



Quality Education Pupils Right (QEPR) Programme in Kerala: A Critical Analysis

Vijayakumari, K* & Remesh, N, K**

*Associate Professor, Farook Training College, Calicut, Kerala, India

** HSST – English, Govt. Model HSS for Girls, Trichur, Kerala, India

Abstract

Received: 30 Jan 2015
Revised: 20 Feb 2015
Accepted: 22 Feb 2015

Keywords:

Right to education Act,
Quality education, Quality
improvement programmes in
Kerala, QEPR schools.

Kerala state had launched a Quality Improvement Programme (QIP) in 104 High Schools, the *QEPR schools*, which failed to attain even a 33 percent of pass percentage in the board examination in 2006. This study analysed how much the QEPR programme achieved its objectives in the eleven QEPR schools in Thrissur district in Kerala and found that the programme of QEPR is successful in these schools. The programme could be taken to other schools and even other states for enhancing the quality of education in the schools.

© 2015 Guru Journal of Behavioral and Social Sciences

Education is a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context influencing the younger ones and hence the society. “Children have a right to education, a quality education”, says UNICEF. ‘Quality of Education’ has been a recent topic which received a great deal of attention especially when the quantity has increased. There is agreement that quality needs to be improved at different levels of education—from pre-primary to higher education. Yet, there appears to be very little consensus on what ‘improved quality education’ really means and what factors contribute to its development. A child’s participation in school and the amount that he or she learns is dependent on several factors such as familial influences, education, occupation and income of the parent, the environment in the school, initiative of the learner etc. Many factors including social, familial, institutional and personal, influence the academic development of the learner.

Education is the key of development of any Nation. Talented and skilful youth of a country can double the rate of its growth. Indian education system is among the largest in the world. Attempts have been made for increasing attendance rate of primary education there by leading to national progress. With such progresses, still India is facing severe challenges in the path of its integrity and prosperous which are essential elements for the development. According to the latest researches, only 15 percentage of children study in high schools, more than 35 percent people are still illiterate. Even then, Indian education system is the third largest system around the world after America and China.

The landmark passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 marks a historic moment for the children of India. For the first time in India’s history, children are guaranteed their right to quality elementary education by the state with the help of families and communities.

Few countries in the world have such a national provision to ensure child-centered, child-friendly education to help all children develop to their fullest potential. Prior to the passing of the Right to Education Act (REA), Kerala achieved most of the aims envisaged in the act. Kerala is a model to other states for introducing new programmes like providing free and compulsory education up to the Higher Secondary level, reducing the burden of the students by introducing the child and activity oriented curriculum in the schools, introducing free



software in the schools for learning and also introducing the grading system and continuous evaluation.

The society attaches so much importance to education that the school in Kerala is really the nucleus of the social microcosm. When compared to other states of India, Kerala attained significant progress in areas like dispersal of education, school system and intervention of parents and society. Better education kindles the aspirations of the people and the main concern is on how to improve the quality of education.

The period from the late 1980s to the present has been one of intense activity – of public discussion and action – in the field of school education in Kerala. The major agencies of activity in the field have been the People’s Campaign for Democratic Decentralization, the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), teachers’ organizations and the Education Department of the Government of Kerala. They have worked independently and sometimes, with success, together. The very poor overall performance in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) examination, which students write at the end of Class 10, has been an important motivation for the movement to improve the quality of school education in Kerala.

A study conducted by State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Thiruvananthapuram in 2006 for analyzing the SSLC result of the year 2006, revealed that some students are not attaining the ‘*optimum level in education*’ even after completing their school education. The state average in the result of SSLC 2006 was 68 percentage, but 104 schools were not able to get even a 33 percentage result in that examination. No a system that upholds the constitutional values of equality and social justice can neither ignore or overlook the failure of this magnitude. Keeping this in view, the State launched a new Quality Improvement Programme (QIP) with the slogan ‘*Quality Education Pupils Right*’ in the 104 High Schools in Kerala in 2006. Later the number of QEPR schools was increased to 107 in 2007. This programme was named as QEPR (*Quality Education Pupils Right*) and the schools selected for this programme called as QEPR schools.

The main aim of the programme was to improve the quality of the schools by providing academic, economic, official and social support to these schools. The study of SCERT revealed that the selected schools under this project were either neglected or marginalized by the society. The emphasis was given in the improvement of academic quality and infrastructure development of these schools. This programme was initially started as a project for 5 years by the General Education Department of Kerala from 2006 to 2011, later it has been carried on.

Thrissur district has traditionally been a center of Learning and one of the educationally and socially forward districts in Kerala. It has so many potential in the area of education; it has numerous schools and colleges, including Medical, Engineering and other professional colleges which are considered as better when compared it with other districts in the state. Among the 107 QEPR schools 11 were from Thrissur district, which was truly a concern for the educationalists in the district. These eleven schools include the schools from the city of Thrissur to coastal areas of Chavakkad. A lot of efforts have been taken by the administration and the education department to improve the quality of these schools under the QEPR programme. Different committees were set up implementing the programme in the district. QEPR programme completed its five years in 2011-12. The effectiveness of the programme in the state in general and in the Thrissur district in particular is to be analysed for further development.

This study aims at finding how much the QEPR programme achieved its objectives in the eleven (11) QEPR schools in Thrissur district. This would definitely help to improve the planning and researches in the area of education in the state of Kerala and help others to implement similar projects rectifying the drawbacks, if any.



Objectives

1. To analyze the performance of QEPR schools in Thrissur District.
2. To assess the satisfaction of stakeholders on QEPR programme

Procedure

Collective case study method was used in the study. Information regarding the effectiveness of the QEPR programme was collected from students, parents and teachers of the 11 schools using questionnaires prepared for the purpose. Data was collected from 330 students of the 11 schools, from 55 parents and 55 teachers. Interview was arranged with the Heads of the Institution of all the QEPR schools to get information about the school in four areas viz., Academic Improvement, Infrastructure Development, Social Intervention in the School, and Change made by QEPR in the school. SSLC results from 2006 to 2012 were taken for assessing the academic achievement of the QEPR Schools.

Analysis of the data

SSLC result is always a touch stone to assess the quality of education imparted in schools. QEPR programme started in the year 2007 on the basis of the SSLC results of the year 2006. The selection was based on the low performance of the schools in the year 2006. The pass percentage of all the QEPR schools in the SSLC examination, March 2006 was below 33 Percentage, i.e., a two-third of the students in these schools failed to achieve optimum level after their schooling. When the SSLC results of QEPR schools in Thrissur District were analyzed, it was found that the average pass percentage was 26.09 in 2006. The adoption of these schools into QEPR programme made a sea change in their SSLC results. In 2007, they scored an average of 71.45 Percentage, in 2008, it got improved to 84.36 Percentage, in which two schools secured a hundred percentage results for the first time in their history of the SSLC examinations. In 2009, the pass percentage in the SSLC examinations got raised to 85.72 percentage and in that year three schools bagged cent percentage results in the examination. In 2010, a slight reduction in the pass percentage occurred. It was 84.18 percentage; one school scored a cent percentage. In 2011, the results improved to 92.63 percentage; and two schools secured 100 percentage results. In 2012, the results reached an all time high with 93.72 percentage and four schools out of the eleven QEPR schools got hundred percentage results. In 2012, after analyzing the SSLC results of QEPR Schools, a significant change was observed from 2006 to 2012. It is the result of the QEPR programme, implemented in these schools. Heads of these Institutions expressed great satisfaction in the improvement of the SSLC results after the introduction of the QEPR programme. They were quite happy to give the credit to the QEPR programme for the improvement they got in the SSLC pass percentage.

Responses of Headmasters (HM)

Interview with the heads revealed that the infrastructure facilities like class room, furniture, and toilets are satisfactory in these schools, a dissenting notes by three HMs regarding class rooms; one regarding furniture and three HMs about toilet facility for girls. One HM expressed concern about the inadequacy of drinking water facility in the school.

Libraries and Labs are very important for education. Among the eleven QEPR schools, HM of only one school expressed dissatisfaction in the present condition of the library in the school. Two HMs felt that the Lab facilities in their schools are inadequate. The HMs of all the eleven schools was of the opinion that their schools are equipped with adequate Audio Visual aids to support the students in their learning. One HM, from among the eleven QEPR schools, expressed a complaint about the number of computers available in the computer lab.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is an integral part of the schools promoting wholesome development. One HM from the QEPR schools expressed dissatisfaction in the

performance of the PTA in the school; two HMs expressed the opinion that the performance of their PTA was ideal; but the others expressed satisfaction over their PTA. Local Support Group (LSG) is the organization in the schools that are aimed at mobilizing local support to the school. In QEPR programme, LSG was given adequate importance in the development of that school. Regarding the performance of LSG, only one HM was critical. One of the HMs opined that the involvement of LSG was ideal to the school; the others expressed satisfaction in the performance of LSG in their schools. Local Resource Group (LRG) is another group initiated by the QEPR programme. It is intended to support the school with the intellectual resources. HMs of three schools were of the opinion that they did not receive any support from their LRG; but the others were quite satisfied with the intervention of LRG in their schools. All heads agreed that the Department of Education provided maximum support to them for the improvement of the schools. One HM was critical about the support provided by District Institute of Education and Training (DIET); but the others were satisfied with that. All HMs opined that QEPR improved the standard of their schools by improving the efficiency of their teachers, efficiency of class room activities, and efficiency of students. They also said that the society came forward to support their schools and the entire environment of the school changed due to QEPR. All the HMs, except one, expressed great satisfaction in the manner in which the programme of QEPR was implemented for improving the quality of education in their schools but one was not satisfied with the resources, especially economic support given to the school. All of them wanted to continue the programme of QEPR for a sustainable growth of their schools.

Responses from teachers

In order to ascertain the impact of QEPR on quality improvement, questionnaire was distributed among 55 teachers of eleven QEPR Schools in Thrissur district. The analysis of the responses on the questionnaire is as follows.

Fifty out of the 55 teachers expressed the opinion that the training given under QEPR was better than the other training programmes they received. Thirty two teachers said that the QEPR programme increased their burden; that they were given additional duties when compared with the non QEPR schools. Forty eight teachers opined that On Sight Support (OSS) given in QEPR supported them in solving their problems in teaching. Fifty teachers said that QEPR improved the local support to their schools. Forty nine teachers had the opinion that QEPR improved the physical infrastructure of the school like Lab, Library; Class rooms etc. Forty seven teachers said that QEPR improved the quality of education in their schools. Thirty one teachers expressed their view that QEPR reduced their work and it could transform them as efficient teachers. Fifty two teachers said that QEPR was the best programme implemented by the Department of Education, Kerala for improving the quality of education in schools. Fifty three teachers said that QEPR helped in improving their teaching.

Responses from students

The questionnaire was given to 330 students of the 11 QEPR schools of Thrissur District to get their response on the quality of education they receive from their schools. The sample was randomly collected from all the eleven schools with an average of 30 students from each school. A total of 280 students were from BPL category showing that majority of students of QEPR schools are from the deprived sections of the society. Three hundred and sixteen students said that they had sufficient books in the library for reference. Three hundred students were satisfied with the facilities of their science lab. Three hundred and ten students said that their families support their studies. Two hundred and ninety students said that local self government authorities are taking keen interest in the development of their school. Two hundred and seventeen students are taking mid day meal from the school and they are satisfied with the quality of food served in the school. Three hundred and seventeen students said that slow learners are getting special attention in their school. Three hundred and two students are



satisfied with the furniture available in their school. Three hundred and sixteen students were satisfied with the number of computers available in their computer lab. All the students said that their teachers visited their home at least once in a year which was one of the items listed in the QEPR programme. Three hundred and eighteen students expressed satisfaction in the support they received from the society. Two hundred and fifteen students said that they had sufficient learning materials of their own. All the Three hundred and thirty students expressed their opinion that their teachers are friendly and supportive. They said that the teachers did not give them any type of stress in the learning process. All the students attended the summer camps organized under QEPR programme and they enjoyed it well. Three hundred and two students wanted to continue in the same school, even if they are given chance to change the school.

Responses of parents

Data was collected from 55 parents, who are members of PTA in QEPR schools. When they were asked about the efficiency of the Head of the Institution (HM), 24 parents said that the HMs were ideal in performing their duties; the rest said that they were satisfied with the performance of HM. Twenty two parents expressed satisfaction in the availability of teachers in the school, but five parents expressed dissatisfaction upon the same. Forty one parents expressed greater satisfaction in the quality and efficiency of teachers but eight parents were concerned about the quality of teachers. Nine parents expressed great satisfaction in the infrastructure of the school and the rest were satisfied with it. Nine parents were of the opinion that the interference of the local self government was ideal in their schools but seven parents had a different opinion. four parents pointed out the greater support the school received from the society under QEPR.

All the 55 parents, who participated in the survey, expressed great satisfaction in the QEPR programme in the schools and wanted continuation of the QEPR programme in the coming years also.

Conclusion

Analysis of the SSLC results of QEPR schools in Thrissur district revealed that an increase in pass percentage from 29 to 93.72 is achieved through the implementation of the QEPR programme. The infrastructure and other facilities like library and lab had significant improvement after the implementation of the programme. All the Heads of the institution of QEPR schools in Thrissur District expressed happiness over the result of QEPR programme in their institutions.

The teachers were of the opinion that the training provided under QEPR programme was good and it helped them to improve their teaching at schools. The assistance of DRGs (Resource Teachers) and OSS team were supportive to them. Some teachers mentioned about the stress they had as part of the implementation of the QEPR programme. Such type of stress should be avoided in the implementation of any educational programme.

Parents were very supportive in the implementation of the QEPR programme. They are of the opinion that this programme paved the way for improving the quality of education in the QEPR Schools. They could get a significant role as well as involvement in the activities of the school. The participation of the society in the school activities became another important aspect of the programme. The societal intervention in the form of School Support Group (SSG), Local Resource Group (LRG) etc. proved vital for the success of the programme.

Students expressed their wish to continue the QEPR programme in their schools. They got noon meal as part of the QEPR programme. Additional care and support was given to them from the Education Department and the society.



Analysis of the data collected reveals that the programme of QEPR is successful in the eleven QEPR schools of Thrissur District. The programme could be taken to other schools and even other states for enhancing the quality of education in the schools.

It was found that the stakeholders are satisfied with the various interventions of QEPR programme ranging from a moderate level to high. Even then a very limited number have dissatisfaction in certain aspects. Hence while organizing such programmes, an institutional planning is necessary in which the local needs are prioritized and efforts are made to satisfy these needs.

References

- Department of General Education, "A Report on the Study conducted by SCERT based on the SSLC Result March 2006." SCERT Thiruvananthapuram.
- Department of General Education, "Quality Education Pupils Right (A comprehensive programme to improve the quality of education in the selected 104 schools)" SCERT Thiruvananthapuram, 2006
- UNICEF (2011). *Quality education*. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/india/education_196.htm.