All the teaching posts sanctioned are filled up. Besides, 88 per cent of the teachers is inhabitants of the locality, residing within a radius of 10 km of the schools concerned.

The only high school in the panchayat, HDPS HS, has maintained a record of pass percentages at levels higher than the State average, as figures in Table 3.A.3 indicate.

In contrast to the relatively satisfactory results of the SSLC examination in this particular high school, the performance at the lower stages in the schools is not satisfactory. An analysis of the marks obtained by students in the half-yearly examination reveals the backwardness of students, particularly in subjects such as English, Hindi, and Arithmetic/ Mathematics.

In August 1996, a 'pre-test' was conducted as part of the *Vidya Jyothi Aksharapulari* (Dawn of Letters of the Beacon of Learning) among students in standard IV of the Thrissur district. Students who obtained more than 80 per cent marks at the 'pre-test' were excluded from the test. Among the students who were tested, nearly 60 per cent (175 out of 291) was found extremely poor. They had not even acquired command of the alphabet.

Some voluntary agencies had tried to find out the problems of the education sector in Padiyur panchayat. A one-day educational survey conducted in July 1995, in which 125 volunteers actively participated, marked the beginning of such educational activities. The major findings of the survey were discussed by the local people at the meetings held in eight centres in the panchayat.

Under the aegis of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), an effort was made during the summer

holidays in 1997 through the *Vidyakeli* programme (the programme of learning through playing) to improve - through remedial teaching activities - the educational level of students who were identified as backward in learning. For this purpose, the Kodungalloor zone of KSSP prepared special teaching tools. The programme was intended for students who had completed their studies in standard IV. At this programme, which was conceived as a pilot exercise, 25 school children participated in storytelling and games of different sorts employed as teaching devices. Efforts were made to make maximum use of the expertise of persons in the locality interested and well versed in educational activities. Active involvement and participation of the parents throughout the programme were ensured. A team of six persons took the lead in organising the programme. It included school teachers

and college students. The activities of *Vidyakeli* provide concrete proof that creative educational programmes would get the unstinted support of the society. It is against this background that we decided to make an intervention in the educational activities of the panchayat and conduct studies on education.

**Table 3.A.3 Pass Percentage at SSLC Examination: 1993-94 to 1997-98: HDPS HS**

Year	Percentage	State average
1993-94	71	Around 50
1994-95	62	
1995-96	60	
1996-97	69	
1997-98	78	

**Table 3.A.2 Physical Facilities in Schools in Padiyur Village Panchayat**

School	Area of premises	Availability of							
		Staff room	Lab-oratory	Lib-rary	Adequate number of rooms	Lat-rine	Elect-ricity	Play-ground	Adequate drinking water
St Mary's LPS	106 cents	NA	NA	A	NA	A	A	NA	A
RIS	29 cents	NA	NA	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
DBEPS	60 cents	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	A	NA	NA
SNV LPS	45 cents	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
SNGSS UPS	122 cents	A	NA	NA	NA	A	A	NA	NA
SSA UPS	111 cents	A	NA	NA	NA	A	A	NA	NA
HDPS HS	308 cents	A	A	NA	NA	A	A	NA	A

N A = Not Available, A = Available

RIS = Rehmathulla Islamia School, DBEPS = Don Bosco European Primary School, SNV LPS = Sree Narayana Vilasom Lower Primary School, SNGSS UPS = Sree Narayana Guru Smaraka Sanghom Upper Primary School, SSA UPS = St. Sebastian Anglo-Indian Upper Primary School, HDPS HS = Hindu Dharma Paripalana Sanghom High School.

Source: Development Outline of Padiyur Panchayat

Attempts to intervene directly in educational activities through the People's Planning Campaign for developing a comprehensive development perspective were begun in the favourable social atmosphere that prevailed in the panchayat. The educational action committee has succeeded in evolving a wholesome approach in the field of education and giving shape on its basis to a variety of projects. Such projects belong broadly to three categories: (i) academic activities; (ii) activities supplementary to classroom learning; and (iii) democratic activities.

The programme of the panchayat school complex that provides the leadership to all these categories of activities has been envisaged in the pattern indicated below.

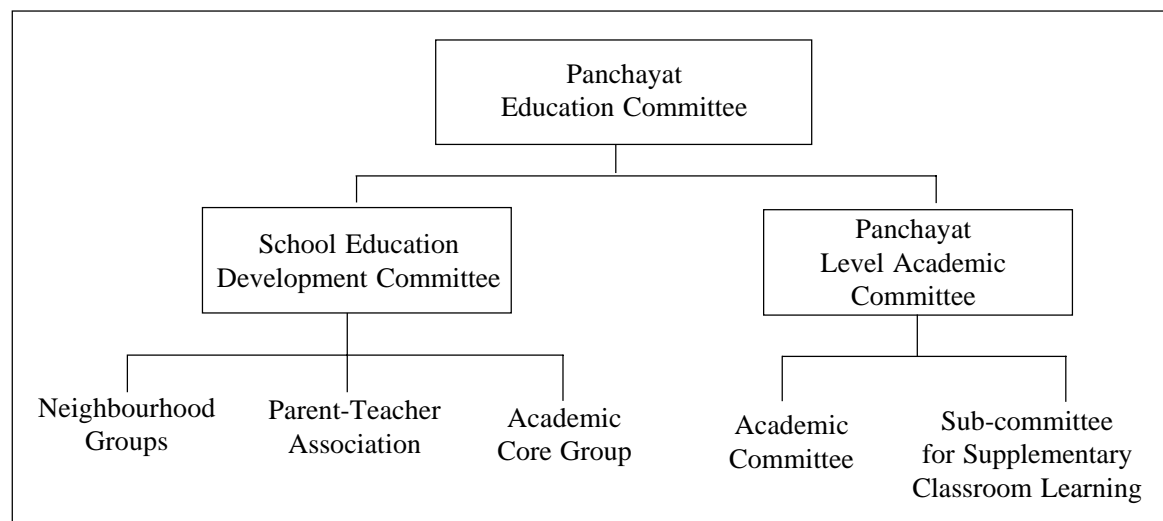
In association with the process of taking the new learning-teaching activities to the teachers, an education programme for parents was conducted. The purpose was to acquaint parents with the limitations of the existing teaching programme and teaching and learning methods. It was also expected that through the programme, both parents and teachers would become convinced of the urgent need for developing new programmes and approaches.

The first meeting of the Panchayat Education Committee was held on 13 June 1997 for giving leadership to the activities of the educational complex of the panchayat. School-level committees were formed immediately thereafter. In order to give leadership to the academic activities taking place in the panchayat, a panchayat-level academic committee was formed. This committee planned and implemented academic activities in the panchayat.

### Teacher Training

A two-day workshop was held on June 20 and 21 in which all teachers of the lower primary schools in the panchayat participated. The main purpose of the training imparted to teachers was to convince them through action that every teacher was capable of contributing to the development of new teaching methods and forms, which would be child-centred, action-based, and true to the realities of life. The contents of the teaching programme were of a kind appropriate for ensuring active participation of all the teachers undergoing the training. The methods by which each teacher could prepare teaching devices appropriate to his classroom conditions were therefore discussed throughout the course of training. This kind of workshop was held twice in 1997.

### Structure of Panchayat Education Complex of Padiyur Village Panchayat



### Activities of Panchayat-level Academic Committee

Academic Committee	Sub-committee for Supplementing Classroom Learning
1. Monitoring	1. Short-distance learning trips
2. School management	2. Science club activities
3. Comprehensive evaluation of students' performance	3. Farmers' club
4. Re-training of teachers	4. Mathematics club
5. Production of learning tools	5. Morning assembly
6. Conscientisation of parents	6. Flower gardening
7. Observance of the National Independence Day	7. Vegetable gardening
8. Improvement of the physical facilities in households	8. Literary society
	9. Manuscript magazine

### Workshop to Produce Learning Tools

The workshop for producing learning tools held on September 23 proved to be a model demonstration of the possibilities of making use of local-level skills and knowledge in educational activities. A large variety of teaching tools out of waste products and cheap resources in the locality were produced when the teachers selected from each of the schools, PTA activists, and local people who had special handicraft skills in different areas came together. This workshop thus proved to be a concrete example of the potential of local people to support the educational process.

### Evaluation Workshop

It is well known that many Education Commissions identified examination as the villain of the formal educational process. In fact, it is the examination which determines what the type of teaching would be. The present examination methods are incapable of evaluating the faculties of a student other than his/her memory. Even though there is unanimity in the view that the present system of examinations should change, there is no consensus about the nature and extent of the required change. It is in this context that workshops were organised in the panchayat to prepare questions to evaluate

the talents of children, going beyond the established patterns of examination.

On November 23, a workshop was organised to prepare question papers for the half-yearly examination, through the joint efforts of the teachers in the panchayat. The main discussion was on the limitations of the existing method of evaluation. Groups were formed on the basis of these discussions to prepare the questions. It was a refreshing experience for teachers and students alike, when evaluation was done on this basis. The responses were, however, not uniform. While a few educational institutions responded in favour of the new approach, others took a negative stance.

### Training in English Language Teaching

In order to improve the standard of teaching of the English language, a syllabus was prepared with the help of DIET (District Institute of Education and Training), Thrissur. An eight-day training programme was organised for the English language teachers at the primary school level. The teachers welcomed the programme wholeheartedly. In continuation of this training programme, an English subject council was formed.

## Parental Education

The role of parents in educational activities is crucial. Educational authorities pay little attention to parents' participation. Formal education has become an activity concerned with teachers and students only. Parents' education is an effort to change this state of affairs. A workshop of all the PTA members of schools in the panchayat was held on 22 December 1998, in which topics such as the role of parents in educational process and the relevance of mothers' associations were discussed in-depth. Educational discourses were conducted in various schools in the locality in continuation of the process begun by this workshop.

## Extra-curricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities are an integral part of the educational scheme. They are vital to make learning a pleasurable experience and an environment-related exercise. The programmes organised in the panchayat showed that it is possible to develop the creative faculties of children, to inculcate scientific temper in them, to foster their powers of observation, and through all such processes, to engender in them an orientation towards learning. Simple and short study tours were organised in all schools in the panchayat. Besides, programmes such as vegetable gardening and production of a magazine and a wall magazine were carried out. Observance of Independence Day, Republic Day, etc. was developed into new devices for learning of history. In connection with the celebrations of the 50th Indian Independence Day on August 15, preparations began in July: School committees were formed; rehearsals were held for the singing of patriotic songs, decorations were made; processions were organised; interviews were arranged with freedom fighters; and a variety of art forms were demonstrated in which the major theme was the freedom movement and its various episodes. *Anyonyam* (Debate), organised in all schools in the panchayat in connection with the Independence Day celebrations, was a programme in which all teachers and students participated enthusiastically. This programme also came up as a model learning device.

A workshop was held on the methods of evaluation in connection with the observance of Teachers' Day on September 5. It discussed the unscientific nature of the prevailing methods of evaluation.

On November 14, the birth day of Jawaharlal Nehru, celebrated annually as Children's day all over India, quiz programmes and sports competitions were organised.

As an extension of the school-level activities, programmes were organised at the panchayat level. The educational programme organised under the aegis of the panchayat against the background of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments turned out to be a rewarding experience for all. The panchayat has become aware that it is possible for local self-government institutions to give leadership in educational activities.

## Observations

1. Panchayat Educational Committees can provide leadership for the activities of educational complexes in panchayats; Academic Committees can play a useful role. A democratic camaraderie in the educational front can be brought about through such people's committees.
  2. The workshop on the preparation of teaching aids and the activities, organised in connection with the activities of the Golden Jubilee of Independence, proved the possibilities of people's intervention, directly as well as indirectly, in educational activities of the locality.
- (i) Many of the waste products and several cheap materials are useful in the making of educational tools and instruments. Moreover, the workshops demonstrated that it is possible to make use of the community skills, particularly in handicrafts, and to develop new instructional patterns and devices through the joint efforts of teachers and parents. The workshop thus contributed



to the development of a new understanding of educational tools.

- (ii) The debate between the students on the one hand, and the elders and war veterans on the other, conducted as part of the Independence Day fete, opened up new methods for learning national history. The workshop demonstrated that the expertise of the society can be employed to further the aims of education.
3. Teachers were trained in two-day camps, combining one working day and a holiday. All the teachers in the panchayat attended the camps, even though no payment was made to them by way of travel expenses or daily allowances. Noon meals were served from panchayat funds. The training programmes were conducted on the basis of a well-designed plan, making use of the services of the best resource persons available and ensuring universal attendance of teachers. Constraints of time or loss of a holiday did not deter the teachers from undergoing the training, thanks to the high quality of the contents of the training programme and the opportunities ensured for the participants to share their individual experiences with the fellow teachers. The programme clearly demonstrated the pitfalls of the usual training programmes run by the Education Department.
4. Study tours conducted to the sea shore quite close to the panchayat and to the industrial units and the college nearby proved to be a rich experience and demonstrated the possibility of making such tours an effective learning device.
5. It will be difficult to make a quantitative assessment of changes in students' activity brought through this new method. The question of designing devices appropriate for making precise assessment of such changes needs to be taken up.
6. The common understanding among educationists is that the evaluation of the performance of students should be made by

their teachers themselves. The teachers have, however, at present, no role in the development of tools of evaluation or setting question papers for terminal examinations. In contrast to this prevailing practice, some efforts were made to prepare questions through the combined efforts of the teachers. The need to evaluate the faculties of students beyond their memory power was seriously discussed at the evaluation workshops. As a result, it became possible, to a moderate extent, to develop devices for evaluating other faculties of students also.

7. The quality of English language teaching in the schools is very low. When an opportunity arose and when better resource persons were available, teachers tended to show a lot of enthusiasm to partake in the training programmes continuously. These programmes provide opportunities to primary-level teachers of the panchayat for group discussions and self-learning.
8. It is necessary to educate parents about the importance of education and limitations of the prevailing educational process. The parents should be made aware of the need for action-oriented classes and active parental participation in the educational process. The workshop on parental education suggests that parents have keen interest in discussions on this topic. Parents' education would open up new dimensions to educational activities.
9. It is the responsibility of local self-government institutions to ensure the quality of teaching in schools. The Department of Education and institutions like DIET should help these institutions to discharge this responsibility. The officialdom in the State and the DIET are, however, yet to recognise this fact.
10. It is desirable that the village panchayat itself becomes the training unit for primary-level teachers. The training unit for high school teachers may be organised at the block level.

11. Among the major problems identified are :
  - (i) The difficulties experienced by teachers to dispense with the conventional methods of teaching; (ii) the inability on the part of the entire local population to get convinced of the need for their active participation in educational activities; and (iii) the failure of parents to see the need for new methods of evaluation.
12. The PTAs are yet to acquire the ability to develop a broad perspective in educational activities. Serious thought has to go into the question as to how to involve the PTAs and all others interested in the promotion of education of the right kind.
13. It is necessary to link extra-curricular activities organically with classroom activities and explore possibilities of developing such an integrated approach.
14. Thought needs to be given to the question as to how learning time could be increased for ensuring that all students, coming from diverse environments and with varying capabilities, attain the desired curricular goals.

## Chapter 4

# Quality Improvement in Government Schools: An Experiment

G. Mohan Kumar and V. Sasi Kumar\*

### Introduction

The goal of education is not just to impart knowledge but also to mould students into responsible citizens contributing to social well-being. This goal will be realised only when teachers inculcate in the students a sense of curiosity about, and a desire for, learning by nurturing their innate talents and creating social awareness in them. But, at present, education is confined to learning, often only to memorise the syllabi for reproducing parts of them in examinations. The process of teaching and learning has been accepted almost as a necessary evil for scoring high marks in examination, particularly in entrance examinations for professional courses such as medicine and engineering. The students who get admission to such courses are eventually able to get well-paid jobs, not necessarily jobs in which they have talent or interest. Often, their awareness about social realities is very low. The educated find it difficult, in general, to fit into the social ethos. They are likely to grow up into self-centred individuals.

In Kerala, schools under private management, particularly of the recognised but unaided category and those under the government are, in general, poor in educational standards, in terms of marks scored by students in examinations like the SSLC. There are of course exceptions to this rule; some outstanding exceptions. But it is generally accepted that the educational standards in most of the government schools do not meet expected levels.

The problem of inadequate instruction and indifferent learning in government schools is not confined to any particular stage of school education; it is found both at the primary and the

secondary stages. At the primary stage, the government schools lack, in general, infrastructural facilities, enthusiastic teachers, and enticing learning environment. Kindergarten or pre-primary education is run almost entirely by private agencies in Kerala. Although innovative approaches such as the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) are being implemented in several districts, they have come in for severe public criticism largely due to the lack of involvement and apathy on the part of teachers. It is universally accepted that primary school is the stage at which foundation for character-building is firmly laid. This stage should provide the student with ideas of vastness and variety of the world they live in and open up their minds to its marvels. Primary education should kindle children's curiosity and creativity. While a good syllabus and appropriate teaching techniques are essential components of an efficient educational process, it is ultimately the teaching-learning environment and quality and application of the human material for teaching that decide the educational outcome.

One of the areas which has not received adequate attention of the educational agencies is the role that people of a locality would be able to play in influencing educational process in that locality. Kerala has had the rich experience of enlightened individuals and agencies entering the field of education on their own, by donating land, constructing buildings, and mobilising resources. However, the tradition of people of a locality taking active interest in the functioning of school is not strong. In recent years it has taken root only in a limited number of localities. Incidentally,

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*\*The authors are scientists working at Centre for Earth Science Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. This paper is extracted from their studies under KRPLLD, 'Teaching science in government high schools: possibility of improvements through low-cost methods' and 'Improving education in government upper primary schools: an attempt to evolve a working model for Kerala'.*

the government school system is crumbling fast and the educational standards of this system, except in a very few cases, have been deteriorating. No wonder, therefore, the parallel system of unaided, but recognised, English-medium schools is proliferating. This 'development' has attracted all categories of parents, and those who can afford the expenses involved - high tuition fees, substantial travel costs to school and back, prohibitive cost of uniforms and expenses on study tours, picnics, etc - send their children to these 'prestigious' schools. Among them are parents of all hues irrespective of political, ideological, or social moorings. It is mostly the poor, the indifferent, and those with ideological rigidity who will send their children to government schools.

In this context, it becomes imperative that the standard of teaching in government schools should be improved. It is with such an understanding that the authors, on an experimental basis, in a government high school and a government upper primary school in Thiruvananthapuram city undertook the intervention programme discussed below.

The intervention programme consisted of the individual initiatives of the authors by way of helping the poor among the school students with textbooks and school uniforms and supplying the schools with teaching aids. The authors, being scientists employed in a research institution in the locality of the schools, have taken up this programme on a part-time, voluntary basis. On a preliminary assessment of the functioning of these schools, the authors noted that the conditions in these schools were far from satisfactory. All the concerned local actors involved in improving the educational process - teachers, parent-teacher association (PTA) and people in the neighbourhood - could not, or would not, in general, do anything to change them. It appeared that the people were virtually resigned to the state of affairs in government schools. We found to our surprise that these schools did have some very good teachers who took considerable interest in the

students even to the extent of providing material help to some of the needy. We felt that the situation was not beyond redemption and that perhaps this was the right time to make an attempt to intervene.

## **The High School**

### ***Background***

The school selected was the Government Medical College High School (now renamed Government Medical College Higher Secondary School), Kumarapuram. This school has a large campus with a two-storeyed building containing 24 classrooms and two single-storeyed buildings. The school used to house the upper primary (UP) and lower primary (LP) sections in the same campus, in a separate building. These sections have now moved to the Kumarapuram UP school that was set up recently. The buildings that had housed LP and UP sections are now in disuse except for a small Anganvadi being run in one of the rooms.

The school has about 550 students in 14 class divisions, nearly two-thirds of them boys. The students belong mostly to low and middle income groups. The student strength did not vary much during 1996-97 and 1997-98, the period of this project. The school had 24 teachers in the school year 1996-97, which came down to 22 in 1997-98 following the transfer of some teachers. Of the teachers transferred, three are male who taught Physical Education, Music, and Science; the vacancies remain vacant. Five different clubs (Science, Forestry, Mathematics, Health, and Social Studies) were functioning till a few years ago. Their present non-functioning is attributed to a void in leadership caused by frequent transfers of teachers and, according to the teachers, by insufficient response from students. The school has a large library, which too was not functioning properly.

The school is well-equipped with a science laboratory and audio-visual equipment such as a 16 mm projector, a slide projector, an overhead projector, and a strip film projector. But most of the equipment remained unutilised.

There are six computers and one Personal Computer (a PC 486 with a hard disk, mono-monitor and a 5 1/4 inch floppy drive) in the school. A person trained at the Lal Bahadur Sastri Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, used to conduct classes weekly on the use of the computers. Only about a dozen students were attending the classes and no teacher took the initiative to learn the operation of computers. Thus, none of the teachers is trained in computers.

About 25 educational software packages meant for the computers were available in the school, but none was being used. The school had a pass percentage of around 25 in the SSLC examination in 1996 and 1997. According to the teachers, the subjects in which the students perform very poorly are English, Mathematics, and Science. Many students who secure more than the overall minimum of marks necessary to pass the SSLC examination often fail in one or more of these subjects.

### ***Work Done***

To establish a rapport with the school, we held several rounds of discussions with the teachers and some of the students. The objectives of the project were explained to the teachers and their suggestions and views were obtained. The teachers were initially reticent but eventually showed willingness to talk about the school. They raised several problems such as indiscipline and the absence of a sense of belonging among students, lack of interest of parents, and paucity of reference material in the school. While we were able to suggest ways to overcome some of these problems, others were beyond our scope. For instance, the policy of full promotion and the drabness of the curriculum material were two issues raised, issues on which the government had to take decisions. We stressed that our efforts are confined to improving educational standards within the available educational policy framework.

In order to familiarise ourselves with the curricula and syllabi and to prepare an action-oriented programme, we procured textbooks for all the

classes from standard V to X. We found that the school lacked sufficient teaching aids in certain areas like geography and general knowledge. Therefore we supplied to the school a few maps and help-books in these areas.

We found that the high school was quite receptive to the ideas of the project. The headmistress and the teachers were enthusiastic about the project and very cooperative in its implementation. We first convinced them about the need to activate the different clubs that had been functioning in the school. Since the project started in January 1997, late in the academic year 1996-97, the teachers suggested that it could be implemented only in the next academic year. Accordingly, some preliminary steps were taken during January-March 1997 and teachers were identified for supervising the clubs; the first meeting was held on 1997 June 19 immediately after the reopening of the school for the academic year 1997-98. About 40 students, both boys and girls, attended the meeting. Cleaning and arranging the science room and laboratory was started with the help of a few volunteers. A new science teacher took charge of the science room and laboratory at the beginning of the school year. He opted to conduct his classes in the science room. He also took keen interest in using the audio-visual equipment for the benefit of the students. Although considerable change was brought about in the school with his active interest and our support, this teacher was soon transferred back to the school from which he came, apparently on the insistence of the PTA of that school. But the unconventional approach that he demonstrated has helped to bring about a change and has left a lasting imprint on the attitudes of other teachers in the school. The Chemistry laboratory was put to use with the support from the project. Although several pieces of equipment were available, much of the glassware was in disrepair and the chemicals had become useless due to long, improper storage. We provided some essential glassware and chemicals on the condition that the school would invest an equal amount from its PTA or other funds.

A copy of the Resource Atlas of Kerala, published by Centre for Earth Science Studies (CESS), was

donated to the school. It was proposed to build a simple herbarium in the school with the help of a botanist from CESS. However, due to several reasons including the preoccupation of the botanist with other work and lack of time on the part of the teachers and the students the project did not materialise. Talks by eminent scientists and science teachers were planned as part of the activities of the Science Club. The first talk was delivered by C R Soman, (retired Professor of Nutrition, Thiruvananthapuram Medical College). Subsequent talks were given by C S Sathish Babu (Director, South Indian Federation of Fishermen's Society and an expert on computers and Internet), D Krishna Warriar, (President, Amateur Astronomy Association), and also by one of us. This programme was discontinued after a few lectures because the original schedule of having the talks on all Wednesdays affected the work of teachers of one and the same subject every week. Although we requested the teachers and the headmaster of the school to find a way out without affecting the classes (since changing the timetables in mid-term was inconvenient), a solution was not found till the end of the year. It is hoped that an alternative would be found in the next year.

We realised at the beginning itself that the standard of teaching in science cannot be improved and maintained in isolation without bringing about an overall change in the teaching and learning culture existing in the school.

We made several suggestions to the teachers in this respect. One of the complaints of the teachers was that some students are hyperactive and tend to create trouble in the classes. We suggested that these students be involved in some physical activities in order to channelise their excess energy into productive channels such as sports club. The teachers were enthused with the idea and the Physical Education teacher agreed to take lead in the matter. Since the reopening of the school coincides with the onset of the monsoon, we are hopeful of making a beginning in this respect at least after the *Onam* holidays (falling during the month of August / September). But there are difficulties. The physical education teacher was

reluctant, to say the least, to initiate any activity unless there was 'a change at the top', meaning perhaps, a change of the head of the school.

We had planned to conduct classes on personal computers for the teachers during the vacation preceding the school year 1997-98. However, the teachers were busy first with the conduct of SSLC and annual examinations and then with the University and the Government examinations held in the school. Classes for the teachers could be conducted only on four days. Although this was not sufficient for putting the computer to use in the day-to-day affairs of the school, the classes were of use in two ways.

First of all, the teachers felt the need to learn more about computers and became aware of the convenience computers would provide to their work. They have requested us to conduct more classes. Secondly, some students who also attended the classes learned to use the educational software packages on the computers and the teachers were convinced about their usefulness. Subsequently, the software packages were demonstrated to a few classes during the school year 1997-98. Since our regular job responsibilities at CESS prevented us from devoting more time to conduct the classes, we have identified a few persons to train the teachers in the operation of computers.

All the teachers were of the view that the lack of help-books like question banks is one factor that puts the poor students at a disadvantage in comparison to students who come from affluent families. We were willing to provide the books, but felt that a system that would provide such assistance to the school on a continuous basis would be better. We approached the Samyukta Social Circle of the State Bank of Travancore (SBT) with this proposal and our request was almost immediately accepted. The Social Circle provided Rs. 5,000 to the school that was used for purchasing 12 sets of good quality books. The books were distributed among the students of the standard X. The Social Circle has promised continued support.

We initially identified about 16 students who, we felt, would be able to score good marks, and divided them into four groups. Each group was given a set of books for its own use. The teachers issued the remaining eight sets to the students of the four divisions. Although eventually this system was not strictly followed, the help-books proved to be useful in improving the performance of the students. The students did not return some of the books, but 10 complete sets have been returned, a rate that we feel is good. However, the teachers do not appear to be in favour of giving the books to students for taking them home for study despite our promise that the missing books would be replaced since the SBT Social Circle has promised continued support. The teachers still appear to be victims of the administrative mind-set of maintaining the stock of books intact rather than making the best use of them.

The school library consisting of about 6,000 books had been remaining unused for several years. An effort was made to revive the library when the new science teacher appointed to the school expressed readiness to take up the responsibility. The school received a large number of new books on popular science as part of the government effort to improve the understanding of science among school children. Subsequent to the departure of the science teacher, the running of the library was entrusted to the Physical Education teacher and the library returned to the *status quo ante*. In the beginning of the current school year (1998-99), a new male teacher attached to the higher secondary section (Plus-Two section) has since been given charge of the library, and he is taking serious interest in running the library properly.

The school introduced in-house tuition for all students on the basis of our suggestion. Last year, these classes used to be run only for SC/ST students. This move appears to have yielded positive results since the pass percentage in the SSLC examination has gone up from 28 per cent in the previous (1997) examination to about 34 per cent in the March 1998 examination.

## **The Primary School**

### ***Background***

The school selected for the project was the Government Upper Primary (UP), Ulloor, Thiruvananthapuram. This school has been brought under the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation as part of decentralised planning.

The UP school is situated adjacent to a temple with no compound wall separating the two. The temple ground is being used by the school as playground. The school has two tiled buildings that house upper and lower primary sections, besides a pre-school class of about 30 students. Several classes functioned in a common hall without any partition between them. This practice naturally inhibits effective teaching and poses a serious problem. The school does not have sufficient space even to house a library or to provide a reading room or a science room. Although the school has a 'kitchen' to cater food under the mid-day meal scheme, the space for the children to sit and eat the food is inadequate. The school has 14 class divisions with about 450 students in all and 18 teachers. Of the teachers, only four are male. They teach Mathematics, Malayalam, Sanskrit, and English. The Sanskrit teacher's services are shared among three nearby schools. The students of this school belong mainly to the poor and the lower middle classes. There are a few students who score 80 to 90 per cent marks in the annual examinations, but the average performance is poor. The school is being covered by the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) since the academic year 1997-98. Under DPEP, the curriculum has been redesigned and the teachers have been trained to teach through songs, recreation, and demonstrations. Textbooks and uniforms are given free to all girl students and all SC/ST students in the lower primary section. Therefore, boys enrolled in the LP section who do not belong to SC/ST communities are the only category left without any support from the government.

Our objective was to attempt to improve the general standard of education at the upper primary

level and to evolve a model, if possible, that could be replicated in similar schools. Our policy was to ensure that the available facilities are effectively used for the benefit of the students and to limit material inputs to the minimum.

### ***Work Done***

When the project was initiated in January, we met the then headmaster and explained to him the objectives. He was very enthusiastic about the project but cautioned us that the school did not have the necessary infrastructure for a UP school. Therefore, any effort to improve the standard of education in the school should start, according to him, from scratch. He pointed out the absence of partition between classes. Other facilities lacking were: Teaching aids like charts, maps, models, etc, reference books like dictionaries for the use of the teachers, and space for a science room or a library-cum-reading room. The headmaster convinced us that the provision of partitions between classes was a priority. Five brick partitions, each of dimension 18 x 5.5 ft approximately, to form six class divisions in the lower primary section were put up as part of our project. Two parents who were masons by profession took interest in the work, and under their leadership the work was completed in two days. Some repair work was also done. Part of the cost of labour was met from the funds of the PTA.

One dictionary (English-English-Malayalam), a few maps, and a few reference books were purchased under the project and provided to the school on the request of the teachers. Although we suggested to the teachers the need to probe into the interests of the students in various activities including fine arts and sports, our suggestion was not carried out. It appeared that the time available for such activities is limited for the teachers, or perhaps, they were not quite convinced about the need for such a probe.

We were invited to a meeting of the PTA in July 1997, in which we took the initiative to encourage the parents to take more interest in the functioning of the school and to help maintain the school

premises. It was on the basis of this initiative that two parents came forward to help in building partition walls. We also requested the headmistress to convene the PTA meeting at least once every term, but this did not take place. We understand that the PTA meeting is supposed to be called, according to the stipulations of the Department of Education, at least once in every term. This is not done perhaps because of the lack of interaction between the parents and the teachers. The proceedings of the meeting in which we attended were confined to presentation of the accounts of the previous year, the election of office-bearers for the current year, and the decision to hike the annual subscription of parents to Rs. 50 from Rs. 25. Even though there was very little response to this decision on the spot, we came to understand later that most of the parents resented the hike in subscription.

There were about 1,200 books, about 300 in English and the rest in Malayalam, kept in a wooden almirah in the school. They were lying unused for a long period. The books had already been partly eaten by insects and the whole cupboard was littered with their excreta. The LP school that had merged with this school about a decade ago had given all these books. Our first attempt was to make the library operational. A teacher was identified to take charge of the library. The almirah was cleaned and painted. With the help of a group of students the books for circulation were selected and listed. These books mostly related to the subjects taught. They are now being issued to the students on a regular basis. This interaction helped us to assess the interests of the group of students who helped us at every stage in the work. Interestingly, the students expressed interest in the different fields of study including history, mathematics, and literature. This may be contrasted with the statements usually made by rank holders in the SSLC examinations every year who are, as a rule, totally ignorant about the world around them, but declare that they plan to study either engineering or medicine. These primary school students appeared to be reasonably aware of what goes on around them, including sports, literature, and cinema.



## **Observations and Constraints**

Our close association with the two schools has helped us to have a glimpse of the functioning of the schools from the point of view of an outsider. Our experience shows a rapidly deteriorating structure with teachers largely unwilling to make serious efforts, parents unwilling to take the trouble to ensure that the system works properly, and the hapless students suffering the consequences in silence. A fair percentage of the teachers are women, who, understandably, find it difficult to spend much time in preparing for the classes or in extra reading. Nevertheless, we found a few women teachers more responsive than their male counterparts, to suggestions for introducing a new or a different method of teaching.

### ***High School***

Much of the equipment and books available in the school lie unused. The high school has a collection of good equipment and books, as explained earlier. But the teachers are wary of issuing the books to the students or of making use of the equipment for teaching. They have their reasons, which may be partly valid. Since the students come from low and lower middle income families, it would be difficult or even impossible to recover costs from them if they lose any book. The teacher-in-charge therefore stands the risk involved for replacement of the lost books. The teachers have a heavy workload as it is and they would rather not take up the additional responsibility of looking after the library. Only trained persons can operate many items of equipment in the school and most of the teachers in the school do not have the required training. Further, there is no mechanism to get any equipment repaired if and when it develops a snag. Finally, there is hardly any incentive for a teacher who takes interest in these matters. On the contrary, he or she faces the risk of landing in trouble. While some or all of these arguments sound reasonable, it may be remembered that there still are some teachers who make full use of the facilities provided. Thus, it would appear that if the teacher is sufficiently motivated, improvements are possible.

The physical conditions in the high school were found deplorable. The science laboratory was in disarray and bore the marks of long neglect. The only activity in the science laboratory and mathematics workshop seemed to be centred around the conduct of annual science fairs. The science room does not have a suitable sink. Water does not reach the wash basin there. The audio-visual equipment do not seem to be in regular use. Of the six computers, only three are in working condition now. A new 486 PC remains unused and little useful software is available in the school.

Another problem is connected with the setting of timetables. For instance, science teaching is often scheduled for the last period of the day; and, surprisingly, some of the first periods in the forenoon are assigned for physical instruction. When a difficult subject like science or mathematics is taught in the last period of the day, students may not be able to effectively assimilate the lessons. It appears that the personal convenience of teachers is given undue importance in scheduling the timings of the classes for various subjects.

### ***Upper Primary School***

The UP school does not have sufficient floor space. The classrooms are not separated. The roof tiles are broken (because of children playing cricket in the evenings) and the classrooms leak. About 100 to 150 tiles are replaced every year. Necessary teaching aids are not available. The nearby temple ground is used as a playground. Thus, this is a school that does not possess the basic requirements of a good UP school. It is ironic that the primary section in the sprawling campus of the Medical College High School was discontinued though that school had plenty of building space while this school, which is not situated far away and has problems of space and amenities, continues to be burdened with a lower primary section.

The school received some sports goods from the Department of Education during the academic year 1997-98. They included a volleyball, balls and

bats for cricket, and a badminton net and racquets. Many of them were of no use to the school since there was no space for students to play these games. The department supplied these because it formed part of a package sanctioned for a few selected UP schools.

The package was decided at the level of the Assistant/District Educational Officer, perhaps without regard for the specific facilities and requirements of the schools concerned.

In order to get an idea of the performance of the upper primary students, we conducted a discussion with students of classes V to VII. During this session of 10 days, we covered varied topics like story of language (evolution of words, formation of simple sentences to convey an idea, and word meaning), story of numbers and basic arithmetic (through the games they know), and some topics of general interest like travel, places of importance, literature, and fine arts.

What follows is partly based on this discussion.

## **Conclusion**

1. Government schools suffer from lack of concern on the part of parents, people's representatives, and the school authorities. Intervention in the affairs of the school by the parents and the public would improve the teaching-learning process in these schools.
2. The general impression is that the students in government schools are below

average in their capacity to learn. We feel that this is not true. Our interaction with students at the primary level shows that they definitely are interested in knowing more about what goes on around them. But the drabness of the curriculum and the uninteresting manner of instruction put off many among them.

The emphasis in the classes is often observed to be more on equipping the students to perform well in the examinations than on imparting knowledge to equip them for the larger struggles in life. The teachers themselves are not always well-equipped with the information necessary to satisfy the curiosity of children.

3. Our limited experience shows that these children have a good relational ability. That is, they are able to extrapolate with reasonable accuracy from what they know to what they are told afresh. They are also able to reach logical conclusions from experiments discussed with them. But they have to obtain supportive information from teachers or from the library or similar sources. The UP school students came out with more imaginative answers than did the high school students. This indicates that a suppression of the natural talents of children at the earlier stages of school education has a long-lasting effect that gets aggravated at higher levels of education and later in life.

## Chapter 5

# Local Initiatives in Educational Development in a Backward Region

A. Abdul Salim\*

### Problem

Educational development does not signify growth of literacy alone. It should lead to higher levels of achievements - general, vocational, and professional. Further, education is not merely an end in itself, nor is it solely aimed at creating better citizens. Education can promote certain types of employment and confer economic benefits to the society as well as individuals. Looked at from this perspective, some villages in Kerala have shown spectacular progress while others have lagged far behind. In other words, educational attainments and consequent socio-economic progress have not been uniform across localities and regions. Obviously micro-level factors account for such differential development in villages. The present study attempts to identify such factors on the basis of an intensive enquiry in two selected villages.

### Significance of the Study

The study attempts to throw light on the determinants of educational development at the micro-level to gain insights for local-level planning. Further, knowledge about existing infrastructural and teaching-learning facilities, and performance of students in schools is necessary to improve the quality of education.

The Kerala Government spends about 37 per cent of the budget on education and health. It also finances almost the entire recurring expenditure on education not just in the government sector, but in the private, aided sector as well. In this context, it is important that the full potential of the local communities to raise resources for financing education is realised.

In the present study, we discuss the crucial role of effective participation of the local community in

the education sector to render it not just cost-effective, but also more relevant.

### Objectives

With this view, we set the following objectives:

- (i) identifying the factors and agents of educational change or non-change at work at the village level;
- (ii) examining the nature and intensity of the educational efforts of the change agents in creating the demand for and supply of education in the villages;
- (iii) evaluating the facilities of education in the villages;
- (iv) analysing the performance of schools in the villages and the factors affecting school performance;
- (v) estimating the institutional/government cost of education in the villages; and
- (vi) analysing the capability of parents in educating their wards and the magnitude of parental cost of education.

### Method of Study and Sources of Data

The study uses both analytical and statistical methods. In the absence of the required secondary data, information is collected through a field survey of households and schools in the selected villages. Village characteristics have been collected through interviews with local leaders, village elders, and other knowledgeable persons.

As a first step towards selection of the study area, we classified the districts and taluks of Kerala on the basis of literacy, using Census data of 1971,

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*\*The author is a lecturer at Dept. of Economics in EMEA College of Arts and Science, Kondotty, Malappuram. This paper is extracted from his study under KRPLLD, 'Education and development at micro-level: a case study of two villages in Kerala'.*

1981, and 1991. It was found that Ernad taluk of the Malappuram district that had been one of the most backward taluks (in terms of education) during the early 1970s has witnessed significant educational progress. A classification of the villages of the taluk showed that some villages attained spectacular progress in literacy while others made only marginal progress. Further, we found that some villages (like Edavanna, Areacode, and Pulikkal) in the taluk made significant achievements in education not merely in terms of literacy, but also in higher education (acquiring of higher degrees), and better jobs while some others (like Nediyrappu, Tanur, and Parappanangadi) lagged far behind. In order to examine the factors behind this differential development, two villages - one forward (Edavanna) and one backward (Nediyrappu) - were purposively selected.

### Collection of Data

A village schedule was used for collecting information on socio-economic, demographic, and educational profile of the village. A school schedule was employed to collect data on school facilities, institutional costs, sources of income of the school, environment, drop-outs, pass-outs, teachers' qualifications, factors accounting for the educational performance of the schools, etc. All the schools in the selected villages (12 schools in Edavanna and 11 in Nediyrappu) were included in the survey. The field data were supplemented by the information collected from the village and the panchayat office records. Data on costs incurred by parents and the capability of the parents to finance education were gathered with the help of a household schedule.

### Selection of Households

In order to obtain suitable household data, we used both random and non-random sampling methods. Each village was classified into wards on the basis of the levels of their socio-economic development (ascertained from discussions with the panchayat members and other officials of the panchayat and village offices). Two wards each from the two villages, one forward and one backward, were selected. Households were selected (in such a way

as to obtain at least 30 observations for a variable) by the method of purposive sampling, from the list of households available in the panchayat office records. Accordingly, 241 households from Edavanna and 203 from Nediyrappu were selected.

Besides collection of information using interview schedules, participant observation techniques like in-depth interviewing (using an unstructured list of questions) with important persons of the locality, focus-group discussions, key-informant interviews, life histories, and case studies were also used. On the whole, 72 persons from the two villages (36 each) were interviewed. They included 16 important persons, 11 school managers, 11 school headmasters, 12 head teachers having at least 10 years of service, and 22 PTA/MPTA presidents. Life histories of 14 persons aged 65+ including leaders of political parties, voluntary organisations, school headmasters, philanthropists, and social activists were also collected.

### Factors Behind Educational Development in Edavanna

Our study has revealed that the level of educational development in Edavanna has been the result of a variety of favourable factors that emerged at various points of time. Among them, the more important are the following: (i) a socio-religious reform movement, *Mujahid* movement, which began in the 1940s; (ii) the local community efforts which followed government interventions under able political leadership; and (iii) since 1970, Gulf migration and the consequent remittance inflows which helped the educational process.

Among these, the *Mujahid* movement was the harbinger and the central force of change.

### *Mujahid Movement*

*Mujahid* movement stands for educating the Muslim masses on the necessity of eradicating superstitious beliefs and practices followed in the name of Islam and for re-organising religious education, giving encouragement to secular and women's education.

In Edavanna, the movement had its origin from the early 1940s onwards. In response to the preaching of Alavi Maulavi, a great scholar and reformist, and the efforts of some enlightened young men, drastic changes were brought about in the religious practices in the locality. The priest began delivering in Malayalam his Friday *Qutuba* (sermon before the noon-prayer) in the mosque. Since 1945, women were allowed to attend the Friday congregational prayer (the Sunnis who constitute the majority of the community in Kerala do not permit women to attend the prayer). During the *Qutuba*, the priest stresses the need for modern education in the Muslim community; it may be remembered that in those days, modern education was despised by the villagers due to their animosity towards the British. The Muslim leaders also encouraged the people to study Malayalam that was described by the orthodox sections of the community as *Aryanezhuthu* (language of Hindus) owing to the strained relations between Hindus and Muslims after the Malabar rebellion. The reformers advocated also the study of English, a language that had been portrayed as the language of the hell. These changes resulted in the transformation of the whole ethos of the society in the village. The changes gradually spread to some of the nearby villages like Areacode and Pulikkal.

The changes opened up a new path in both religious and modern education. Education itself took the form of a social movement. People in large numbers started seeking secular education and salaried employment. Unlike in most other villages, Muslim priests and Islamic scholars in Edavanna gave all advice and help for the development of modern education. Even *Madrassa* (centre of religious education attached to the mosque) timings were adjusted to enable students to attend secular schools. *Madrassa* classes were held in the mornings from 7.30 to 9.30 and evening classes dispensed with. In fact, *Madrassas* played a great role in the educational development of the village because religious education was imparted through the mother tongue unlike in other places. The priests who engaged classes in *Madrassas* themselves motivated children to attend secular schools. They played a role similar to that of the Buddhist monks in Japan in spreading modern education in the

village. The monks had set up schools adjacent to their temples and monasteries where all the children attended the classes.

The contribution of the movement in spreading girls' education is remarkable. The traditional attitude of the society towards girls' education is reflected in the following verse (translated from Malayalam).

“Oh my holy saints!

Girls go out for learning, reading and writing!  
These are no doubt the signs of the doomsday!!!”

This was the sentiment during the 1940s when a few girls started going to schools. In those days, the qualities required of a girl for marriage did not include modern education, as is revealed in the following verse.

“She reads the Qur'an well  
She does the housework as well  
She is a very beautiful lady  
Who can sing any song”  
(Songs praising saints)

This attitude started changing since the late 1940s owing to the efforts by the movement. Women were allowed to attend Friday congregational prayers and to organise welfare work.

Women were allowed to take jobs in government and private firms, and to attend public functions. Such empowerment of women has enabled them to give importance to educating their children. Initially, most girls stopped their studies after completing the primary school. For the first time, in 1943, Ayisha became a teacher under the Malabar District Board School for a salary of Rs. 15. In 1960, the first lady from Edavanna, P V Mariyumma, passed the Matriculation examination. Today, most of the young women in Edavanna complete at least their high school education. Studies have shown that the pay-off to adult female education is far higher than to adult male education. In Edavanna, the importance given to girls' education has helped the village to attain its present

level of educational achievement. On the whole, the role of the *Mujahid* movement has been crucial in preparing the village to take to literacy, schooling, and higher education.

### ***Attitudinal Change***

The *Mujahid* movement was also instrumental in bringing changes in the attitudes of the people. From the 1940s onwards, people in the village began to treat education as good for the individual, the family, and the community at large. The feeling that education is 'the door to a new earth and a new heaven' was all-pervasive in the village since the 1950s. People in the village looked at education now as a means to upward occupational and economic mobility. Many labourers and farmers whom we interviewed dreamt about jobs beyond farms for their children. They talk about hopes of their children quitting agriculture and physical labour. It is with this desire that they send their children to schools and colleges despite the high costs of education involved, well beyond their means. In at least a few cases, their dreams come true.

### ***Local Community Effort***

Edavanna has had a rich tradition of voluntary community action for development. The *Mujahid* movement played a critical role in involving the local community in this respect. The movement acted as a catalyst for raising the level of people's participation in social activities. The effort made by the village community for its educational development was remarkable. Except in the case of one school that is under individual management, the local communities were deeply involved. In all these cases, the land for the schools was either donated by individuals, or purchased and donated by local community. Funds for the construction of school buildings, purchase of equipment and furniture, and provision of other facilities were mobilised in most of the cases by the local community.

Local community leaders and philanthropists played a major role in the educational development of the village. They led all the resource mobilisation

drives. Their initiatives helped many children to receive education and enter jobs. Ahamed Perul, a rich person of the locality, helped poor students financially and took them to schools and colleges. He begged for money from local people to educate poor students. He was instrumental in starting the first high school in the village. Interestingly, the village has only one school under individual management, while the other three private schools are owned and managed by corporate bodies.

### ***Government Intervention***

During the British rule, educational reforms were few and government intervention weak in Malabar. However, Edavanna was an exception. Almost half the number of schools in the village was started by Malabar District Board during 1921-1947. They were *Othupallis* (religious educational institutions) where Qur'an is taught by rote, by a teacher designated *mullah*. The government converted these institutions into formal primary schools by retaining *mullahs* as teachers. The *mullahs* carried out door-to-door campaigns requesting parents to send their children regularly to schools. This was necessary because their salary was determined on the basis of the number of students in the class. In fact, the initiative taken by the *mullahs* imparted an element of legitimacy in the minds of orthodox Muslims who had been opposed to British education. Thus the government policies together with the introduction of Arabic as one of the languages in the schools paid off well. These reforms led to a gradual fading of the conservative elements in the village.

After independence, two more government schools were started; two of the existing schools were upgraded, one to the high school level and the other to the upper primary level. Eight out of the 12 schools in the village are now government-owned. Thus, the government played an active part in the development of education in the village.

### ***Positive Pressure***

The starting of half a dozen schools and upgradation of three schools in Edavanna has been the result of lobbying and political pressure. P. Seethi Haji, the

late Muslim League leader from the locality, influential in the State government for a long period, was able to procure government funds for the construction of buildings for a government school in the village, and obtain sanction for upgrading schools to higher levels. A higher secondary school is named after him. The Muslim League and its local leaders also played an active role in getting a training college for teachers in the village.

### ***Economic Development***

All the persons we interviewed in the village were unanimous in their opinion that during the British period and the two decades since independence, poverty remained one of the major deterrents to educational development. Things began to change since the 1960s with the development of trade and commerce in the village. Business in timber and furniture flourished and many people became rich. A large number of poor people got jobs in the business, which raised their income considerably. Edavanna has now 600 small furniture units, including 120 recognised units, which employ about 6,000 workers, a large number of whom belong to the village. The experience in the village shows that reduction in poverty promotes schooling. Many studies have established the fact that more prosperous villages have relatively higher educational development. Improvement in economic conditions is expected to have led to progressively higher literacy rates and educational achievements in Edavanna.

### ***Gulf Migration***

Largescale migration of people from the village to the Gulf region began since the early 1980s. It has led to an upward economic mobility among a large number of lower middle class and poor households. This tended to reduce the degree of overall income inequality in the village. The desire for acquiring social status on the part of migrant households finds expression in their ostentatious expenditure in acquiring land, on construction of houses, and the conduct of marriages. Nevertheless, economic improvement among the lower and the middle classes has led to a higher demand for education of children in Edavanna.

The foregoing discussion reveals several factors behind the educational development in Edavanna: (i) the *Mujahid* movement; (ii) an advanced *Madrassa* system; (iii) government intervention; (iv) private efforts (individual and corporate); (v) political pressure; (vi) local community efforts; and (vii) economic improvement. Among them, the *Mujahid* movement played the most important role.

### **Factors Behind Educational Backwardness in Nediirippu**

The factors which brought about educational renaissance during 1945-85 in Edavanna were absent in Nediirippu.

### ***Socio-religious Reform Movement***

No major socio-religious movement took place in the history of Nediirippu. The predominant section of the local community belongs to the Sunni sect of Muslims, which until very recently, was steeped in superstitious practices, customs, and traditions. This conservative sect does not give as much importance to secular education as to religious education. Among the occupations preferred, the emphasis is on trade and agriculture. Professional, administrative, and white collar occupations that require higher educational qualifications are not given due importance. Perhaps, this is the case with most of the Muslim community in Kerala, and it is all the more so in villages like Nediirippu. However, things have begun to change very recently. Now the Sunnis and their organisation *Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulama* also encourage secular education and have begun to start secular schools.

### ***Minimal Attitudinal Change***

As cited earlier, Muslims despised the type of education introduced by the British in Malabar and the priests proclaimed that those who went to such schools would go to hell. In Nediirippu, till the 1970s, girls were not encouraged to attend school. The rigidly defined traditional gender norms denied the girls even the minimum education. Girls used to leave *Othupalli* after religious classes by 9.30 in the morning. By the end of the 1950s, girls began to attend schools, but only up to the primary

level. They were withdrawn from school abruptly on attainment of puberty. Parents married their daughters away as early as possible to ward off worry and economic burden. This attitude is still prevalent in many families. The gender dimension is strikingly visible in the poorer enrolment of girls in schools. Parents pay little care to the performance of girls in school. The attitude of some parents towards girls' education remains unchanged from what it was half a century ago. They do not find any need for, or use, in the schooling of girls whose assigned role in society is to get married. Moreover, it is difficult to find husbands for highly educated girls. Muslim girls in this village began to attend schools in large numbers only after the 1970s and that too due to initiatives taken by leaders like C H Mohammed Koya, the first Muslim chief minister of Kerala. In more recent years, changes are visible. We now see even the priests and other orthodox sections of the community taking their children to schools, securing modern education to them. However, the attitudinal change in the village till now has been only minimal and the village remains educationally backward.

### ***Economic Backwardness***

Most people in the village live by agriculture. The village remains industrially backward. Incomes of the people in the village remained extremely low till the 1980s, when Gulf migration from the village began. Most of the people in the village, including low class Muslims and Scheduled Castes, are landless labourers in agriculture and allied activities. Until very recently, a high proportion of the households did not have the wherewithal for sending children to schools and keeping them there until they complete at least primary schooling. In the village, there were instances in which the teacher himself brought slates and pencils to the school and distributed them to the students. Providing *kanji* (rice gruel) was a practice of great help, which encouraged poor children to attend the school. Many children, particularly girls, did not attend schools since their parents would be away from home for work, mostly on others' lands. There were several instances of boys who performed well in primary classes not being able to continue their

education due to abject poverty at home, and ending up as labourers in construction work and copra processing or as cleaners and drivers in taxi cars and jeeps.

From the early 1980s onwards, migration of a large number of people from the village and the consequent flow of remittances to the village has resulted in some degree of improvement of the economic condition of the people. But the inflows have been spent ostentatiously on houses, ornaments, marriage ceremonies, etc. An average Gulf migrant in the village gives a dowry ranging from 50:50 to 100:100 (ie from jewels worth 50 sovereigns and Rs. 50,000 to jewels worth 100 sovereigns and Rs. 1,00,000) for the marriage of his daughter. Except a very few, migrants spend little on the education of their children. Migration and the resultant improvement in economic conditions have not yet brought significant changes in the outlook of the people towards education, health care, sanitation, and development.

### ***Community Effort***

In the village, community effort was visible in one government upper primary school and in one high school under private corporate management. In the other schools, it was almost non-existent. Two of the four government schools do not have adequate land and are run in rented buildings with poor facilities; but no effort is forthcoming from the community either for purchasing land or for improving facilities. The same is the case with seven of the eight private schools. However, the village has a high school, thanks to some political pressure, established in 1976.

### ***Government Intervention***

Government intervention in starting schools, upgrading them, and improving the facilities has been weak even during the period since independence. Interestingly, three of the four government schools in the village were started during the British period. The village did not make much headway in education also due to absence of high schools within its vicinity and lack of transportation facilities. For the students of the 10



primary schools in the village who wish to pursue secondary school education, there is only one high school and, that too, only since 1976. In contrast, Edavanna had a high school since 1957.

### ***Private Effort***

The private sector has played an important role in the educational development of the village. Of the seven private schools, six were the outcome of individual efforts. These schools are, however, mostly profit-making business enterprises with little concern for the needy and the vulnerable sections. They pay scant regard to educational values. As a result, the quality of education in these schools remains deplorably low.

Thus, we find that unlike in the case of Edavanna, Nediyrippu did not have socio-religious reform movements. Government intervention was weak and the people remained poor, ignorant, and backward socially, culturally, and economically for a long period.

### **Quality of schooling**

Having looked at the determinants of educational development in the villages, we now turn to a discussion on the quality of schooling in the villages in terms of facilities and performance.

### ***Access to Schools***

In Edavanna, primary schools are available at a distance of less than two km from home for about 84 per cent of the students, while in Nediyrippu, such a facility is available only for about 67 per cent. In Edavanna, three high schools (two of them higher secondary) are accessible to 61 per cent of the children within less than two km, while in the other village the only high school is at a distance of more than two km for the majority (67 per cent). This might be a reason for the large proportion of drop-outs and irregular attendance among the students, particularly at the high school level, in Nediyrippu. Though Nediyrippu has an adequate number of primary schools, institutions for secondary and higher education are less than

in the other village. Further, the only high school in Nediyrippu is located in a remote corner of the village (on the border of another village); most of the students in the village find it difficult to reach the school. Had it been in the centre of the village, it would have attracted more students from the village and ensured regular attendance. A significant portion of the students of this school now comprise children who belong to the adjacent village. It was because of political pressure that the school was located in the present place. It shows that people and villages with less influence in political parties suffer and remain backward; some villages get schools in excess of requirement. Locating schools on considerations of political pressure and availability of land has created hurdles in access to schooling for a large number of children in both the villages, particularly in Nediyrippu.

### ***Physical Facilities***

A comparison between government schools and private schools shows that in Edavanna private schools have better facilities, maintenance, and repair. But no clear pattern is observed in this regard between the two types of school in the backward village. However, a comparison between the two villages shows that the forward village has some advantage over the other in the provision and maintenance of physical facilities in the school.

### **Accretion of Facilities**

A survey of the facilities in the schools indicates that in this respect, both the villages are in an unsatisfactory position: More classrooms, teachers' rooms, furniture, and blackboards are needed in the case of most of the schools in both the villages. In the case of the forward village, the need is greater since the two schools in it are running under the shift system. Currently, not much effort is being made to upgrade the school facilities or even maintaining the existing facilities properly in the government and in the private schools. The situation is worse in Nediyrippu. In Edavanna, two government schools have recently received funds from the District Panchayat and from the government under District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), for constructing new

buildings and renovating the old ones. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) of a few government schools in Edavanna also contributed money for the construction of dining halls, purchase of equipment, and the provision of drinking water. In Nediyruppu, funds have not come from any source, even from local agencies, to any significant extent.

### **Enrolment and Attendance of Students**

Gender and caste considerations, and socio-economic factors, which had strong influence earlier, do not have any influence now on school enrolment. Enrolment of children, particularly at the primary level, has become almost universal irrespective of gender, caste, and socio-economic differences even in the backward village. However, some of these factors certainly have adverse effects on the attendance and dropout rates of children, but more so in the backward village. Our field experience does not indicate any association between financial difficulty in the household and non-attendance of children in either village, particularly at the primary level. In the backward village, attendance is influenced by a social set-up which still does not give much importance to girls and women in the family and the society.

In Nediyruppu, school attendance is hit by certain practices like *virunnupokku*. This is a practice among the couples - going with their children to the homes of their parents on special occasions like *Bakrid* and *Ramzan* and staying there for several days. In some cases, women, with their children, stay for long in their parents' homes since their husbands are away in other States or in the Gulf countries. Certain pseudo-religious practices like *nerchas* (prayers and offerings in the name of the Prophet and the holy saints) also affect attendance adversely. Teachers reported that about 15 per cent of the students are irregular in attendance due to these practices. No such practices are reported in the educationally forward village and hence attendance rates of Muslim students there are much higher; the attendance rate of Muslim girls in Edavanna are also high because girls are not discriminated against on grounds of socio-religious

factors. A few girl children belonging to poor Scheduled Caste families in both the villages attend classes only irregularly because of the absence of their mothers at home. The girls look after younger siblings when mothers are away from home on wage labour. Absence from school is caused also by children being put to work at home and outside. Some parents in the village do not have any real interest in the education of their children, particularly their daughters.

### **Dropout of Children**

Stagnation and dropout rates are the lowest in Kerala among the States of India. In the study villages, dropout at the primary level is between 1.6 to 2 per cent of the enrolment and is lower than at the secondary level. Dropping out is more from among the Scheduled Castes and the backward Muslims. Though it is mainly due to financial difficulties, lack of interest among students in studies is another factor. In the backward village, among Muslims the drop-outs are mostly girls. It happens because of cultural taboos, early marriages, and related factors. Boys drop out from the high school stage because they take up jobs such as shop assistants, vehicle cleaners, head-load workers, etc. Some of these drop-outs financially support their parents in their own small way; others squander away their incomes. In most States in India, children's entry into paid work contributes to non-enrolment and dropout. But such cases are rare in the villages of Kerala.

Drop-outs belong to socially and economically backward families and also to conservative Muslim families, sceptical about girls' education. Surprisingly, we found a few school drop-outs in the rich families of Nediyruppu; the parents of these drop-outs were illiterate. Thus, parental education prevents the dropout of children.

### **Costs and Financing of Education**

#### ***Institutional Cost***

A considerable amount of resources seem to have been invested in creating facilities for education, a little higher so in the educationally forward village.

However, not much importance is given to providing furniture, equipment, and other basic facilities, a fact that surely has a bearing on the quality of education. While the educationally forward village invested Rs. 432 per student place per annum, in the backward village the corresponding figure is Rs. 296. Further, investment per student place in government schools is low in both the villages. A student in the forward village spends Rs. 1,626 per annum, as against Rs. 1,594 in the backward village. In both the villages, the schools are unable to mobilise money for maintaining the existing facilities and providing for the curricular and extra-curricular activities. The deficiency of funds for upgradation and maintenance of facilities is a serious problem. Only 45 per cent of the school buildings is permanent. In the backward village, most schools do not have funds even for purchasing teaching aids and providing for mid-day meals. The situation is slightly better in the forward village in this respect.

### ***Costs Incurred by Parents***

A parent in the forward village spends Rs. 1,179 per annum for school education per child while in the backward village, the corresponding figure is Rs. 896. It is found that the upper, middle, and high-income parents spend larger amounts than the low and lower middle income groups, particularly so in the forward village. The relatively rich spend larger amounts on private tuition, stationery, etc that are somewhat non-essential. Professionals, businessmen, and those engaged in 'services' in the forward village are capable of spending more than the others. In the backward village, no clear pattern is observed. It is also found that, in the forward village, highly educated parents spend considerably higher amounts than the less educated and illiterate parents .

The study shows that the potential for increasing cost recovery by raising fees is high in the villages. The potential of the parents belonging to higher income groups to bear the institutional cost of education, in part or even in full, is higher in the educationally forward village.

Our field experience also shows that even under the present 'free' education system, poor parents find it very difficult to bear the expenditure on uniforms, books, and stationery. They seek to raise

additional income by sending their children to work, thereby making their school attendance irregular and the chances of their dropping out higher.

Thus, there is need for a dual system of fees, along with a system of subsidies, in which payment of fees would depend on the paying capacity of parents.

### **Sources of Financing School Education**

In the case of government schools, the local community financed most of the initial capital expenditure with some matching grants from the government. This is true in the case of private schools also. It is the local people, including the teachers and managements of the schools concerned, who bore the burden. But more than 98 per cent of the recurring expenditure of both government and aided private schools is financed by the government (funds raised through fees and PTA receipts constitute hardly two per cent). Thus, as far as the recurring expenditure is concerned, education is almost entirely financed by the government.

Owing to financial stringency, the government is hard-pressed to allocate more funds either for upgrading the existing facilities or creating new facilities. Hence, the quality of education suffers. This is the context in which the government is thinking in terms of alternative sources of financing and of entrusting the responsibility of primary education to local bodies. In Kerala, local communities can finance school education in the economically forward rural and urban villages. Till very recently, local communities provided resources for creating most of the educational facilities. Now, the historical role of the local community in creating the basic educational infrastructure has almost ended. From now onwards, it should take up a new role - improving the quality of education. It is time to think of a village school system in which the government will provide the administrative structure by appointing teachers, paying their salaries, procuring books, and designing the curriculum. The local community will be entrusted with the task of providing the infrastructural facilities and meeting the recurring items of expenditure other than the salary of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

## Chapter 6

# Educational Development Schemes for Tribesfolk: Awareness and Utilisation

C. Krishnan\*

### *Introduction*

Education plays a vital role in the process of national development. Governments in India, at the Centre and at the States, have paid special attention to the promotion of education, especially among the weaker sections comprising Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), backward communities, and women. Various special schemes and programmes are being implemented for the social and educational development of the tribesfolk. These programmes aim at developing these traditional communities towards modernity - socially and economically.

There can be no doubt that progress has been made in the education of tribesfolk during the past half-a-century. Their educational status, however, continues to lag much behind that of the general population, even behind the SCs. According to the 1991 Census, the literacy rate of the ST population was 29.6 per cent as against 37.4 per cent for SCs and 52.2 per cent for the general population.

Kerala is one of the States that introduced several tribal education schemes right from the inception of development plans. As a result, the literacy rate among the tribal people in the State has improved considerably. Still, the literacy level of the tribesfolk remains lower than that of the other sections of the population. Compared to the general literacy rate of 89.8 per cent in Kerala in 1991, the literacy rate among the tribal people was 57.2 per cent while that of the SCs was 79.7 per cent. Among the tribesfolk, glaring inequality exists between the literacy rates of men and women. The difference is wider at higher levels of education. The persistence of low literacy rates may be due to the fact that the educational development schemes have not been effective in

raising enrolment rates and/or to hold the enrolled in school for long enough. Most often, the outlay for educational development of tribal people is reportedly underutilised. The Financial Targets and Achievements of Tribal Sub-plan (1994-95) of Kerala reported that, for general education only 33.4 per cent and for technical education only 17.80 per cent of the budgetary provision was actually utilised. The shortfall in the expenditure implies non-utilisation of funds. Some pertinent questions which arise in this context are: What could be the possible reasons for this gap? Are all the tribesfolk aware of the educational development schemes? Are they utilising these facilities properly? The present project is a limited exercise to seek answers to these questions.

A review of the literature on the topic revealed that most of the studies undertaken in this area were of an anthropological, ethnographic, and descriptive nature. The majority of them were government reports. Only a few have focussed on the tribal households. In fact, none has gone deep into questions of awareness about and utilisation of tribal educational development schemes. Hence this project is taken up with the following objectives.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to understand the extent of awareness on the part of the tribesfolk about the educational schemes meant for them and the degree of utilisation of such schemes by the tribal households in Kerala. The specific objectives are: To identify and review the performance of various government schemes for tribal educational development; to study the extent of awareness on

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*\*The author is a Lecturer in Economics at Marthoma College, Chungathara, Malappuram. This paper is extracted from his study under KRPLLD, 'Awareness and utilisation of educational development schemes by tribesfolk in Wayanad'.*

the part of the households belonging to different tribal communities about the educational development schemes; and to analyse the problems faced by the tribal people in the utilisation of educational facilities meant for them. The study intends to offer suggestions to improve the level of their awareness and the extent of utilisation of the schemes.

## Methodology

The study is undertaken in the district of Wayanad in Kerala. It uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data required for the study were collected mainly from heads of tribal households and officials of tribal development departments. As the study concentrates mainly on questions of awareness and utilisation of educational development schemes meant for tribal people, enquiry at the household level was considered essential.

For the selection of households, a multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure has been adopted. The study is confined to Wayanad district for a variety of reasons. First of all, it is the homeland of the most primitive and numerically the smallest of the tribal communities on the Indian mainland. Secondly, Wayanad has the highest tribal concentration in the State. Finally, it is one of the districts with poor tribal literacy.

The five major tribal communities of the district - viz *Adiyan*, *Kattunaykan*, *Kurichian*, *Kuruman*, and *Paniyan* - constitute 73 per cent of the tribal population in the district. Mananthawady Development Block, where all the major tribes are found, was selected in the first stage of sampling. From the three panchayats - viz Panamaram, Thavinhall, and Thirunny of the Mananthawady Block, where all these tribal communities are found, Panamaram, the most backward one, was selected in the second stage.

A sample of 250 tribal heads of households have been selected from Panamaram panchayat by stratified random sampling, with the communities as strata, giving proportional weightage to each

community. The sample thus selected consisted of the following communities: *Paniyan* (100), *Kuruman* (48), *Kurichian* (38), *Adiyan* (32), and *Kattunaykan* (32). This constitutes 15 per cent of the households of these major tribal communities in the Panamaram panchayat.

A detailed interview schedule was used to collect information from the heads of households. A three-point scale was adopted to analyse the extent of awareness about and utilisation of the various schemes.

## The Tribesfolk - An Overview

Before presenting an overall view of the tribesfolk in Kerala, we present below the literacy levels of tribal people in other parts of the country.

The spread of education amongst the STs during the past five decades has been quite uneven. It is observed that a few States, particularly in the north-eastern region, have forged far ahead of others. In these States, the tribal literacy levels have overtaken even the general literacy levels. State-wise details on tribal literacy show that Mizoram tops in tribal literacy (82.7 per cent) in 1991. The lowest tribal literacy was observed in Andhra Pradesh (17.2 per cent). The sex-wise literacy rates of tribesfolk show that there exists wide inequality. The female literacy is abysmally low. For the tribesfolk, literacy rate among males was 40.7 per cent and that among females 18.2 per cent in 1991. The female literacy rates among tribesfolk in other parts of India (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli) are also lower than the national average.

## Tribal Situation in Kerala

In Kerala, tribal concentration is low and the tribesfolk constitute only 1.10 per cent of the total population. There are 35 communities in the list of STs in the State. The district-wise distribution of tribal population in the State reveals that more than 70 per cent live in four districts viz Wayanad (35.8 per cent), Idukki (15.7 per cent), Palakkad (11.1 per cent), and Kasargod (9.1 per cent). The

highest number of tribal households is in Wayanad district (23,287) and the lowest is in Alappuzha district (651).

The tribesfolk in the State are subjected to various kinds of exploitation and their life is one of poverty and misery. The report submitted to the Government of Kerala by C P Balan Vydier (1997), Chairman of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Committee, refers to various kinds of exploitation including sexual exploitation of womenfolk. Mention must be made in this context to the inhuman practices such as forced abortion, rape, and other forms of sexual assault. In Wayanad district alone the number of unwed mothers is reportedly more than 400. A survey conducted by Rural Development Department of the Government of Kerala (1992) found that 48.5 per cent of the ST families in the State are below the poverty line. The incidence of poverty is the highest in Wayanad district, where 60.4 per cent of the tribal families are below the poverty line.

### **Tribal Literacy in Kerala**

Kerala is one of the States that places due emphasis on human resource development (HRD). A lion's share of HRD expenditure is devoted to educational development. The budget of the education department came to 6.7 per cent of the net domestic product of Kerala during 1993-94 compared to the national average of 3.8 per cent. Kerala has achieved spectacular progress in literacy and enrolment standards of its people. The State stands first also in respect of literacy, reckoned separately for males, females, and SCs. However, in the case of literacy rate of STs, Kerala ranks only fifth in India, though the rate is far higher than the national average. While the male literacy rate of tribesfolk in India is 40.7 per cent, in Kerala it is 63.4 per cent. In the case of females, Kerala has a literacy rate of 51.1 per cent compared to the national average of 18.2 per cent. The combined tribal literacy rate of Kerala is 57.2 per cent compared to the national average of 29.7 per cent. The growth rate in literacy among various social classes during 1971-1991 showed that for the

whole population it was 48.6 per cent, while it was 98 per cent for SCs and 122.5 per cent for STs.

However, though more than 50 per cent of the total outlay of the State-level schemes of the Scheduled Tribes Development Department are on education, the literacy rate of the STs in Kerala has not caught up with that of the SCs, not to speak of the general population. The district-wise literacy rates of the tribesfolk in Kerala reflect the lopsided development of tribesfolk. The highest tribal literacy is noticed in Kottayam district (88.7 per cent) and the lowest in Palakkad district (34.8 per cent). The tribal literacy rates of Palakkad, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Wayanad are lower than the State average of 57.2 per cent. It is to be noted that, though more than 65 per cent of the tribesfolk in Kerala are in the Malabar region their literacy rate is below 50 per cent. This is a clear indication of the north-south divide in tribal development in the State.

The degree of indifference shown by the tribesfolk towards formal education is proved by the relatively high rate of dropout of tribal children from schools. Out of the tribal students who enrol in standard I, only 35.5 per cent reach the Xth standard. The corresponding figures for SCs (58.5 per cent) and that for general population (74.3 per cent) are much higher. In all the classes, the dropout rates of tribal students are higher than in the other categories. In 1994-95, the estimated dropout rate of ST students was 9.1 per cent in lower primary classes compared to 2.1 per cent for SC children and 1.3 per cent for the general category. In upper primary classes the dropout rate of the ST students was 12.0 per cent while that of the SC students was 7.9 per cent. For the general population, it was 4.0 per cent. In high schools, the estimated dropout rate was 22.7 per cent for ST students. For SCs it was 20.6 per cent and for the general category 14.5 per cent. Thus it is clear that the dropout rates of tribal students are higher at all levels of education. This is despite the fact that enrolment and retention of tribal students in school have improved during the past few decades.

## Tribal Literacy in Wayanad District

The literacy status of the tribesfolk in Wayanad district is poor. Tribal literacy in the district (50.6 per cent) is even lower than that of the SCs (75.3 per cent). The general literacy rate of the district was 82.7 per cent in 1991. Further, the literacy rate among tribal people in Wayanad is lower than that of tribesfolk in the State as a whole. The low-level literacy is attributed to many factors, the most important being the peculiar nature of the areas of their habitation. The majority of the STs live in remote areas located far away from educational institutions. The deplorable economic conditions prevailing in the tribal settlements are not conducive for studies.

The DPEP survey conducted in 1991 found that there were no study rooms, no furniture, no food supplies, nor any related facility in the schools in tribal hamlets. The number of tribal students who remained in school at the beginning of 1997-98 was only 66.4 per cent of the number enrolled in standard I in 1992-93; the corresponding figure for the non-tribal students was 95.2 per cent. The sex-wise retention rates in schools in Wayanad show that only 65.7 per cent of the male tribal students and 67.1 per cent of the female tribal students enrolled in standard I in 1992-93 remained in school in 1997-98. Here, one positive aspect to be highlighted is the higher retention rate of females than of males. This fact may be an indication of the forward-looking quality of the tribal community in the district.

There are also inter-community differences in the literacy levels of tribesfolk in Wayanad. A Benchmark survey of Integrated Tribal Development Projects in Kerala (1982) conducted by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala, showed that *Adiyans* and *Paniyans* were the most illiterate among the tribal community. *Kurumans* and *Kurichians* were more literate.

## Schemes for Tribal Education

As mentioned earlier, the State government gives prime importance to education of the ST children as a means for their development. Facilities are

provided from the pre-primary stage to the post-graduate level in the form of educational concessions and subsidies. Kindergartens and single-teacher schools are being provided for pre-primary education. Provision of hostel facilities is another scheme for tribal education. Hostel facilities are provided at pre-matric and post-matric levels at subsidised rates.

Other important schemes include incentive grants to parents and students, special awards to brilliant students, assistance for enrolment in tutorials, award of lumpsum grants and monthly stipends, facilities for all-India tours, encouragement for arts and sports, conduct of district/State level youth festivals, facilities for studying outside the State, provision of centres for study-cum recreation, industrial training, vocational training, production, training and pre-examination training, financial assistance to attend interviews, grants to Ambedkar Memorial Rural Institute for Development (AMRID), and establishment of mobile employment exchanges. These measures attest to the effort by the government to improve the educational status of the tribal community.

## Socio-economic Profile of Sample Households

The socio-economic conditions of the sample tribal households reveal that all of them are located in rural areas and areas bordering forestlands. Their housing conditions are, in general, deplorable. The average size of a family is 4.4. The religion-wise distribution of the sample households shows that 96 per cent are Hindus and the rest are Christians. Only *Kurichians* are found to have converted into Christianity.

Nearly 90 per cent of the households are of agricultural labourers. The pattern of land ownership reveals that marginal farmers constitute less than 10 per cent of the total population. The level of income of the sample households clearly demonstrates that 97 per cent of them are below the poverty line. The pattern of their expenditure shows that 64.6 per cent is devoted to food; 10.6 per cent to clothing and only 5.5 per cent to

education. *Kuruman* and *Kurichian* tribes spend higher amounts for education. More than three-fifths of the heads of households are illiterate. *Kurumans* and *Kurichians* are found to have higher literacy levels. About 46 per cent of the tribal households are illiterate. Most of the literate members have only primary education.

### **Awareness of Educational Development Schemes**

Awareness on the part of the STs about the educational schemes for them was considered the most important factor determining their educational progress. In this study, we analysed 20 important schemes from among the numerous schemes under implementation, which are specifically concerned with education. The extent of awareness of tribesfolk about the educational schemes varied from scheme to scheme. Inter-tribal variation in awareness was also evident. The most popular schemes are: Lumpsum grants and monthly stipends, hostel facilities, and incentive grants to students and parents. But a sizeable section of the tribal people remain unaware of many of the facilities available for their educational improvement. It is the *Kurichians* and the *Kurumans* who had greater awareness about the various educational schemes.

Awareness is a qualitative attribute that hardly yields to quantification. However, in this study, a three-point scale was used to measure the extent of awareness of the educational development schemes among the tribesfolk. It was found that, as a whole, only 16 per cent of the total respondents had a high level of awareness about the educational schemes in existence. About 69 per cent were moderately aware and the rest (about 15 per cent) had only a low level of awareness.

*Kurumans* had a higher mean score of awareness, followed by *Kurichians*. The *Paniyans* and the *Kattunaykans* were at the lowest end. It is clear that there are wide

inter-tribal variations in awareness of educational development schemes. Statistical tests show that there exist significant differences in the mean level of awareness among different tribal communities.

### **Utilisation of Educational Development Schemes**

An analysis of utilisation of the different schemes by the tribesfolk also shows poor results. The data give the impression that most of the educational schemes are yet to be availed of by them. Of the 20 schemes, the important ones made use of by all the tribal groups are lumpsum grants, monthly stipends, and incentive grants (to both parents and students).

It was found that in the sample as a whole, only less than 10 per cent households belonged to the category of high level users of the schemes; another 63 per cent were moderate users. Thus, the percentage of low-level users was found to be as high as 27. Levels of utilisation of these schemes across the tribal communities differed significantly.

It was also identified that, of the 288 children in the age group of 6-14 in the sample tribal households, only 61 per cent were attending schools. About 21 per cent were school drop-outs. Surprisingly, 18 per cent of the children had never attended schools. The highest dropout rate was found among *Adiyans* and *Paniyans*. It was found that 72 per cent of drop-outs of these communities discontinued their studies at the primary level. Almost all the children of the *Kattunaykan* community enrolled in the school dropped out at the primary level.

Many factors account for the high levels of non-enrolment and dropout of children of the tribal communities. The prime reason is economic backwardness. The second important reason given by the heads of households was disinclination on the part of the children towards education. Tribal children were found to opt for paid employment at an early age to gain income, mostly for meeting their personal expenses.



The winds of the modern life style have blown into these communities in a big way, particularly in respect of attire, footwear, cosmetics, etc. The youngsters among them like to wear quality dress and shoes as people do in the civilised society. The parents cannot support the needs of their children as they are leading a hand-to-mouth existence. As a consequence, the children are forced to take up paid employment in order to gain income. The craze for style and the resultant need for income drive many a tribal student to drop out. Physical disability, non-accessibility to schools, etc are also cited as reasons for non-enrolment and dropping out.

### **Other Issues in Tribal Education**

An assessment of the tribal parents' aspirations about their children's education revealed that 97.2 per cent want them to get educated. They also expressed desire for government jobs for their children. But the majority of them were of the view that the amount of assistance that they receive from government through various development schemes was too inadequate.

The social taboos that blocked the educational progress of females among tribesfolk are now on the way out. In this study, three-fourths of the respondents were found eagerly interested in educating their girl children.

### **Reasons for Inter-tribal Variations**

Inter-tribal variation is significant in the levels of awareness and utilisation of educational facilities. The relatively high position attained by *Kurichians* and *Kurumans* may be attributed to their overall socio-economic development. Even in the middle of the 17th century, *Kurichians* and *Kurumans* had lived in independent geographical divisions,

separated from other tribal communities and ruled by tribal chieftains of their own communities. They led largely a settled life, practising slash-and-burn agriculture. *Adiyans* and *Paniyans* were, on the other hand, mainly nomadic tribes.

During the latter half of the 19th century, Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam mobilised a tribal army by recruiting able-bodied persons from *Kurichians* and *Kurumans*, for his fight against the Mysorean invasion. The soldiers thus recruited were allowed to possess and cultivate land in return for the military service they rendered.

Acquisition of land and the beginning of a settled life of agriculture by *Kurichians* and *Kurumans* set them apart among the tribesfolk. Another important reason for the observed differences is the fact that some of the members of these communities are employed in government services. This has a positive impact on their educational development. *Kuruma* and *Kuruchia* families spend as much as 10 per cent of their total expenditure on education.

### **Conclusion**

The tribesfolk remain educationally backward even after 50 years of independence. Their representation in government jobs is far lower than their due. Their educational backwardness does not arise due to paucity of schemes for their development. The immediate task is effective implementation of the existing schemes rather than the initiation of new schemes. The schemes would succeed only when the tribesfolk become more aware of them than now. Any programme of educational development will appear meaningless to the tribal population unless they are convinced that education could remove their economic distress.

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