

Status of Special Schools in Kerala

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Abstract

Education of all children in public schools, together with those with disabilities, continues to be an unanswered issue in many countries around the globe. While education of all students is mandated by law and well thought-out a basic human right in many countries, the current status of execution varies. India, for example, is a prehistoric country that adopted moderately a lot of laws and policies for its citizens with disabilities after the independence from British rule. Today, India legitimately requires the education of all students in schools; however, despite this, millions of students with disabilities prolong to stay behind out of school or be given little or no education. In this context, this paper intends to analyze the status and infrastructure of special schools in Kerala and the factors determining the enrollment of disabled students in these schools.

Keywords: Disabled Students, Education, Infrastructure, Special Schools

1. Introduction

Education of all children in public schools, together with those with disabilities, continues to be an unanswered issue in many countries around the globe. While education of all students is mandated by law and well thought-out a basic human right in many countries, the current status of execution varies. India, for example, is a prehistoric country that adopted moderately a lot of laws and policies for its citizens with disabilities after the independence from British rule. Today, India legitimately requires the education of all students in schools; however, despite this, millions of students with disabilities prolong to stay behind out of school or be given little or no education. In this context, this paper intends to analyze the status and infrastructure of special schools in Kerala and the factors determining the enrollment of disabled students in these schools.

2. Review of Literature

Rane¹ evaluated the scheme of incorporated education for disabled children in Maharashtra and exposed the major deficiencies. Pathak² investigated the celebrity traits, adjustment, aspirations and socio-metric conditions of the disabled children in normal schools. Sharma³ attempted to examine the difference in the personality characteristics of the Learning Disabled (LD) and the Non-Learning Disabled (NLD) children and also assessed the efficacy of intervention programmes developed for children with varied learning disabilities. Lali⁴ conducted a comparative study of the scholastic performance of the visually handicapped pupils studying under the integrated system with that of the normal pupils in Kerala. Reddy and Sujathamalini⁵ found that in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu the school teachers possessed only moderate and low awareness and attitude

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with moderate competency towards the disability aspects in children. Mehta⁶ revealed that ICSE board teachers were more aware of learning disabilities among students as compared to CBSE and SSLC board teachers. Erik et al.,⁷ analysed the summer employment and community activities of high school students with severe disabilities. Dahle, Knivsbery and Andreassen⁸ focused on a small group of children and young adolescent with Dyslexia who have severally impaired reading skills despite prolonged special education. Ryan⁹ found out the barriers faced by students with disabilities in nursing courses, particularly in clinical placements. Boyle and Rivera¹⁰ examined the effectiveness of three different note-taking techniques used by students of varying disabilities during lectures. Simonsen et al.,¹¹ identified the use of school wide multitier systems of support to address the challenges of children and youth with emotional/behavioral disorders in the United States.

3. Objectives

- To study the social characteristics of the heads of the disabled institutions in the study area of Thrissur, Ernakulum and Kottayam districts.
- To study the educational infrastructure facilities available in the special schools of study area.
- To examine the enrolment and dropout of students with disability in the special schools of study area.
- To expose the opinion of the head of the institutions towards various problems faced by such schools.
- To highlight the factors determining the enrollment of disabled students in these schools.

4. Hypothesis

H₁: The enrollment of disabled students is determined by ownership of the school rather than infrastructure and transport facilities.

5. Methodology

This study is based exclusively on primary data. The primary data required for the study has been collected from the select districts of Kerala state. The districts with more number of special schools were identified and selected for the present study based on the simple random sampling technique by which Thrissur, Ernakulum and Kottayam districts were selected. All the special schools available in these three districts were chosen and surveyed. Totally 30 special schools were surveyed for the present study. All the heads of the special schools were approached in person and the required data was collected.

6. Results and Discussion

Designation wise classification of the heads of the special schools is presented in Table 1. It could be observed that the share of Head Masters was little high (40%) when compared to others. Among the districts also the same picture could be noticed excepting Kottayam, where, the share of Correspondents was higher than the other two headships.

Table 2 portrays the social characteristics of the respondents. In all, both female (50%) and male (50%) equally heading the institutions. Among the districts, Kottayam has a higher percentage of male (71.43%) than female. While in other two districts, the share of female was higher than male. As Kerala gives equal importance to both male and female, the share was more or less equal. It is clear from the same table that more than nine tenths of the respondents (90%) belonged to General Category which was followed by OBC (10%). In all the districts, general category was the highest when compared to other communities and their share was very high. It is also explained from Table 1 that a vast majority of the respondents belonged to Christian religion; the only other religion found in the study district was Hindu, which was very meager (13.33%). Mostly the special schools are run by the Christian missionaries and hence the share of Christians was high.

Table 1. General information about the special school

Sl. No.	Designation	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Principal	4.00 (30.77)	2.00 (20.00)	2.00 (28.57)	8.0 (26.67)
2	Head Master	5.00 (38.46)	5.00 (50.00)	2.00 (28.57)	12.00 (40.00)
3	Correspondent	4.00 (30.77)	3.00 (30.00)	3.00 (42.86)	10.00 (33.33)
	Total	13.00 (100.00)	10.00 (100.00)	7.00 (100.00)	30.00 (100.00)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Table 2. Social characteristics of the heads of the school

Sl.No.	Social Characteristics	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
Gender					
1	Male	6 (46.15)	4 (40.00)	5 (71.43)	15 (50.00)
2	Female	7 (53.85)	6 (60.00)	2 (28.57)	15 (50.00)
Religion					
1	Hindu	2 (15.38)	1 (10.00)	1 (14.29)	4 (13.33)
2	Christian	11 (84.62)	9 (90.00)	6 (85.71)	26 (86.67)
Community					
1	GT	12 (92.31)	9 (90.00)	6 (85.71)	27 (90.00)
2	OBC	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	1 (14.29)	3 (10.00)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Table 3. Specialization of Schools in the Study Area

Sl. No.	Type	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Blind	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	4 (13.33)
2	Mental Retardation	6 (46.15)	5 (50.00)	4 (57.14)	15 (50.00)
3	Deaf/HI	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (23.33)
4	Blind Integrated	1 (7.69)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.33)
5	Deaf/blind	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (14.29)	1 (3.33)
6	Physically handicapped	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.67)
	Total	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Table 4. Ownership of the special schools

Sl. No.	Ownership Nature of the Schools	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Government	3 (23.08)	0 (0.00)	1 (14.29)	4 (13.33)
2	Private	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.67)
3	Aided	2 (15.38)	3 (30.00)	2 (28.57)	7 (23.33)
4	Trust	7 (53.85)	6 (60.00)	4 (57.14)	17 (56.67)
	Total	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Table 3 shows the specialization of the special schools in the study districts. The specialization of the schools was classified into 6 broad categories viz., Blind, Mental Retardation, Deaf/Hearing Impaired, Blind Integrated, Deaf/Blind and Physically Handicapped. It reveals that 50% of the special schools were providing education to students with mental retardation, while, 23.33% of the schools were providing education to those with deaf/hearing impairment. Only a few schools were specialized in educating the blind (13.33%); blind integrated (3.33%); deaf/blind (3.33%) and physically handicapped (6.67%). Among the districts also the same trend could be seen. However, there was no school for deaf and Hearing Impaired (HI) in Kottayam where the numbers of schools for blind were high (28.57%).

Table 4 unveils the ownership status of the special schools in the study area classified into four categories, viz., government, private, aided and trust. It could be seen that 56.67% of the schools were owned by the trusts (charitable welfare society) and 23.33% were aided schools. Whereas, the government schools were less at 13.33% only and the remaining 6.67% of the schools were under private ownership. Among the districts also the trust schools were higher than the other ownerships. Surprisingly, no school was found under government category in Ernakulam and not private school was found in Kottayam district.

Table 5 explains the position of teachers in the special schools, on the dimensions of their total strength, total

number of disability teachers, total number of trained teachers, untrained teachers, permanent teachers and temporary teachers. It could be observed that about one third (33.33%) of the schools have a total teaching staff ranging from both 10-20 and 20-30 teachers. However 16.67% of the schools have their teaching staff of either below 10 members or above 30 members. However none of the schools in Kottayam seem to have the strength of teaching staff above 30.

Further, it could be inferred that more than two thirds (66.67%) of the special schools have a strength of disability teachers upto 10. Regarding the total number of trained teachers in all, about 40 per cent of the schools possess 20-30 trained teachers. In case of total untrained teachers, a majority of the schools (66.67%) possess 10 or less only of such untrained teachers. It could also be observed that a vast majority of the schools (83.33%) have more than 10 permanent teachers, while about one half of the schools (50%) have temporary teachers of below 10 only.

Table 6 presents the enrolment and dropout of Hearing Impaired and Blind students from class 1 to 12. It is seen from the table that Ernakulam had more enrolment (435) than Thrissur (324) and Kottayam (217). Among the gender wise also the enrolment of both boys and girls were high in Ernakulam district when compared to other two districts. It is inspiring to note that none of the disabled students had dropped out from class 1 to 12.

Table 5. Position of teaching staff in the special schools

Sl. No.	Teachers	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
Total Number of Teachers					
1	Below 10	2 (15.38)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	5 (16.67)
2	10-20	3 (23.08)	5 (50.00)	2 (28.57)	10 (33.33)

3	20-30	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	3 (42.86)	10 (33.33)
4	Above 30	4 (30.77)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	5 (16.67)
Total Number of Disability Teachers					
1	Below 10	9 (69.23)	6 (60.00)	5 (71.43)	20 (66.67)
2	Above 10	4 (30.77)	4 (40.00)	2 (28.57)	10 (33.33)
Total Trained Teachers					
1	Below 10	3 (23.08)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	6 (20.00)
2	10-20	3 (23.08)	3 (30.00)	3 (42.86)	9 (30.00)
3	20-30	5 (38.46)	5 (50.00)	2 (28.57)	12 (40.00)
4	30-40	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.67)
5	Above 40	1 (7.69)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.33)
Total Untrained Teachers					
1	Below 10	9 (69.23)	7 (70.00)	4 (57.14)	20 (66.67)
2	Above 10	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	3 (42.86)	10 (33.33)
Total Permanent Teachers					
1	Below 10	2 (15.38)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	5 (16.67)
2	10-20	11 (84.62)	9 (90.00)	5 (71.43)	25 (83.33)
Total Temporary Teachers					
1	Below 10	8 (61.54)	3 (30.00)	4 (57.14)	15 (50.00)
2	10-20	5 (38.46)	7 (70.00)	3 (42.86)	15 (50.00)

Table 6. Enrollment and dropout of disability students -hearing impaired and blind

District										
SL. No	Class	Thrissur			Ernakulam			Kottayam		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	I	13 (8.55)	12 (6.98)	25 (7.72)	23 (11.56)	21 (8.90)	44 (10.11)	15 (15.15)	15 (12.71)	30 (13.82)
2	II	12 (7.89)	16 (9.30)	28 (8.64)	24 (12.06)	36 (15.25)	60 (13.79)	8 (8.08)	13 (11.02)	21 (9.68)
3	III	5 (3.29)	12 (6.98)	17 (5.25)	18 (9.05)	27 (11.44)	45 (10.34)	8 (8.08)	14 (11.86)	22 (10.14)
4	IV	8 (5.26)	13 (7.56)	21 (6.48)	31 (15.58)	27 (11.44)	58 (13.33)	9 (9.09)	9 (7.63)	18 (8.29)
5	V	13 (8.55)	7 (4.07)	20 (6.17)	22 (11.06)	16 (6.78)	38 (8.74)	6 (6.06)	14 (11.86)	20 (9.22)
9	VI	15 (9.87)	12 (6.98)	27 (8.33)	25 (12.56)	14 (5.93)	39 (8.97)	10 (10.10)	14 (11.86)	24 (11.06)
7	VII	12 (7.89)	19 (11.05)	31 (9.57)	13 (6.53)	24 (10.17)	37 (8.51)	15 (15.15)	16 (13.56)	31 (14.29)
8	VIII	18 (11.84)	9 (5.23)	27 (8.33)	13 (6.53)	15 (6.36)	28 (6.44)	4 (4.04)	5 (4.24)	9 (4.15)
9	IX	15 (9.87)	18 (10.47)	33 (10.19)	17 (8.54)	24 (10.17)	41 (9.43)	8 (8.08)	5 (4.24)	13 (5.99)
10	X	10 (6.58)	13 (7.56)	23 (7.10)	9 (4.52)	18 (7.63)	27 (6.21)	9 (9.09)	3 (2.54)	12 (5.53)
11	XI	16 (10.53)	19 (11.05)	35 (10.80)	1 (0.50)	6 (2.54)	7 (1.61)	3 (3.03)	5 (4.24)	8 (3.69)
12	XII	15 (9.87)	22 (12.79)	37 (11.42)	3 (1.51)	8 (3.39)	11 (2.53)	4 (4.04)	5 (4.24)	9 (4.15)
Total		152 (100.00)	172 (100.00)	324 (100.00)	199 (100.00)	236 (100.00)	435 (100.00)	99 (100.00)	118 (100.00)	217 (100.00)
Dropout		0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0	0

Enrollment and Dropout of Disability Students										
<i>Cont...</i>										
(Mentally Retarded)										
SL. NO	M.R Class	District								
		Thrissur			Ernakulam			Kottayam		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Pre Primary	44 (17.74)	41 (15.83)	85 (16.77)	37 (17.96)	37 (19.27)	74 (18.55)	33 (19.19)	42 (17.50)	75 (18.20)
2	Primary	60 (24.19)	40 (15.44)	100 (19.72)	39 (18.93)	42 (21.88)	81 (20.30)	34 (19.77)	38 (15.83)	72 (17.48)
3	Secondary	78 (31.45)	57 (22.01)	135 (26.63)	47 (22.82)	48 (25.00)	95 (23.81)	47 (27.33)	55 (22.92)	102 (24.76)
4	Vocational Training Course	66 (26.61)	121 (46.72)	187 (36.88)	83 (40.29)	65 (33.85)	149 (37.34)	58 (33.72)	105 (43.75)	163 (39.56)
Total		248 (100.00)	259 (100.00)	507 (100.00)	206 (100.00)	192 (100.00)	399 (100.00)	172 (100.00)	240 (100.00)	412 (100.00)
Total Dropout		0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Regarding the mentally retarded the enrolment was much high in Thrissur (507) when compared to Kottayam (412) and Ernakulam (399). On the gender wise also, Thrissur had the highest enrolment of both male and female students. In this category of disability, the dropout was nil. As these schools provide free education, none of the disabled students had dropped out from the schools.

The problems faced by the schools are reported in Table 7. The major problems faced by the schools have been classified into two categories viz., lack of text books and lack of Braille. The major problem faced by most of the schools was the lack of text books required for their students. In fact, the disabled students cannot cope with their studies without textbooks. Further a few schools have not received Braille, the most essential requisite for the blind students in particular.

Table 7. Problems faced by the special schools

Sl. No.	Problems	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Yes	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
Reasons					
1	Text Books	12 (92.31)	9 (90.00)	5 (71.43)	26 (86.67)
2	Braille	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	4 (13.33)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Table 8. Special school physical infrastructure

SL.No.	Infrastructure	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Braille/Braille slate/Stylus/ Taylor Frame	2 (15.38)	0 (0)	2 (28.57)	4 (13.33)
2	Audiogram/Hearing Aid	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	2 (28.57)	9 (30.00)
3	Others(Charts/Drawing book/Sketch/Pencil)	7 (53.85)	7 (70.00)	3 (42.86)	17 (56.67)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Table 8 shows the physical infrastructure available in the special schools of study area. More than one half of the schools have the infrastructural and stationery facilities

like charts, drawing books, pencil etc. The availability of audiogram was better than Braille as 30% of the special schools have it.

7. Testing of Hypothesis

Table 9 presents the major determinants of enrolment in special schools in the study districts which are independent variables. To find out the significant determinants, a multiple linear regression model was used. Enrolment in special schools was taken as dependent variable.

The major determinants used were ownership status, school transport facility, school library, total teachers and instructional programmes. R square value of 0.33 indicates that the above said variables together influence the enrolment in special schools by 33 per cent. The F value of 2.363 being significant at ten per cent level indicates that the construction of the model is satisfactory. Among the independent variables, school transport facility and school library, were significant at 5 per cent level, while all other variables were not significant even at a ten percent level. Further, it can be inferred that, if the schools had library facility, then the enrolment was increased by 46 students. On the other hand, the school transport facility

had negatively influenced the enrolment. This is because, if the students are physically challenged, school transport was not preferred by them and hence it was negatively influencing. Thus the hypothesis “The enrolment of disabled students was determined by ownership of the schools rather than by infrastructure and transport facilities” has not been validated.

8. Suggestions

The following are the important suggestions drawn from the present study:

- The infrastructure facilities in most of the surveyed schools were poor and hence the infrastructure facilities should be increased and improved by either the government or the sponsors.
- Only a few schools have library facility, so the government or the donors or the management

Table 9. Determinants of enrolment in special schools

Sl. No.	Model	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		Beta	Std. Error		
	Constant		69.045	-.355	.726
1	Ownership Status	.036	6.246	.210	.836
2	School Transport Facility	-.428	18.899	-2.067	.050
3	School Library	.468	43.910	2.706	.012
4	Total Teachers	.031	.758	.151	.881
5	Instructional Programme	.100	43.527	.581	.567
	R	.574			
	R Square	0.33			
	F	2.363	.070		

Source: computed from primary data

should establish libraries in all the special schools at the earliest to enhance and enrich their enrollments.

- Government should recruit more trained teachers in special schools so that such disabled students' studies at higher education level will also be improved in future.

9. Conclusion

Education is the key factor for socio-economic progress and it is an important indicator for human development. In the recent times, significant efforts taken by the Ministry of Human Resource Development at the Centre and the State Governments by way of introducing more policies and legislations for differently abled persons to increase their participation in inclusive education and encouraging them to contribute their skills to develop our society are quite laudable. Thus the study concludes that the disabled children were taken care of by the government, private and trust schools with either free education or at concessional fee. However, these special schools need to be provided with good infrastructural facilities to enrich the disability students in the knowledge domain.

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