

Addressing difficulties in rural estates with limited education facilities

A research study for uplifting social harmony

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Abstract

As a policy of the Sri Lanka government, all citizens have an equal right to receive free education. On an average the school attendance of younger generation is about 98%. The literacy level in the country is also about 95%. But the condition is getting deviated for the children from estates, who live as poor for long period of time in rural tea estates. Therefore in this research a case study was carried out to addresses the current education level of estate children's around tea estates in Akuressa and surrounded area in Matara district. A questionnaire was conducted, and other relevant and important data were also collected from authorities. Results revealed that current literacy level of estate workers, further fuel the bad side of their children's education. In addition, the priorities for the parents still look forward to hunger relief. Their parents were in a view that if the government could involve with a very strong commitment, then uplifting the level of education will be possible. Therefore, few recommendations for both estate workers and relevant authorities to deliver a better education in future for their new generation are given.

Key words: Estate education, Children Education

Introduction

Since independence in 1948 the Government has given highest priority to education. The literacy rate has grown, and by mid of 1980s over 90% of the population was literate. Traditionally the principles of free education, equity and access to education had been well established in Sri Lanka. A policy conforms to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which proclaims that every citizen has a right to education. Introduction of free education from primary level up to university level, and changing the medium of instruction from English to mother tongue i.e. Sinhala and Tamil, were landmarks in this regard. Later, bringing all private and assisted schools under government control, providing free mid-day meals, subsidized transport, free text books, free uniforms and giving financial assistance through scholarships at various levels are some of the distinct measures adopted by all successive governments during the past. In 1997, the government enacted regulations to ensure compulsory attendance of children, in the age range from 5-14 years. However, the children of the estate workers remain in darks. Their education level is very lower than others. Although, the Sri Lankan government has free education policy, due to lack of equity and fairness to these estate workers, the literacy level of the estate workers is comparatively very low (approximately about 46% in year 2000)^[1]. Every estate has their own peculiar characteristics in this regards, and there are several similar reasons for this pathetic condition. Therefore this study was conducted with the objective to address the difficulties and reasons that prevent them to have free education in Akuressa region in Matara district. Further, this study was planned to develop recommendations and suggestions to assist the policy makers for ensuring social harmony in near future. This study area is mainly consisting of tea estates and the workers in these estates are mainly Tamils. Residents of these workers are located in very rural areas with very minimal key infrastructure facilities. Similar to other developing countries^[2], their voice are not powerful and relevant authorities have given very low priority to improve their social status.

Data Collection

This study was supported and funded by conflict study center attached to the University of Ruhuna. The study has been initiated with collecting relevant literature survey, frequent site visits and meeting with relevant officers such as Gramasevakars and principal of the schools in the study area and so on. After these preliminary survey, a questionnaire was prepared which covers major issues of the projects such as; the education level, age structure, availability of school, medium of teaching, reasons for not attending school, occupational structure, priorities to

basic needs, their suggestions to improve education. In order to have a fair and justification of data, two sites were selected for gathering data with the characteristics such as availability of Tamil and Sinhala medium schools, mix of different races of people and so on.

Results and Discussion

Population and Level of Education

According to the survey result 97% of the population were Tamils and remaining 2% Sinhalese and 1% Muslims. Age distribution structure shows about 28% are less than 16 years old, and about 42% between 16 and 50 years. The school attendance and the education level of the estate workers are shown in Tables 1 and Table 2, respectively. About 43% of people have no education at all, about 46% having less than 5 years in school. No one progress above G.C.E(O/L). A group analysis was carried out to see the improvement in education among estate workers, and their expose to a school environment with age. As it can be seen from Table 2, the percentage of the population attending a school environment is getting increase among the younger generation. The percentage attended school for the age groups of 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and 21-25 years are 73.6, 68.2, 67.4 and 64.4, respectively, and it implies that the school attendance is slightly increasing over the last two decade. Further it was identified that school attendance among Sinhala and Tamil communities are about 87.5% and 51.5%, respectively.

Table 1. School attended

Education Level	Percentage (%)
No Education	43
Less than grade 5	46
Less than grade 9	10
Less than GCE(O/L)	1

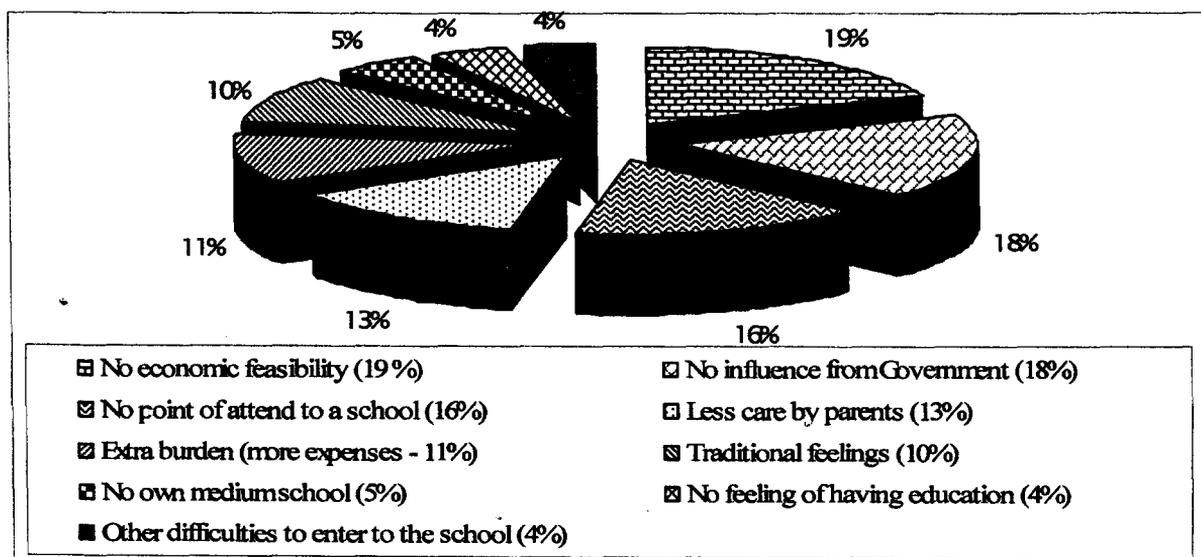
Table 2. Education Level

Age Group	Percentage (%)
6-10	73.6
11-15	68.2
16-20	67.4
20-25	64.4

Reasons for not attending school

Reasons for not attending the school were collected by an interview from the relevant parents, and results are shown in Figure 1. About 19% of the families commented that they do not have enough economic background to send their children to schools, and about 18% of them expecting that government will do something to improve the situation, and top of all nearly 11% of them have a feeling that if they send their children to school then it will be an extra burden for them to cover up the monthly expenses. Nearly 16% were in a view that there will be no improvement from their living standard if they have education, therefore no point of sending their children to the schools. Five percentages of them told that there is no school for them to attend in Tamil medium.

Figure 1. Reasons for not attending school



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Priorities to the basic needs are different between the families as shown in Table 3. Food is the top priority for most of the estate workers. Education and housing are the second and third priorities as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Priorities to the basic needs

Priority	Food	Education	Housing	Sanitary	Water
Percentage (%)	50	33	11	4	2

Recommendation

According to the view point of the estate workers there are no point of having education and no benefit by having education. Therefore, it is required to arrange the seminars or workshops to expose the importance of having education. Also the existing Tamil medium school in that area is not well conducted or developed. So it is suggested to arrange the relevant and appropriate actions to improve the facilities in the school as well as to uplift the quality of teaching. The oversight by government should not be continued. Forming a committee from the professionals in education and estate workers to check the children attendance and performance in their school might improve the situation. This committee should also inspect the education of the students and take measures to motivate them by conveying the importance of having education. The government must take imitative to provide opportunities to have basic infrastructure facilities, such as schools and transportation and so on, by providing financial support to enhance the quality of life among estate workers.

Conclusion

This research is carried out to measure literacy level as well as to identify the reason for poor schooling among the estate people near the Akuressa area. Results found that both the literacy level of the estate workers and their children's school attendance in this area are relatively low compared to Sri Lankan's average. But now a days exposure to the school environment is improving. The parents at present have a reasonably good vision about education, and they like to send their children for school. On the other hand, children are also having interest to attend school for their education. During last two decade, the percentage of exposure to the school environment is slightly increasing, approximately by about 10 %. From the results it is found that the major reasons for not attending schools are: no economic feasibility, no point of attending to school, no benefit from having education, no influence from Government, traditional feelings of the estate people and so on. According to the priorities of the basic needs, the earning for food ranked first in the list. Therefore incorporating these issues, the government should take appropriate actions to improve the social harmony in these estates.

References

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A death due to sexual asphyxia ?

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Abstract

An 18 years old healthy boy was found dead in a room few meters away from his own house. He was found naked while his left hand was gripping his penis. His clothes were found lying neatly on the ground and the trouser belt was also on the floor together with clothes. Empty shopping bag was also found near the body. The scene was undisturbed. There were no external or internal injuries. There was no evidence of sexual assault. Both hands showed cadaveric spasms. There were no evidence to suspect poisoning. The toxicological screen including volatile substance was normal. Macroscopic and microscopic examinations of the organs were normal except for the subendocardial shock hemorrhages. We could not ascertain the cause of death in this case, but the following could be considered as the possible cause of death; accidental death due to sexual asphyxia (due to plastic bag suffocation with volatile substance inhalation) or fatal ventricular arrhythmia.

Introduction

These are asphyxial deaths principally caused by hanging, in which transitory anoxia is intentionally induced to enhance sexual arousal produced by masturbation. Some times volatile substances are put in plastic bags and are being sniffed to enhance the sexual gratification. Such deaths are rare, with victim virtually always a male (Dimaio, DiMaio, 2001).

History

An 18 year old previously healthy boy was found dead in a room few meters away from his own house. He was found naked while his left hand was gripping his penis. His clothes were found laying neatly on the ground and the trouser belt was also on the floor together with clothes. Empty shopping bag was also found near the body. The scene was undisturbed.



Figure 1 shows the scene of death.

Post-mortem findings

There were no external or internal injuries. There were no evidence of sexual assault. Both hands showed cadaveric spasms. There were no evidence to suspect poisoning. The toxicological screen including volatile substance was normal (volatile substances cannot be assessed in our Government Analyst's laboratory). Macroscopic and microscopic examination of the organs were normal except for the subendocardial shock haemorrhages.



Figure 2 shows the cadaveric spasm.

Conclusion

We could not ascertain the cause of death in this case, but the following could be considered as the possible cause of death; accidental death due to sexual asphyxia (due to plastic bag suffocation with or with out volatile substance inhalation) or fatal ventricular arrhythmia.

Reference

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