



Indian Journal of Agriculture and Allied Sciences

A Refereed Research Journal

ISSN 2395-1109

e-ISSN 2455-9709

Volume: 3, No.: 4, Year: 2017

www.ijaas.org.in

Received: 10.11.2017, Accepted: 20.12.2017

Publication Date: 31st December 2017

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS OF KUMAON DIVISION, UTTARAKHAND

Neha Upreti¹ and A.K. Singh²

¹Research Scholar and ²Professor, Department of Extension Education, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, U.P., Corresponding Author: Neha Upreti

Abstract: Alternative schools are considered to be one of the key institutions for addressing the needs of students who cannot meet regular schools. In this regard a careful study with respect to the problems is a prerequisite for the suitable design and implementation of government's developmental programmes. The purpose of the study is to provide such information through survey and description of absolute problems of the students and the functioning staff. The findings of the study revealed that most of the alternative schools lack adequate infrastructure, lack of adequate/ timely funding, teachers related to this system are not rendering any special training and lack of social acceptability, dissatisfaction with payment among functionaries, lack of teachers in time of need and alternative schooling is more expensive due to use of cassettes, leaflets etc., than the fees and transport facilities of the formal education system.

Keywords: Alternative school, Infrastructure, Formal education, Problems, Funding.

Introduction: There has been a proportionate educational research and experimentation to provide best of the education to the children throughout the world in second half of the twentieth century. Many new policies and practices are being practiced to overcome the present problems. But still there are many questions that are remaining unanswered and thus giving new approaches to the educational research ^[1]. As per the educational history of America it shows lot of reformation in the educational sector due to high accountability. So many practices are followed so that the children will reach their educational potential ^[2]. In spite of these many reforms some students are not reaching the academic goals desired by parents, educators, and the public. Through the past few decades, some educators and policymakers have contended that, if an alternate educational option is provided for students at risk of school failure, they will be able to succeed. As per the views of alternative schools are a "cutting-edge" educational reform, even though they have been in the educational arena for decades ^[3]. In his words, A mid all the current talk of school restructuring, alternatives are the clearest example we have of what a restructured school

might look like. They represent our most definitive departure from the programmatic, organizational and behavioral regularities that inhibit school reform ^[4]. The U.S. Department of Education defines an alternative education school as "a public elementary/ secondary school that addresses the needs of students which typically cannot be met in a regular school and provides nontraditional education which is not categorized solely as regular education, special education, vocational education, gifted and talented or magnet school programs" ^[5].

Meeting the needs of students disenfranchised from the traditional education system is becoming more and more important as we are faced with a growing population of students for whom the status quo is not successful. Alternative schools are one of the possible solutions that many states and local school districts are implementing to address the issue of students who are not meeting desired educational outcomes and standards in traditional education settings. However, the way in which the definition is operationalized within states and communities is still unclear. Even with the lack of clarity in definition, alternative schools are growing at a rapid rate. Yet there are many

problems being faced by the respondents in alternative schools. The present study is designed to identify the problems that are being faced by the students, staff and other associated members of the alternative schools.

Methodology

The Kumaon division of Uttarakhand was purposively selected for the study as the literacy rate of the division is 71.21% (Statistical Handbook, Kumaon Division) which is lower than total literacy rate (79.80%) of the state. The respondents were randomly selected from 12 selected alternative schools. The selected respondents include 60 Students, 60 Parents and

Problems of Alternative Schooling

S.N.	Problems	Response	%	Rank
1	Teachers related to this system are not rendering any special trainings	75	69.44	IV
2	Alternative schooling is more expensive due to use of cassettes, leaflets etc., than the fees and transport facilities of the formal education system	32	29.63	X
3	Alternative schooling encourages educated unemployment among youth	69	63.89	V
4	High officials in the organization take least interest in general programmes/ issues	83	76.85	III
5	Lack of social acceptability	75	69.44	IV
6	In the system, the examinations doesn't remain materialistic	46	42.59	IX
7	Certificates/ degrees obtained in alternative schooling courses are purchasable	55	50.93	VII
8	Lack of teachers in time of need, a student finds it difficult to solve a problem	52	48.15	VIII
9	Lack of adequate/timely funding	87	80.56	II
10	Management related issue	69	63.89	V
11	Inadequate infrastructure	94	87.04	I
12	Dissatisfaction with payment among functionaries	61	56.48	VI

The respondents were further enquired to know the problems faced in alternative schooling. The following were the problems emerged during the investigation and were presented in Table.

The most severe problem faced was inadequate infrastructure (87.04%) and was ranked as I followed by lack of adequate/timely funding (80.56%, ranked II), high officials in the organization take least interest in general programmes/ issues (76.85%, ranked III), teachers related to this system are not rendering any special training and lack of social acceptability (69.44%, ranked IV), management related issue and alternative schooling encourages educated unemployment among youth (63.89%, ranked V), dissatisfaction with payment among functionaries (56.48%, ranked VI), certificates/ degrees obtained in alternative schooling courses are purchasable (50.93%, ranked VII), lack of teachers in time of need, a student finds it difficult to solve a problem (48.15%, ranked VIII), in the system, the examinations doesn't remain materialistic (42.59%, ranked IX) and alternative schooling is more expensive due to use of cassettes, leaflets etc., than the fees and transport facilities of the

36 Community members thus making a total of 204 respondents. The data was collected using a well-structured and pre tested interview schedule. The data was analyzed by using appropriate statistical tools.

Results and Discussion

In any social science research study, an absolute understanding of the respondents clearly shows the actual impact of the particular study. Problems are one of the most important factors that play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of the system. In this regard, the problems that were being faced by the selected respondents were clearly depicted below.

(n=204)

formal education system (29.63%) and was ranked X.

For any institute or organization infrastructure plays an important role which directly depends on the funds. Timely funds will help the alternative schools to have proper space or place and thereby increasing the standards of the place. Even the schools require well trained educational volunteers so that they might guide the students well. The duration period also should be increased to educate the children thereby improving the functioning of the alternative school and mostly the schools should be opened in the other areas of locality where out of school children were available.

Summary and Conclusion

The study clearly shows that most of the alternative schools lack adequate infrastructure, lack of adequate/ timely funding, teachers related to this system are not rendering any special training and lack of social acceptability, dissatisfaction with payment among functionaries, lack of teachers in time of need and alternative schooling is more expensive due to use of cassettes, leaflets etc., than the fees and transport facilities of the formal education system.

Alternative schools are one of the important mechanisms that can help the drop out students not only to adapt changing circumstances but also to shape their lives. They create a new environment that definitely bring a fresh air as they can add valuable time during their schooling both by updating their knowledge and application of learnt skills in real life. It's need of the hour for the government to keep focus on the alternative schools for timely implementation of programmes, providing adequate funds, well trained educational volunteers so as to bring the effectiveness in functioning of the alternative schools there by enhancing the standard of living of the students.

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