



HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU, 1947-1986

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Cite This Article: Dr. D. Vellaiammal, "History of Education in Thoothukudi District of Tamilnadu, 1947-1986", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Volume 2, Issue 2, Page Number 216-222, 2017.

Abstract:

Education has been regarded both as an End in itself as well as a Means of realizing other desirable ends. It develops the Personality and Rational Choice of Individuals and qualifies them to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions and improves their Social and Economic Status in the process. Education gave rise to a new set of people known as the Educated Elite, with a liberal outlook. These Educated Elite became a force responsible for modernizing the society. In Thoothukudi district, the Spread of education acted as a Change Agent, helped the people to fight against the existing social evils, and made them realize the need for social development. The Scheme of compulsory education existed in many centers in Thoothukudi district. Therefore the researcher chosen to study this topic and to study the higher education level in the thoothukudi district.

Key Words: Education, Society, Students & Schools.

Introduction:

Thoothukudi is a southern coastal district of Tamil Nadu located between the L 8° 19' and 9° 20' N and 77° 40' and 78° to E. The district is bounded by the Ramanathapuram district in the north east, by the Virudhunagar district in the north and North West by the Tirunelveli district in the west and south and by the Gulf of Mannar in the Bay of Bengal in the east. The district is like a mini India in shape. It is broad in the north and tapers towards south. The three northern taluks are Kovilpatti in the west, Ettayapuram in the centre and Vilathikulam in the east. The central taluk Ottapidaram touches the borders of the district both in the west and the east, Thoothukudi in the east and Srivaikuntam in the west and the east, bordering Thoothukudi taluk up to the sea from the belly. The southernmost taluks are Sattankulam in the west and Tiruchendur in the east. In the taluks of Tiruchendur and Srivaikuntam, there are windswept dunes, which look like small hillocks. The wide seashore is filled partly with pure white and partly with a peculiar red soil piled up in great dunes known as teris. The teri region spreads in the area adjoining Nazareth and Tiruchendur. The vast water resources, known as taruvais in these sand dune areas, are judiciously tapped and utilized for cultivation. The region also abounds in Palmyra trees. It is an open country where cotton is largely cultivated on black soil, though a considerable extent of land still remains barren. The fertility of the black soil has helped rich cotton cultivation, leading thereby to economic prosperity of the region. Soil in the district may be classified into two varieties namely, red soil and black soil. The northern part of the region consists of the black loam and southern part, red loam. The black soil has high value when compared to the red. Kovilpatti and part of Srivaikuntam taluks on the north-eastern part of the district consist of black soil where cotton is grown extensively. The availability of cotton in abundance at a cheaper rate in the Thoothukudi district was utilized by the British Company and this led to economic exploitation. Pearl fishery is one of the important professions in the Thoothukudi coast where able bodied and athletic men took up this profession. The number of villages that border the district is 86. The length of these coast is 163.5 km. extending from Ovari in the south to Vembar in the north. The major coastal villages and towns are Ovari, Kulasekarapattinam, Manappadu, Tiruchendur, Veerapandyanpattinam, Kayalpattinam, Punnaikayal, Thoothukudi, Tharuvaikulam, Vaippar and Vembar. On the 20th October 1986 a new district, carved out of the erstwhile Tirunelveli district was born in Tamil Nadu and named after V.O. Chidambaram, a great national leader hailing from Ottapidaram who led the Swadeshi Movement in the south. Since 1997 as in the case of other districts of Tamilnadu, this district has also been named after its headquarter town, Thoothukudi.

Origin of the Name of the District:

The origin of the name Thoothukudi is that being a coastal town, the people used to tap drinking water by digging small ponds (oothu - in Tami) and Qothukudi to mean dig pond and drink became corrupted into Thoothukudi. Ptolemy refers this as Sosis Koral. Certain scholars postulate that Sosikorai became corrupted into Thoothukudi. Tuticorin is the anglicized corruption of Thoothukudi. From 1760 to 1998, the name of the town found in official records was Tuticorin. In 1998, the Government of Tamilnadu directed to call it as Thoothukudi both in English and Tamil.

Area and Population:

The total area of the district as per 2001 Census is 4621.00 Sq.km.¹ and the population according to the 2001 Census is 15,72,273⁽²⁾ and the district has 468 revenue villages.

Table 1: Area and Population - Taluk wise

S.No	Name of the taluk	Total Number of Revenue Villages	Area in sq.km
1	Thoothukudi	33	349.84
2	Srivaikundam	69	600.54
3	Tiruchendur	58	480.68
4	Sattankulam	25	368.34
5	Kovilpatti	75	716.51
6	Ettayapuram	56	487.55
7	Vilathikulam	89	864.88
8	Ottapidaram	63	752.07
Total		468	4620.41

Land and People:

The earliest inhabitants of Thoothukudii were Dravidians.³The people of Thoothukudi were divided into four divisions and after aryanisation, they were regrouped as the Brahmins, the Non-Brahmins and the Depressed Class People. Normally, Brahmins possessed high-position and status in society.⁴The Vellalas occupied a position next to the Brahmins.⁵They were the chief advisers to the Poligars (Palayakkars). The Maravas were the men who were noted for their bravery. Most of Poligars and Kaval chieftains belonged to Marava community.⁶Senaithalaivar occupied a position next to Vellalar. The Nayakkar, a sect of Telugu speaking people, migrated to Thoothukudi region during the time of Vijayanagar rule in Madurai.⁷ In the early times, the Nadars were ill-treated by other community people and were treated as depressed classes.⁸Due to their association with Christian Missionaries, the social status of the Nadars improved.⁹ The depressed class people, treated as untouchables, comprised of Pallas, Paraiyas and Chakkilias¹⁰. Tamil was the popular language of the people and a few people spoke Telugu too. The Thoothukudi region was a fertile one. The major caste groups- Brahmins, Vellalas, Maravas, Nadars and the depressed people constitute about eighty per cent of the total Hindu population of this district. The remaining twenty per cent consists of vary small groups of artisans (Kammalar), writers (Kanakkar), weavers (Kaikolar), potters (Kuyavar), barbers (Ambattar), washermen (Vannar), and others. Muslims and Paravas present two minority groups. Thus the social structure in this district was so complex and social relations were so confusing that it resulted in lack of solidarity among the inhabitants. The people were mostly ryots, and cultivation was made on both wet and dry lands. Palmyra trees provided them with some occupation.¹¹In the time of drought, famine, flood and disease, the people lost their hope and suffered very much. Their food was very simple. Most of the poor people took porridge or kanchi.¹²The old men of the peasant community wore longodu and covered mostly the lower part of the body.

Education:

The continuous accumulation of knowledge from different directions is 'Education'. Education, in its broadest sense, begins at birth and ends at death. Education is rightly regarded as the very basis of civilized life. In its broadest sense, education is any process by which an individual gains knowledge which helps him to develop attitudes or skills. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge or experience which would bring about appropriate changes in one's behavior.

The term, 'Education' is derived from the Latin word 'Educare' which means to 'bring up' or 'bring forth'. Further, education is the deliberate systematic and sustained efforts to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills or sensibilities, as well as any outcome of that effort. The educational process of development consists of the passage of human beings from infancy to maturity.

Choice of the Study:

Tamil Nadu which was under the Congress party's rule during 1947-1967, showed a remarkable achievement in the field of education in Thoothukudi region. Undoubtedly, it was the foundation laid by the Congress ministries in the field of education during the two decades of the post-Independence period that made the Thoothukudi region an outstanding example for others to follow its models. The Congress Ministries made strenuous efforts to promote educational activity to a greater extent and Thoothukudi stood as a shining example. From Primary education to college education, Thoothukudi had made great strides. The contribution of the Congress and Darvidian ministries in Thoothukudi region had not been taken as 'a subject for a critical research by earlier scholars. Further, few works on the educational development in Tamil Nadu had not focused much on the Thoothukudi region during the specified period. Hence an attempt is made to highlight history of education in Thoothukudi District of Tamil Nadu during 1947-1986. Indeed this period is known for the development of education and for the increase in the literacy rate in Thoothukudi region.

Nature and Scope of the Study:

Education had always been a factor for the development of an individual and the society. India, right from ancient times had been a significant seat of learning and a great centre of educational activity. Even during the period of Muslim rule the growth of education in India was not impeded. But the picture was different during the colonial era. The imperialists seldom paid heed to the development of education. Except under administrative exigencies and for their own selfish interests the alien administrators offered education to the masses only to

serve the imperialmasters as English knowing Assistants. Gandhiji made a statement in 1931 to the effect that the literacy in India has diminished during the colonial rule and that it was because, soon after their advent, the British closed down the existing schools and the indigenous institutions of learning. Thus, the British Administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. This was the sad state of affairs at the time of India's independence. From the dawn of independence, it became the responsibility of the nationalist leaders of India to improve the condition in every field of human activity. It was in this context that the leaders felt that priority must be given to education along with the economic imperatives. The provinces of India followed suit and there was a tremendous educational activity all over the districts of Tamil Nadu including Thoothukudi.

Periodisation:

The year 1947 is the Indian Independence year which marks the beginning year of the study. O. P. Ramasamy Reddiyar formed the Congress Ministry in Madras Presidency. It marked the beginning of the study. Since then the number of schools increased and primary, elementary, middle, higher, technical and professional education received great attention. Basic Training Schools were started. Thus in the period from 1947 to 1986, there was a notable development in the field of education. During this period, Thoothukudi region was a part of the composite or the erstwhile Tirunelveli district. In the year 1986, Tirunelveli district was bifurcated and the Thoothukudi district was created. The year of the dawn of the Thoothukudi district is the year which marked the end of the study.

Objectives of the Study:

The study put forth certain objectives to understand the course and trend of educational activities in Thoothukudi District. The objectives were:

- ✓ To trace the early evolution of educational consciousness among the Tamils.
- ✓ To trace the forces which backed the backward and downtrodden people to attain education..
- ✓ To find out the reasons for increasing educational activities of the missionaries in Thoothukudi District.
- ✓ To trace the circumstances which prompted the government educational measures.
- ✓ To identify the agencies which promoted higher education in Thoothukudi District.

Hypotheses of the Study:

The study attempts to test the following hypotheses framed by the Scholar.

- ✓ The spread of western ideas and education provided a great stimulus to the modern education in Tamil society.
- ✓ The missionary schools played a remarkable role in spreading education in Thoothukudi District.
- ✓ The spread of education had its noticeable impact in social and economic sectors in Thoothukudi District.
- ✓ The government initiatives in independence period triggered educational activities in Thoothukudi District.
- ✓ There was increasing number of students in educational institutions in every year in Thoothukudi District.
- ✓ Backward and Scheduled Castes began to get education freely in the Independence period.

Review of Literature:

A few studies have been taken-up by the researchers on the growth of education in Post-Independence period of Tamil Nadu. The Scholars were involved in carrying out many research studies from different perspectives on education and only a few studies scantily refer to the educational development of Thoothukudi region in Independence Tamil Nadu.

The present study attempts to highlight the history of education in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu during 1947 – 1986. A few important literary works referred to in this connection are as follows.

History of Higher Education in South India, (1857-1957), by the University of Madras Publication provides much detail about the educational commissions of pre-independence India. Naik, J.P., and Syed Nurullah's A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973), S. Sattinandhan's History of Education in the Presidency, P. Rajaraman's Higher Education in Tamil Nadu, A. Thanappan's Higher Education in Tamil Nadu during 1967-1987, Y. Vaikuntham's, Education and Social Change in South India 1880-1920, Suresh Chandra Ghosh's The History of Education in Modern India 1757-2007, Lakshmi Misra's Education of Women, 1921-1966, throws much light on the different aspects of educational growth and shifting paradigm in the sphere of education.

Indian Education in the Emerging Society by Jagannath Mohanty, D. S. Gordon's, Principles and Practice of Education, deals with the educational policy of the government. Likewise, B.D. Bhatt and J.C. Aggarwal's, Educational Documents in India (1813-1968) to some extent with the central educational policy of the colonial and post-colonial Government.. All these works are descriptive works and they deal with educational development to some extent only. Further these works do not elaborately deal with the development of education in Tamil Nadu in the period specified. Hence the present work attempts to fill the vacuum left in the earlier works.

Sources:

Many primary and secondary sources are consulted for this study. The primary sources include missionary records Government Orders, Report on Educational Census, Tamil Nadu Government Reports on Public Instruction, Annual Administration Reports, Recommendations of the Educational Commissions, Proceedings, and the Publications of the both Central and State Governments.

The Secondary sources are helpful to construct this thesis along with the Primary Sources. Most of the Secondary sources are published works and newspapers, journals, periodicals and Research articles and some dissertations also provide supplementary information. A critical and comprehensive study of the different sources and the corroboration of evidences were carried on for bringing out this work with critical and scientific applications. As regards methodology followed in this work, Descriptive method has been adopted with analytical discussion at relevant places.

Methodology:

The methodology employed in the Thesis deserves special mention. It is historical, narrative, analytical and critical. Vital issues were analysed to corroborate the hypotheses. Inductive and deductive processes were logically employed to marshal the ideas and to arrive at conclusion which constitute the vital findings of the research work.

Limitations:

Even though the study period is fixed from 1947 to 1986, sporadic references are given about the second half of the Twentieth Century which is unavoidable. Some primary materials collected from different places were not easily accessible because of the restriction to issue contemporary records. For some volumes and documents, dates were not available. Some of the published works are silent with regard to the author, place and year of publication. Thus care has been taken not to misinterpret the available data.

Findings of the Study:

Literacy:

The census reports are the standing sources which provide statistics on the literacy of a district. Census reports use different yardsticks to determine literacy level. As per 1991 census, the yardstick used in determining the literacy level is the ability to read and write with understanding in any language. A person who can merely read but cannot write is, however, not a literate as mentioned earlier. In this Census, the literacy level was determined only for those aged seven years and above, as against five years and above in the earlier census. The population of less than seven years of age has been treated as illiterates in this census. The details of literate persons in the district, based on the Census reports of 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 are given below

Table 2: Literacy Level

Year	Total Population		Literacy Persons			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Literacy % (District)	Literacy % (State)
1951	454227	487977	113888	148735	27.87	-
1961	501683	534018	266330	149585	40.15	36.39
1971	588865	619919	351142	236814	48.64	45.40
1981	657303	693278	430964	326563	56.08	54.39
1991	709760	746160	500796	420091	73.02	62.66
2001	764087	801656	598669	542290	81.96	73.47

Source: Report from the Census Hand Book, Thirunelveli District.

Though, 1991 census is the first one after the formation of the district, statistics of the earlier census reports on the taluks which formed the area now Thoothukudi district have been completed to arrive at this statement.

Middle Schools (Including Primary Section) from 1947 to 1980:

The number of middle schools (including primary section) has been steadily increasing. The total number of primary and middle schools rose from 800 in 1947 to 1000 in 1954 and to 1259 in 1979. The following table shows the number of primary and middle schools in the district from 1947 to 1980:

Table 2: Middle Schools

Year	No. of Primary Schools	Year	No. of Primary Schools
1947	800	1964	1185
1948	850	1965	1190
1949	900	1966	1298
1950	910	1967	1201
1951	920	1968	1204
1952	925	1969	1210
1953	975	1970	1215
1954	1000	1971	1219

1955	1020	1972	1224
1956	1050	1973	1229
1957	1100	1974	1234
1958	1150	1975	1239
1959	1155	1976	1244
1960	1160	1977	1249
1961	1170	1978	1254
1962	1175	1979	1259
1963	1180	1980	1259

Elementary Education 1980-2000:

In the year 1999, there were 1074 primary schools with 4335 teachers in the district. The number of pupils who studied there was 75159 Boys and 70947 girls.

Middle Schools:

The upper primary schools during British period became higher elementary schools later and now they are called Middle Schools. These schools are those which have class I to VIII (or in rare cases, classes VI to VIII). There is a public examination called E.S.L.C. (Elementary School Leaving Certificate) examination which the Director of Government Examinations conducts for the private candidates who need not have formal education in various classes. The students could appear for the examination directly and the only condition is that they should have attained a prescribed age. But for regular middle school pupils common E.S.L.C. examinations are conducted districtwise. During 1998-99, there were 284 schools teaching about 36079 boys and 34422 girls with a total number of 2432 teachers (820 Men and 1612 women).

High Schools:

The secondary schools became the high schools in 1960. The duration of the high school study was three years. (i.e. IX, X and XI) until the introduction of the higher secondary course in 1978 when the pattern of duration of education has been changed to two years i.e. (IX and X standard) the Public examinations are conducted at the completion of the high school study by the Director of Government Examinations. Then the Board of Secondary Education, Tamil Nadu issues Secondary School Leaving Certificate (S.S.L.C.) to the passed candidates. The certificate still bears the name Secondary School Leaving Certificate though the nomenclature of the secondary school was changed to 'High School'.

Administration of School Education:

In 1854 the Directorate of Public Instructions was formed and all the educational institutions in the then Madras Presidency were brought under the administrative control of the department. For the regional administration the office of the Divisional Inspectors were created and the educational institutions in the then district of Tirunelveli along with the neighboring districts were brought under the control of Divisional Inspector of Schools stationed at Madurai. The District Educational Officers are the inspecting officers of all the high schools in the district. The Chief Educational Officer is the inspecting officer of all the higher secondary schools in the district. During 1998-99, there were 74 high schools in the district of which 29 schools were run by the Government and 45 by the aided management. Of the 74 schools, eight were exclusively for girls while most of the remaining schools were co educational institutions. In these schools totally there were 754 teachers, teaching 11967 boys and 12384 girls.

Higher Secondary Education:

Higher Secondary Course was introduced in Tamil Nadu in 1978 by merging the XI Standard of the high school and the Pre-University Course of the college making its duration for two years. Hitherto XI years study up to high school level has been changed to 10 years and the Pre-University courses in the colleges were abolished. The two year's higher secondary education forms a sandwich course between school education and collegiate education (The first year is called XI standard or +1 and the second year as XII standard or +2). The introduction of higher secondary education in the State, has achieved the goal to certain extent. The Government policy of extending the higher educational facility to rural areas, is that at least two higher secondary schools should be in each taluk. The higher secondary schools were opened by upgrading the select high schools and while doing so, due care was taken to locate at least one higher secondary school in a Development Block.

In Thoothukudi district, when the 10+2+3 (10 year high school +2 year higher secondary course +3 year college studies i.e., Bachelor degree) system was introduced, 50 high schools were upgraded as higher secondary schools. Thenceforward, there was an increase in the number of higher secondary schools in this district every year and the number crossed 75 during 1989-90. In the year 1999, there were 86 higher secondary schools, having 2841 teachers and 81728 students (41296 boys and 40432 girls). Of the 86 higher secondary schools in the district 22 are Government schools including six schools for girls and 64 are private aided schools, of which 13 are exclusively for girls.

Total Literacy Campaign (Arivolilyakkam):

Thoothukudi Literacy Profile (as per 1991 census) reveals that 63.72 percent of the total population above seven years of age is literates. Male and female literacy rates were 70.7 per cent and 50.04 per cent

respectively. The literacy data as per 1991 census for Thoothukudi and Tamil Nadu, Total Literacy campaign is a societal mission which started in the State in 1991-92. In Thoothukudi district it was started on 12 December 1994. It seeks to mobilize and enlist the involvement and support of all sections of the society. It means that anyone and everyone, irrespective of rank, status and profession in life who has the urge and commitment to literacy, can join in the crusade as an environment builder or as a trainer or as an evaluator or as a resource person or as a volunteer. When the Survey was taken up on 12th March 1995, there were 1,26,777 illiterate persons in the age group of 9 to 35 in the district. On 29 April 1996, the formal inauguration of the teaching of first primer took place. Nearly one lakh learners and twelve thousand volunteers were involved in the learning and teaching process. The second primer was introduced to the learners on 22 November 1995 and third primer on 2nd July 1997.

Suggestions and Conclusion of the Study:

This study entitled, "History of Education in Thoothukudi District of Tamil Nadu - 1947-1986", analyses the various educational measures and activities in Thoothukudi District of Tamil Nadu from 1947 to 1986. This Thesis also discusses the missionary activities and government initiatives in the sector of education which were brought about a sea change in Thoothukudi District. Education is rightly regarded as the very Basis of Civilized Life. Education has been regarded both as an End in itself as well as a Means of realizing other desirable ends. It develops the Personality and Rational Choice of Individuals and qualifies them to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions and improves their Social and Economic Status in the process. Education gave rise to a new set of people known as the Educated Elite, with a liberal outlook. These Educated Elite became a force responsible for modernizing the society.

In Thoothukudi district, the Spread of education acted as a Change Agent and helped the people to fight against the existing social evils and made them realize the need for social development. The traditional gurukula system of education existed in Tamil Nadu till the arrival of the Missionaries and the Europeans especially the British. The missionaries were pioneers in the field of education in India. They realised that education was the best means to raise the women from their state of degradation. In 1816, when the missionaries arrived in Composite Tirunelveli District which included Thoothukudi region, there was only a microscopic minority of women who knew the Tamil alphabet. The traditions and customs of the society kept them in bondage.

The process of liberating them from this state of affairs through education was started by the missionaries. Their educational institutions in Tirunelveli district, affected great changes in the lives of the natives. During the Period of the Study phenomenal growth was recorded in Higher Education also. The higher educational institutions like V.O.Chidambaram College, St. Mary's College, A.P.C. College for Women, Adithanar College, Pope's College are functioning well even today. Many polytechnics, engineering colleges and professional institutions were started. Many Philanthropists started Higher Educational Institutions in this district. To share their financial burden; the Government had taken a decision to Grant them Aid. The Thoothukudi district is spotted with many christian schools thanks to the legacy of the Christian missionaries. From 1947 to 1986, the Thoothukudi district contributed much to the advancement of education in Tamil Nadu.

The Government sanctioned more money for their Scholarships, Hostels, and Midday Meals etc., which helped them in their Educational Development in Thoothukudi district. The Government under the Congress and Dravidian Parties also witnessed many educational institutions during the tenure of 1947 to 1967 and 1967 to 1986 respectively. Unfortunately, there is no Government Arts and Science College in this District. Recently the Government started a few colleges which are under the control of the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. Thus the Government policies towards education and socio economic development of the People in Thoothukudi contributed towards social changes there.

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