

Role of Unaided Schools in the Growth of Secondary Education in Tamilnadu (1950-2005)

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Abstract

Education has always been an agent of socialization of individuals in a community, an instrument of social control and a means of social change. The primary role of education is to enlarge and enlighten the human mind, to enable the individuals to achieve a status and become a functioning member of society.

The main objectives of this study are to analyze the present trends and the role of private agencies in the growth of secondary education in Tamilnadu. It also aims to bring out the factors which are directly responsible for the phenomenal rise of private self-finance institutions in secondary education during the last twenty years in the state.

Since independence both the central and state governments initiated a number of efforts and schemes for the expansion of secondary education. We cannot underestimate the progress made in this sector in the last fifty years. The enrolment at secondary stage in India increased from 1.5 million in 1950 to 27.8 million in 1998-99. The number of secondary schools increased from 7416 in 1950 to 1, 12,438 in 1998-99.

As per 2001 census in Tamilnadu out of total population of 6.21 crores, 1.65 crore people are illiterates. The state's literacy rate has increased from 62.66% in 1991 to 73.47% in 2001. The female literacy rate has increased from 51.33% in 1991 to 64.55% in 2001.

In respect of Tamilnadu state the number of secondary schools (including HSS) increased from 1117 in 1950-51 to 7939 in 2000-2001. The number of students benefited through secondary higher secondary schools went up from 28.24 lakhs in 1984-85 to 52.64 lakhs in 2000-2001. The drop-out rate of the state has also been reduced considerably in recent years. The drop-out rate has come down from 67.94 in 1990-91 to 57.89 in 2000-2001. The number of teachers in secondary/higher secondary schools increased from 48574 in 1965-66 to 1, 43,820 in 1999-2000, of which 94,808 are higher secondary school teachers. Government took various steps to provide buildings, toilet facilities, water supply, laboratory appliances and furniture and so on to secondary schools. In spite of all efforts, still there are schools functioning without minimum infrastructure facilities. An attempt is being made to get loans fulfill the basic needs of all schools which lack minimum facility.

Introduction of Self Finance Concept

The British government introduced the grant-in-aid system for the first time in the madras presidency in 1856 in order to attract public participation in education system. The effort not only encouraged the missionaries but also the other private agencies to open more number of schools with government aid. Under the compulsion of administrative necessities, the British administration introduced English education in India.

Even though the study of English did not receive popular attention in formative years, the demand for English education steadily increased in all urban areas even in rural areas to certain extent.⁶

The demand for English medium schools rose tremendously when the people realized that the English education will pave more scope for outside employment. At the time of need, government could not give permission to open more number of English medium sections in aided schools due to financial constraints. Using this situation in their favor, private people opened more number of self-finance matriculation schools. All matriculation schools adopted English as medium of instruction which received good support from public.

The state government allotted Rs.224 crores for education in its total revenue receipts of Rs.976 crores which represented 23% of total state outlay in 1980-81.⁷ Though the state government increased the allocation for education to Rs.4649 crores in 2000-2001, the percentage of allocation out of total receipts has come down to 21.56%.⁸ Out of the total budget estimate of 3,834 crores for school education, 43.5% has earmarked for secondary education. The budgeted provision was inadequate to provide the required expansion of secondary schools. More over many of the government and aided schools offered only Tamil as only medium of instruction. On the other hand, the demand for English as medium of instruction was very high. This trend was one of the main reasons for opening self-finance matriculation schools more in number.

Opening more Number of Matriculation Schools

There were only 29 matriculation high and 31 higher secondary schools with 41,000 students in the state out of 2,087 high and 1,087 higher secondary schools respectively during 1980-81.⁹ The number of matriculation schools increased manifold within a period of twenty years. It is due to the heavy demand for admission in these schools, the number of secondary and higher secondary schools increased to 728 and 346 respectively with 3.5 lakhs of students in 1990-91. This worked out to 9.33% of students joined in these self-finance schools out of the total strength of the students studying in secondary and higher secondary schools in the state.

It also revealed that 21.56% of schools came under this category. The figure further rose very fastly to 1699 secondary and 1027 higher secondary schools with an enrolment of 9.93 lakhs of students in 2000-2002 which formed 19.60% of the total strength of students studying in secondary and higher secondary schools. Correspondingly, out of 7698 schools, the self-finance matric schools formed 35.41%.¹⁰

The above data indicated that the growth of self finance schools were very remarkable. The general public showed keen interest in admitting their children in matric schools. Though the number of students studying in government and aided secondary and higher secondary schools increased from 26.61 lakhs in 1985 to 40.72 lakhs in 2000, the percentage of students to total strength decreased considerably from 94.30% to 80.40% during the corresponding period. All this clearly pointed out that there is apathy in the minds of parents in admitting their children in government and aided schools particularly among the elite group in urban areas.

Mobilization of Resources

The self finance state board and matric schools did not receive any grant from the government. But they levied fees on students to meet the expenditure involved on the salary of the staff, examination, amenities, contingencies, provision of teaching equipments, infrastructure etc. even though the teachers and non-teaching staff in these schools were directed to be paid as per government scale of pay which were revised from time to time, these institutions hardly followed it.¹¹ The fee structure varies from institution. Many of the schools do not fulfill the prescribed conditions such as land, buildings, play fields, laboratory, equipments, furniture, sanitary facilities, qualified staff etc. inspections of these institutions are not made periodically due to lack of educational officers.

Factors for Good Patronage

In spite of these disadvantages, the patronage from the public was not lessened to the self-financing institutions. The rapid increase in the demand for private education is the result of a number of factors. While quality can be defined in different ways, at

the school level it is related to achievement in the public examination and particularly the teaching of English. The other reasons are the demand for quality education, dissatisfaction with the performance of government schools and the ability of the parents to not want to tell others that their children study in government schools. Parents also felt that the level of achievement and learning outcomes of the learners in self-financing schools are better with few exceptions. The achievement studies conducted under district primary education programmed show that the achievement levels of learners from private schools are generally higher than those from the public schools.

The major shift in the language policy of the state government in the second half of the twentieth century was also one of the important reasons for the high growth rate of self-financing schools. This policy also made the people to go for English medium sections available in aided and government schools which are limited in number, the public found it difficult in getting admissions in English medium in secondary schools. Taking the situation in their favor, the private enterprise in good number entered the portals of education system and opened schools in the state.

The analysis points out some of the striking features such as the unaided private schools necessarily had to maintain a high standard of education for their survival and thereby they established a healthy competition among the schools. They not only provide adequate teachers for all classes but also ensure to transact effective teaching learning process in all working days. The unaided managements started collecting huge amount arbitrarily from the parents at the time of admission on one side and maintained the prescribed teacher pupil ratio easily on other side and performed effective class room teaching. The private self finance institutions pay lesser salary to the staff and get more work than that of their counterparts working in government and aided institutions. Therefore it is right time to regulate the fee structure, monitor the payment of the salaries paid to teachers and insist on to adhere to the rules and regulations strictly in all these schools to enjoy the recognition of the department.

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