

A Study of Special Educational Programmes in School Education Implemented by the Chennai Corporation, Tamil Nadu, India

V. Kayalvizhi*

Department of History, Dharmamurti Rao Bhahadur Calavala Cunnan Chetty's Hindu College (D.R.B.C.C.C.),
Pattabiram, Chennai-600072, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

The special educational programmes in Chennai corporation schools were meant specially to motivate the students. The present study reports the outcome of the assessment done on special educational programmes conducted in Chennai Corporation schools. The administration of Chennai Corporation reported that in 1985-1986, a large number of schools was maintained by it. However, it drastically decreased in 1999-2000. Then the corporation decided to formulate effective policy to impart education. The following special educational programmes were taken up in corporation schools: teaching of handicrafts and pre-vocational subjects; crafts like carpentry, weaving, net wearing, tailoring, embroidery, printing and book binding were first taught to the teachers and then to the students. At the higher secondary level vocational courses such as automobile mechanism, typewriting, shorthand, photography, nursing, and food preparation and preservation were taught as job-oriented courses. After the implementation of the above special educational programmes, significant changes have happened. The number of schools increased from 329 to 354. The enrolment of students also increased from 1.32 to 1.54 lakhs. The pass percentage which stood at 55% in plus-2 in 1996 rose to 70%. As many as 30 new play schools were opened; nearly four thousand children were enrolled in these. Finally concluded that the special educational programs helped to develop the students' knowledge.

Keywords: *Special education; Chennai Corporation School; value based education*

INTRODUCTION

Value based education is not a priority even among the most prestigious institutions in the country. With few exceptions almost all of them are result oriented. The students, the teachers and the parents are all involved in the rat race of acquiring high marks; where then is the time and inclination for value-based education? Despite all these drawbacks the Chennai Corporation has tried to make some inroads by engaging to upgrade the curriculum based on the needs of the learners. Learning materials of high quality were developed and provided free of cost to all pupils. In the corporation school's non-formal education program was initiated. The corporation provided essential facilities in the primary schools, including at least two reasonably large rooms with necessary toys, blackboards, maps, charts and other learning materials.¹

The role of the teacher in shaping the lives of the students was realized. The teachers needed to develop communication skill. They were also given training. An attempt was made to increase the teachers under various categories employed in all the corporation primary, middle, high and higher secondary schools. The qualifications of various categories of staff employed in the primary, middle and secondary schools were B.T., or B.Ed or M.Ed.

* Corresponding author: Smt.V. Kayalvizhi, Assistant professor, Department of History, DRBCC Hindu College (e-mail: kayalvizhi.durai@gmail.com)

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The secondary grade teachers of the corporation schools included Tamil Pandits, Telungu Pandits, Urdu Munshi, Music mistress, craft teachers, engineering instructors, drawing teachers, P.E. T's. Needle work instructors, home science B.T. mechanics.² The total strength of teaching staff in the 369 primary and middle schools during the year 1980-81 was 4,440; in the 35-corporation high and higher secondary schools the total strength of teachers was 1186³.

During the year 1985-86 the total number of teaching staff employed in the 403 primary and middle schools was 4,212; in the secondary and higher secondary schools it was 1155⁴. By the year 1999-2000 there were 333 schools maintained by the corporation of Chennai comprising 271 primary and middle schools and 62 high and higher secondary schools with a staff strength of nearly 4663; it was respectively 396 schools were maintained by the Chennai corporation comprising 357 primary and middle schools and 39 high and higher secondary schools with a staff strength of nearly 6290.⁵

The strength of the teaching staff and the total number of schools were decreased in 1999-2000: after that the corporation took effective policy decisions to improve the situation. Chennai corporation schools are run by the education department, Corporation of Chennai. The name of Chennai corporations' schools has been changed to Chennai Schools from the year of 2010.

The present studies are to analyse the special educational programmes implemented by the Chennai Corporation, Tamil Nadu for enhance the school education. The studies were analyzed by the government documentations and schemes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted according to governments and Chennai corporation facilities and special schemes provided to the schools for enhance the primary and secondary school educations. The data were collected from Chennai corporations report' schools and Government offices.

The study was conducted on Special educations programmes such as technical job oriented, Audio-visual education, Physical education, Games and Extracurricular activities, Red Cross Activities, Health education and Mid-day Meal Scheme. The data were collected from Government offices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Special educations as technical job oriented

Teaching of handicrafts and pre-vocational subjects received due attention. Crafts like carpentry, weaving, net wiring, tailoring, embroidery, printing and book binding were taught to the Corporation school teachers and later to the students. In the higher secondary schools' vocational courses in automobile mechanism, typewriting, shorthand, photography, nursing, and food preparation and preservation were taught as job oriented courses⁶.

Audio-visual education

The Corporation school teachers also used films to make teaching more effective. This sort of imparting education is called 'Audio-Visual Education'. Films appeal to children; they present the real state of things. This makes learning more interesting. A film makes a feast to their eyes. When a pupil looks at a film, all their senses get pinned to it; colour films and sound films have better effect. Verbal teaching loses its dullness when it is supplemented with an interesting film. An educational film enlivens the methods of teaching. Television sets had also been provided in few corporation schools for the benefit of the children⁷. This programme is very popular among the Corporation school students.

Physical education

Physical education is aimed at providing skilled leadership and sportsman spirit. Adequate facilities and ample time for individuals and groups to participate in situations that are physically helpful, mentally stimulating, ideally satisfying and socially sound is needed. This implies a thorough understanding of the nature and needs of the participants and implementation of a programme, utilizing activities and facilities catering to their interest and need⁸. Physical education was taken up more seriously so as to improve the sportsmanship. It is an essential discipline to relax the mental and physical health of students. This was thought to be a good scheme to inculcate the spirit of physical education in the minds of the young and old. The response of the public was also encouraging⁹.

It was decided by the corporation to extend the activities to other parts of the city also. Thus, the corporation had taken steps to give an incentive to the cause of recreation and physical education in the city. The playgrounds functioned on all the days of the week except on Tuesdays which was meant for maintenance. Efforts were taken to maintain and repair the equipment regularly.

Games and Extracurricular activities

The inert school sports and games were conducted every year. It develops the spirit of competition and participation; prizes were given to encourage the students. Due attention was given to the physical education classes in the schools. Provision was made for both out door and in door games for the pupils.

Extracurricular activities were carried on with great enthusiasm in the schools. Extracurricular activities like conducting of literary association meetings, excursions, audio-visual education and gardening were also a source of increasing general knowledge in addition to regular class-room studies. Ample provision was made for pupils to derive benefit from reading books of educative value from leading libraries.

All the schools of the corporation celebrated important functions like the Republic Day, the Independence Day, Gandhi Jayanthi, Children's Day, United Nation Organization Day, World health day, Wild life week, Flag Day and the like. The secondary school pupils took part in the eloquence and recitation competitions and other competitive contests conducted by various associations including Manavar Mandram. Many students of the corporation schools won prizes.

The corporation purchased buses for the purposes of taking school children to such places of interest both from the education and historical point of view; it is an exciting event. The excursions were taken by the corporation of Chennai once in a year; usually the children were taken to places of interest like Mahabalipuram, Poondi etc¹⁰.

The excursions are useful for visual education as well as for the enjoyment of the school children who are mostly from poor background; left on their own these children would never have a chance to enjoy these sights.

Red Cross Activities

Junior Red Cross activities continued in the corporation primary and middle schools as usual to inculcate health habits among the school children; all these schools were registered with the Indian Red Cross Society T.N. branch. The affiliation fee at the rate of Rs 2 for each primary and middle schools had been remitted to the Indian Red Cross Society. T.N. branch voluntary donations were raised in the schools by the Indian Red Cross society by way of sale of token flags.¹¹

Junior Red Cross activities were continued in the elementary schools. The juniors and the counsellors took active part in the Parents' Day celebrations and other important functions; Zonal meetings and also inter school visits were arranged by the groups. The scout movement occupied an important place in the field of extracurricular activities in the corporation primary and middle schools.

Health education

Health education at school could be provided through the school curricular and co-curricular activities. Health week's first aid training projects, excursions and other activities were undertaken. The health services helped the children of corporation through medical inspection and midday meal scheme.

The health of the people is the index of the prosperity and well-being of the country. Improvement of national standard of health therefore was accorded high priority in social welfare programmes.¹² The medical inspection had important job of examining the general physical conditions, correcting defective teeth, eye sight, infected tonsils and adenoids of the children.¹³ The Corporations appointed medical inspectors and medical inspecteresses to examine the corporation school children.

During the year 1981 – 82 the corporation of Chennai and the Lions club of central Chennai jointly conducted comprehensive health check-up camps. The team of doctors headed by Dr.V. Pachamurthy organized 32 camps on every Tuesday in different schools to examine the children. More than 34,000 children of the corporation schools were examined. Eminent and specialized doctors from the city Government Hospitals and Government Ophthalmic Hospitals took active part to care for them.¹⁴

The corporation maintained a unit in the Health Department with 6 Medical officers for Inspection of the pupils in the corporation schools. Ailments such as Leprosy, defective hearing, defective eye sight were brought to the notice of the parents for giving treatment in the government hospitals.¹⁵ In addition to immunization medical checkup was done and drugs were administered to children for treatment of deficiency diseases.¹⁶ These medical check-ups and mid-day meals helped the children to improve their health habits. This health policy is continued by the corporation.

Mid-day Meal Scheme

With a view to increase enrolment and prevent drop out the Midday meals programme was started by Mr Kamaraj in July 1956.¹⁷ The School Mid-Day Meal Scheme was approved only in November 1957 as a voluntary movement eligible for Government assistance and was also included in the state's second five year plan with a total provision of Rs. 164.77 lakhs. This was also eligible for central assistance up to 50 percent of the cost. It created a congenial atmosphere in the rural area for learning.¹⁸

The supply of Midday meals to poor children attending corporation elementary schools had become a necessary condition for the spread of education among the poorest classes in the city, and thus for the maintenance of steady progress in elementary education by the corporation schools. The Corporation had realized that unless the problem of Nutrition and child health care was tackled simultaneously it would be difficult to enroll more children.

In the year 1982, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr M.G. Ramachandran introduced a new scheme "The Chief Minister's Nutritious Noon Meal Programme scheme" (C.M.N.N.M.P). The policy of the Government was to motivate the children for education. It was highly appreciated at national and inter-national levels. The Chief Minister's nutritional Noon Meal programme had fulfilled major objective of education, health and overall, well – being of the children .¹⁹

Table 1: Distribution of Midday Meal at the Corporation Schools in the Year 1982 – 1987²⁰

Year	No.of Corporation Schools Self Cooking Centres	No.of Pupils fed
1982-83	374	1,00,255
1983-84	336	1,00,255
1984-85	366	1,01,059
1985-86	365	1,16,172
1986-87	365	1,16,172

This table clearly shows that the Chief Minister's Nutritious Noon Meal program successfully followed in the Corporation schools helped to increase the total number of pupils.

The special and noteworthy event in the year 1982 – 83 was the implementation of the Honorable Chief Minister's Nutritious Noon meal scheme to the poor and deserving children of age group 5 + and 9+ and 11+ to 14 with effect from 15.09.1982. All the corporation primary and middle schools were covered under the new Nutritious Noon Meal Scheme. There were 336 cooking centres, to cover 374 schools to feed 1, 00,255 children. Cooks and helpers were appointed for each cooking centre to prepare the noon meals. Independent noon meal organizers were also appointed to all the 336 Noon meal centres to manage all aspects. The objective of the implementation of this scheme was to supply hot, palatable, tasty and nutritious food to poor and deserving children. The entire expenditure on the implementation of the C.M, N.M.P. was met by the government of Tamil Nadu. Nutritious Noon meal was supplied on the all the days of the week except on holidays as notified by the government (Table 1)²⁰.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister's Nutritious Noon Meal Scheme was continued during the year 1987 – 88 in the corporation schools. Noon Meal was prepared in 361 self-cooking centres; 87053 pupils were benefitted by this scheme; a sum of Rs. 1.18 crores were spent for this scheme. The entire expenditure was met from the Government grant. It is noteworthy that chappals and uniforms were supplied to the noon meal beneficiaries.²¹

On 3rd April 1989 the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Dr. M. Karunanidhi in reply to the session on the budget for 1990 – 95, announced that Eggs would be served to the children once in a fortnight along with their noon meal. Following this announcement of inclusion of eggs in nutrition meal programme for school children the state government decided to bring down tax on poultry feeds. The provision of Midday meals in all elementary schools

had a major role in promoting enrolment and retaining the pupils in the schools. One third of the state who came from the poorest section of the population were the beneficiaries.

Facilities such as free supply of midday meals, books, slates, slate pencils, toilet articles, etc., to the poor and deserving children and free medical aid continued to attract under privileged children to the Corporation Schools in large numbers. In order to install interest in the minds of the students in education and to widen their knowledge various programmes were followed by the Corporation of Chennai.

CONCLUSION

We have seen in the previous pages that the corporation of Chennai has been doing its best to see that education trickles to the poorest of the poor. Now its focus is on quality education. The major problem that the corporation faces is enrolling the students and preventing dropouts. The Chief Minister's mid-day meals programme has been strong incentive in preventing dropouts and enrolling more students. The teachers in Corporation schools have to don the mantle of counsellors for both parents and their wards in highlighting the importance of education. The corporation higher secondary schools keep their doors open so that the students can study till 5-6 pm; snacks are also provided to help them. A lot of care is taken to repair buildings and provide basic amenities. Introduction of Kindergarten and computers is another major achievement of the elected council.

The Chennai corporation schools introduced new programmes: 100% literacy, 0% dropout. Skill development, health programme, computer education for all, vocational courses in middle schools are good programmes. The industrial training institute (2006) gives training in computer operator, plumber, fitter and electrician. The government's welfare schemes provide free Laptops to XI and XII students. Free books, free uniform, fees exemption, free shoes, sanitary napkins (for girls) and geometry box for 6th to 10th students are also given under the welfare scheme by the government. Today it comes as no surprise when we hear that the students of the corporation schools are scaling great heights and topping the list of meritorious candidates.

If students from Corporation schools are to be employed in the private sector, they must have worked knowledge of English. In the present state of affairs not everyone would be able to enter into Government service; so, it would be myopic on the part of the policy makers if they completely side line the study of English; then the students from the Corporation schools would definitely lose out on plum jobs offered by private sectors despite their knowledge and skill.

Conflict of Interest: None

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