"THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MINIMIZING SCHOOL DROPOUTS"

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ABSTRACT

Peter et al, (2004) studied the factors associated with the school dropouts of SC and ST students in Chennai Corporation Higher Secondary schools. The problem of school dropouts should be a matter of great concern to the Government and the society as a whole, since it can lead to lopsided development of the different sections of populations and ultimately widen the gap between the haves and have-nots. There is no doubt that the development of human resource through a good education which is free from the problem of dropouts opens the doors for opportunities for the future and it should be the responsibility of the society as a whole, to ensure that these doors are not shut for the students of the poorer sections of the community. Towards this, the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can play a major role by providing training and development Programmes for this particular category of secondary school dropouts.

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41 NGOs were included for the present study, of which 29 organisations deal with the problem of school dropouts. They undertake various programmes like training, counseling and education not only for the students but also for their illiterate parents. In spite of the efforts and services rendered by these organisations, it is quite surprising to notice such a large number of school dropouts and it shows the magnitude of the problem in all dimensions. In the present article, an attempt is made to study the role of NGOs and their reactions to the problem of minimizing school dropouts.

1. Introduction

Sharma (1983) made an attempt to study the factors, which are responsible for the low enrolment in the schools and subsequent high dropout rates. Shakuntala (1987) conducted a critical study on providing Non-Formal Education (NFE) for dropouts and non-enrolled children in the age group 9 to 14 years in Karnataka. The major finding of the study is that the NFE centres were not easily accessible and community participation was minimum. Venkataiah and Jayachandrama (1990) made an attempt to compare the achievement of dropouts and non-starters in NFE centres. The study reveals that there is a significant difference between the academic achievement of dropouts and non-starters at the non-formal education centres. An alternative solution to the problem of school dropouts would be to seek the help of Non-Governmental Organisations. Already, NGOs offer various kinds of services like Vocational Education; Counseling and personality development; Skill training and self employment schemes; Scholarships for the education of the children; Continuing education for the school dropouts; Non formal education; Leadership and recreational activities; Health Education Programmes.

As far as those who have already dropped out, and cannot be re-enrolled because of the time gap, functional literacy classes and non-formal education will be an important means of making them literate. An attempt is made in this article to study the supplementary role played by NGOs in providing education, development and training for this target group. Further, extra coaching classes for those students who are finding difficulties in academic pursuits will go a long way in preventing the wastage of human resources through failure and retention. The reflections of NGOs on this in the form of creating coaching centres in the slums and poorer localities may also be the focus of the study.

2. Methodology

The primary objective of this article is to study the role of NGOs in minimizing the secondary school dropouts, as the literature on this subject is meager. As many as 64 Corporation high/ higher secondary schools in all 10 zones of Chennai city were included for the study to determine the magnitude of the problem of school dropouts. A detailed analysis of school dropouts and the significant findings are discussed in Peter et al, (2004). The living conditions of most of these school dropouts were below poverty line and mostly living in urban slums. In addition to collect information from school dropouts and their parents, members of Non-Governmental Organisations were also interviewed in order to find out their opinion on school dropouts and the services offered by them to these groups.

Out of 41 NGOs interviewed, 29 organisations deal with the problem of school dropouts. They undertake various programmes like training, counseling and education not only for the students but also for their illiterate parents. In spite of the efforts and services rendered by these organisations, it is quite surprising to notice such a large number of school dropouts and it shows the magnitude of the problem.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Characteristics of NGOs

It is worthwhile to observe that the selected groups of the NGOs are receiving funds not only within the country but also outside and 23 out of 41 organisations receive funds from outside the countries.

Source of Funding for NGOs		Target group of NGOs	
Within the Country	29	Children	30
		Youth	33
Outside the Country	23	Elders	15
		Handicapped	20
Government Projects	29	School dropouts	29

3.2 The Duration of Service

The duration of services rendered by these NGOs to different sections of the society ranges from one year to twenty years and 26 (63.4%) organisations providing services for more than five years as evident from the following table:

Table 3.2.1: Duration of Service

Duration of Service (in years)	No. of NGOs	%
0-5	15	36.6
6-10	10	24.4
11-15	6	14.6
Above 15	10	24.4
Total	41	100.0

3.3 Beneficiaries

The average and standard deviation of the number of male beneficiaries from the selected NGOs are 6,463 ± 13,453. It is interesting to observe that there is a wide range in the number of males availing the services from 6 to 62,000. The corresponding figure for females is 9,126 ± 20,401. The minimum and maximum number of female beneficiaries are from 8 to 1,06,490. On the whole, the female beneficiaries are significantly more than male beneficiaries and is a clear-cut indication of the lower empowerment for women in the society.

3.4 The Financial Commitment

The Financial Commitment per annum for these NGOs as per Table 3.4.1 ranges from Rs.5000 to Rs.50 lakhs with an average and standard deviation of 9.9 ± 12.96 lakhs:

Table 3.4.1: Financial Budget in Lakhs

Mean	9.9033
Median	3.2500
Mode	0.50
Std. Deviation	12.96399
Minimum	0.05
Maximum	50.00
Sum	297.10

Multiple modes exist and the smallest value is shown.

3.5 Years of Existence

The number of years of existence of NGOs and their financial commitment has been compared for possible statistical significance only for 30 NGOs wherein which the complete details are available. Table 3.5.1 reveals that four NGOs that exist for more than 15 years, receive on the average 17.25 lakhs per annum and it is maximum from other groups. Also, 12 organisations that are functioning less than 5 years, receive 9.76 lakhs per annum and it is slightly on the higher side as compared to 6–10 and 11–15 years groups. One-way analysis of variance (Table 3.5.2) for testing the equality of several population averages reveals that there is no significant difference among the different groups of NGOs with respect to generating funds (F = 0.53, p= 0.666).

Table 3.5.1: Financial Budget in Lakhs

Duration	No. of NGOs	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0-5 years	12	9.76	17.09	4.93	0	20.62
6-10	8	7.19	11.88	4.20	0	17.12
11-15	6	8.92	7.071	2.89	1.50	16.34
Above 15	4	17.25	6.85	3.42	6.35	28.15
Total	30	9.90	12.96	2.37	5.06	14.74

Table 3.5.2 : Anova for Financial Budget in Lakhs

Source	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	280.993	3	93.664	0.53	0.666
Within Groups	4592.896	26	176.650		
Total	4873.890	29			

4. Summary of the Findings from the NGOs

Peter (2004) summarizes the areas of total agreement among the NGOs and are highlighted below:

1. Community College Education, based on the local needs of the school dropouts may be introduced.

2. The Government should come forward to create a strong awareness in the society through the media in the form of advertisement and hoarding. As the entire media is within the control of the Government, they should work certain modalities to solve this problem.

3. Stringent measures in the execution of the legislation of child labour must be implemented.

4. There was no literature search connected with the study of school dropouts and the future reflections. Hence, it is emphasized that a separate agency should be constituted to conduct a survey on school dropouts.

5. It is the primary duty on the part of the school authorities including the teachers to participate in educating, motivating and counseling the parents of the school dropouts about the importance of education.

6. Vocational and Technical orientation must be incorporated in the educational system. At the same time, periodical changes according to the needs of the students should be introduced. Also, by eliciting the skills of the students the school authorities can chart out the plans and programmes.

5. NGOs' Suggestions and Recommendations for Solving the Problem of School Dropouts

5.1 To the Government

Providing liberal scholarship to the students; Introducing compulsory education; Encouraging and supporting NGOs to start skill based training programmes; providing financial support to school dropouts to continue the education; conducting a thorough survey to know the number of dropouts; Devising various literacy programmes; intensifying Government's policies on education and proper implementation of strategies; establishing guidance and counseling centre; starting more and more vocational education centre; closer monitoring of educational programmes; implementation of developmental programmes; conducting motivational training programmes; organising transit schools.

5.2 To the Society

Monitoring the programmes that are implemented in various centres taking initiatives to prevent school dropouts; eradicating child labour; Undertaking awareness programmes about basic and vocational education; Preparing children to be the good citizens of the country; helping the school dropouts to liberate themselves

from this particular problem; conducting survey of school dropouts and being sympathetic to the poorer students of the society and motivating this target group to continue their education.

5.3 To Educational Institutions

Conducting special classes or lining them to Open School System and help them to complete their education; creating the guidance and counseling centre; accepting recommendations of service organisations for admissions; providing child friendly education; providing practical educational programmes; creating parents teachers associations; creating an atmosphere for learning; ensuring a joyful class room learning environment; concentrating on weaker children who have a tendency to be dropped out; organising regular meeting with their parents; improving the methodology of teaching and making education a joyful exercise.

5.4 To Parents

Undertaking orientation and awareness programmes on education; supporting the children to complete their basic education; should encourage the dropouts to go for trade base learning problems; laying a strong foundation to bring future for children by their hard wok; being responsible and showing interest in the education of the children; preparing the children for self confidence and hard work through motivation and guidance; enabling the children to study and ensure their right to education and development and meeting the teachers regularly and enquire about the progress made by the student.

5.5 To Students

Should follow the directions of the elders and work for the betterment of their own lives rather than allowing themselves to be controlled by discouragement, they should have mental make up to complete their basic education; the students should become aware of their educational fundamental rights; cooperating with educational institutions to complete the education; being regular to school and complete the basic education and developing the skills towards achieving the opportunities.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

An overwhelming response from all the 41 NGOs considered for the study is a positive sign towards the betterment of the society particularly for those who have dropped out from schools for various reasons. It is worthwhile to mention that out of 41 NGOs interviewed 29 Organisations deal with the problem of school dropouts.

These organisations not only educate school dropouts in the form of counseling, mentoring and guiding the students but also convince the illiterate parents about the importance of education and guide the parents to reorient their children back to schools. In spite of many NGOs operating within the Chennai city and receiving funds for the cause of educating the dropouts, it is surprising to see that not even a single organization exclusively works for the school dropouts and addresses the magnitude of the problem of school dropout directly. Various types of training programmes are offered by NGOs but for a short duration. Some of these are driving training, motor mechanic training, tailoring and Embroidery, chalk manufacture, honey making, pickle making, jam making and solid waste management.

The major role of NGOs in minimizing the secondary school dropouts would be their total participation in i) Education programmes ii) Developmental programmes and iii) Training programmes. Towards this they play a crucial role in supporting the school dropouts for further education; conducting job oriented programmes; organising compulsory education and coordinating parents and teachers associations; organising supplementary educational programmes; closer monitoring of schools; giving counseling to parents and individual children; helping the students who are the potential dropouts to continue their education.

Further the NGOs can meet certain items of expenditures that are not covered by the Government programmes. However, there is a danger that any service that is given totally free of cost is not valued by the recipients and therefore there has to be some expectations from the parents to share part of the burden of educating their children.

References

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