



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Economics

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND SOCIAL EXTERNALITIES IN KERALA

KEY WORDS: Women Education, Social Externalities ,Pre-Independence ,Post-Independence Period , Social Development, Kerala

Liji Samuel

Ph.D Student, Department of Economics, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

ABSTRACT

Educational investment is of primary importance for the formation of human capital in children and is considered as investment in the productivity of the future generation .This is very true in the case of female education economic growth human welfare and women's education are closely interrelated and interdependent in all countries, especially in less developed and developing countries. One major and explicit difference is their higher education level. Eighty five per cent of Kerala women are literate. With a high literacy rate and better educational status, Kerala women contribute a lot to the socio-economic development of the State. Christian missionaries were encouraged to open schools, and from the middle of the ninth century the state provided financial incentives for private schools and opened several schools, including convents for girls. A progressive movement led by Narayana Guru greatly influenced the education of women. Kerala's efforts for education have spanned over 170 years. Educating women is educating the whole nation .Employment, empowerment, fertility, quality of child care, health and economic efficiency are all the outcomes of better and higher female education.

INTRODUCTION

"Educate one man ,you educate one person, but educate a women and you educate a whole civilisation"

Mahatma Gandhi

Education for children must be the first call on the nation's resources. Children however take time to grow up and in the meantime events will not wait. In 1937, the introduction of Provincial Autonomy and the spread of the franchise in rural areas gave a great and direct impetus to the education of the adult. This campaign for adult education led to a considerable increase in literacy, but even then, taking the population above 5, literacy in 1941 stood at only 14.6 percent. by 1951, the figure had risen to 18.3 per cent. These figures do not however tell the whole story. The great spurt of activity in adult education that started in 1937 was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, though its full impact was felt in India only after 1941. During the war years, there was, instead of any increase, a large scale -reduction in educational facilities .Many schools closed down and adult education activities were almost at a standstill (Humayn Kabir 1956). The years 1946 and 1947 were however marked by tension and uncertainty which hindered all constructive work finally led to the participation of the country. It is therefore almost certain that on the eve of independence, the literacy figures were lower than they were in 1941. The increase of literacy from 14.6 to 18.3 per cent may therefore be regarded as an entirely post-independent achievement.

Schooling has been the most powerful non- traditional input discovered to explain the puzzle of modern economic growth (Denison 1962). Educational investment is of utmost importance for the formation of human capital in children and is considered as investment in the productivity of the future generation .This is very true in the case of female education economic growth human welfare and women's education are closely interrelated and interdependent in all countries, especially in less developed and developing countries.

Many of these countries are taken the policy of investment more on female education as the priority area of auctioning their growth and development agenda. Both at micro and macro-economic levels, women's education are considered generally as important input for economic growth and development (Singh 2016). To provide better and more educational opportunities for women has become the motto of many countries of the world. The motto has a long social history. The great philosophers like Euripides and Plato urgent for opening women in Greece. Keeping all this factors

in background the present paper is written focusing Kerala, the smallest southern states in India.

Women in Kerala are different from their counterparts living in the other parts of the country. One major and explicit difference is their higher education level (Sanderson 2007). Eighty five per cent of Kerala women are literate. With a high literacy rate and better educational status, Kerala women contribute a lot to the socio-economic development of the State.

The major face behind women's education in Kerala was Christian missionaries. Wives of the protestant missionaries spearheaded this work. They started modern education for girls in Kerala. At first there was a lot of prejudice against women's education. This became a great obstacle to their education .Christian missionaries started the first girl's school in 1819 at Nagercoil. Also in north Travancore the first school for girls was started at Kottayam by Ametia Baker in 1820.

Church Mission Society (CMS) was mainly responsible for the education of girls in central Kerala. in 1820 Norton started a girls school in Aleppy .Baker memorial school was established at Kottayam in 1869. The missionaries imparted free education in Kerala. The progress in education especially for women contributed much to the social reform movement of the time. This influenced the government also to think about starting girls schools. in 1864 Travancore government started the first government school. Though less in number the educated women became aware of the condition in society and argued for change. Educated women were soon absorbed as teachers in schools are there were few women to teach in girls' schools. Education modernised and reshaped the life of women. In Kerala, the movement for women's education started as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century when in 1817 rani Lakshmi Bai of Travancore made a proclamation emphasising the need for universal primary education and the duty of the state to provide it.

Christian missionaries were encouraged to open schools, and from the middle of the ninth century the state provided financial incentives for private schools and opened several schools, including convents for girls. A progressive movement led by Narayana Guru greatly influenced the education of women. Kerala's efforts for education have spanned over 170 years.

Women of Kerala, enjoyed lot of liberty from early days. They used to recite the Puranas and watched performance of

dramas, indigenous arts like Kathakali .Festivals like Onam and Thiruvathira gave occasions to them for social contacts and for the exhibition of their literacy, musical and dance talents. The rich and many among the poor knew to read and write in the Chilapathikaram- literature belonging to Sangam Era, spotted in Chera land by some women performing Kuravainritham, a kind of folk dance. Chandrotsavam ,a poetic composition of 12th century, refers to women artists like Mathi who remarkable for her musical talent and dexterity in playing the veena. To make women education compulsory and free ,but also ruled that 15 per cent of that State budget should go to education.

Table 1. growth of female literacy in Kerala and India

items*	Census years						
	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
i	16.67	24.02	29.45	36.03	52.31	65.38	74.04
ii	7.93	12.95	18.68	24.73	39.29	54.16	65.46
iii	40.47	56.85	60.42	70.42	77.96	87.86	93.91
iv	31.41	38.90	54.31	65.7	75.25	87.86	91.98

Source: economic review , various issues, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

- * i: percentage of literates among the total population of India
ii: percentage of literates among the female population of India
iii: percentage of literates among the total population of Kerala
iv: percentage of literates among the female population of Kerala

Table 2 .Enrolment in school education in all categories in Kerala in 2011-12

Class i-x	Girls	Boys
	2443253	2566505
Class xii	206361	180828

Table 3 .Enrolment in school education in scheduled caste in Kerala in 2011-12

Class i-x	Girls	Boys
	236110	251768
Class xii	17469	15156

Table 4.Enrolment in school education in scheduled tribe in Kerala in 2011-12

Class i-x	Girls	Boys
	38969	41648
Class xii	1721	1499

Table 5 .Gross Enrolment ratio (GER)-xi-xii(16 to 17 years)

GER-xi-xii (16 to 17 years)	Girls	Boys
	84.7	72.0

Source: statistics of school education 2011-12, Govt of India, New Delhi

Today the State of Kerala has 100% literacy. Kerala is ahead of other states in India in women's education. According to the 2001 census, the female literacy rate is 87.86 per cent. Women in Kerala hold a high position in all spheres of public service, education, judicial, medical and engineering.

In the history of Kerala, we see a remarkably diverse group of women for scholarships and cultural achievements, and the songs praise the marital powers and tactics of women like Unniarcha in the Northern Ballads (Vadakkan Pattukal).

Kerala is the number one State in India in terms of women's education. Women in Kerala hold high positions in all spheres of public service. Malayalee women have a strong sense of community, civic and national consciousness. She uses her freedom in a spirit of justice and equality. She excelled as a

wife and mother. Education sharpened her intellect, broadened her perspective and strengthened her social and civic senses.

Certain statistical information is given in the tables 1,2,3,4 and 5.

Result of the survey

A survey is conducted in Kollam district to find out the social outreach through women's education. Of the 300 women interviewed, 35 have less than 12 years of education (first class), 215 have 12 to 17 (second class) and 50 (third category) have 17 years of employment. Only 10 work in the first category, 45 and 185 in the second and third categories respectively.

Thirty women in the first category spend less than Rs.1500 per child and 5 spend Rs.2000 per child for education on an average annually. But 85 per cent of women in the second category spend an amount between Rs.5000-Rs.10000 per child for their education .Except 5 per cent; others are spending more than Rs.15000 per child for education in the third category. The major factor that makes them spending more for education purpose is the benefits they enjoy due to their higher educational status and their inner urge that their children also have to get the benefits of higher education.

Similarly, the spending for better quality food is higher in the case of women in the second and third category. They are much aware of the consequences of the intake of low quality food. This raises the health status of their family members .In the case of child care, again the second and third category are providing the best .All the women in the second and third categories opined that a healthy child as an asset to the family and to the nation. These groups are vigilant against the social evils like dowry, early marriage etc.

Many of the women interviewed are either employed or self-employed. Some run small business units as additional source of income. They say this makes them feel empowered .They have a voice in the decision making process of the family. Survey results show that women in first category are denied of all this privileges. Most of them are under employed or unemployed and not empowered. In short, all the inferences drawn from the survey boils down to the conclusion that "be educated is a virtue" and stepping stone to enjoy one's own life productively and efficiently. Kerala's high physical quality of life index is mainly due to its educated, employed and empowered female force.

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