

A Study of Problems Connected With 'Early Childhood Education 'of The Children of Migrant Labourers in Udupi District, Karnataka

KrishnaKothai¹ & AshokKamath²

¹ Professor Emeritus and Director, Poornaprajna Centre for Research and Development, Poornaprajna Campus, Udupi-576101.

Krishna.kothai@azimpremjifoundation.org

² Vice-Principal, District Institute for Education and Training, Udupi
ashokakamath@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

According to Indian Constitution, citizens can live anywhere in the Country for their livelihood. With this right, people move from place to place (between States and within the States) as Migrants. According to 2011 Census, in India 453 million migrant population was recorded which forms around 37% of the Country's population. Out of every five migrants one is a child. Accordingly, there were 92.95 million migrant children in the Country. Experts opine that, this number is more than what Census and NSS forecast. Migrants move from those places where livelihood opportunities are less to those places which offer better livelihood opportunities. As per the National Sample Survey Organization, 2007-8, there is difference in the number of migrants between castes which move from place to place. It is observed that in the State of Karnataka, 34% of Scheduled Caste persons, 25.7% Scheduled Tribe people, 41% Other Backwards Caste people and 38% Others were observed to be the migrant population.

One of the major problems of migrant population is EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION of their children which is the THEME of this paper.

Udupi, one of the Coastal districts of the State of Karnataka has a huge migrant population coming from northern districts (Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Raichur, Koppal, Bellary, Gadag, Dharwad etc). Migrants come from other States as well (Uttara Pradesh, Madya Pradesh, Jarkhand, Odisha etc).

Thirty Anganwadi's situated near the colonies of the migrants were identified in the district and the study was conducted using a structured questionnaire which included questions pertaining to the OBJECTIVES of the Study.

Anganwadi Teachers/assistants, parents of the migrant children were interviewed.

Officials from the concerned Departments such as DEPARTMENTS OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, LABOUR, ZILLA PANCHAYAT, EDUCATION, DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING etc were met and detailed discussions were held to have an incisive look at the problem.

Data/information was collected pertaining to the following issues mainly:

- a. Status of childhood education of migrant children (pre-primary, mainly)
- b. Reasons for migrant children not using Anganwadi facilities
- c. Socio-economic status of the migrant parents of the children
- d. Problems faced by the migrant children in Anganwadi's any
- e. Problems faced by the Anganwadi teachers
- f. Other issues

The intense field study threw lot of light on all the issues including those suggested in the **NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2020** and issue connected with **FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY**. Paper has dealt the issues studied.

It may be concluded that the **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION** of the children of migrant labours, presently is every neglected issue which deserves a better and faster treatment. Owing to the complexity of the issue, there may not be any panacea for the problem. Apart from the successful attempts of the past in certain parts of the Country, new Models may have to be tested and tried. Concerned Departments may have to tackle the problem in an integrated manner. When Governmental, Non-e ad Voluntary forces join hands with all required sincerity and honesty, this important problem of migrant children may be handled to a satisfactory level. **The country cannot afford to play with the future of the migrant children in the context of their early childhood education.**

Keywords

Ece, migrants, nso,fln. Preschool education, right to move, right to stay, livelihood options.

1.INTRODUCTION:

Indian Constitution allows all the citizens their livelihood to stay anywhere in the Country and earn their livelihoods. With this Constitutional provision, we see people moving from place to place in search of livelihoods. Within the Country, Citizens move from State to State, Within the State from, district to district, place to place mainly for better livelihood options. Such movements, especially of economically backward sections of population is called 'Migration.' People also move from place to place for better educational facilities, employment and for personal or family reasons. The present paper is written keeping the economically vulnerable sections of the society in view.

According to 2011 Census, India has 453 million domestic migrants which accounts for around 37% of Country's total population. It is recorded that amongst every five migrants, one is a 'migrant child'; which accounts for around 92.95 million 'migrant children in the total population of the Country. Experts opine that the total number of migrant children are much more than what National Census and National Sample

Surveys have recorded. It is common knowledge that people move to a place which offers better livelihood options from those locales which offer less scope for better earnings.

According to National Sample Survey Organisation-2007-2008, it is observed that percentage migration varied amongst communities in the Country. In the State of Karnataka, it is recorded that of the total migrating population 34% population belonging to scheduled castes, 25.70% scheduled tribes, 41% other backward communities and 38% belonging to other communities were observed migrating.

It is common knowledge that migrants move from village to village, village to townships, towns to cities, state to state in search of better economic prospects in terms of livelihoods. At times migration takes place depending upon the season. For example, agricultural families move from North and North East Karnataka to Coastal districts during those dry seasons and get back to their native villages when it rains there, to till their lands and do agriculture.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The negative impact created by COVID-19 is alarming and it has hit migrants in a very bad way. The children of migrants fell out of school in huge numbers masking the future of lakhs of migrant children in the Country including that of Karnataka. There is an urgent need by the Government to design suitable programmes and execute at the ground level to address the problem. Right to Education Act-2009 must be made applicable to migrant children as well.

In the states of Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, of the total 12.82 million children, 50% were found out of school. It is found out that in states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh 35.62 million children were found to be out of school. From research it was found that the literacy percentage was less in those districts where migrant population was more.

Survey conducted in 18 States revealed that 46.21 % migrant children discontinued their education. Non availability of electronic media (online education) created enormous education loss during COVID onslaught. This has not only increased the problem of child labour but has pushed the education sector back by decades.

The various dispositions taken by the Government for addressing the problem of migrant children from First Five Year Plan onwards have come to the fore again for discussion. Some of the dispositions which were tried and tested in this background have been Informal School System, Boarding Schools, Open Schools, Seasonal Schools, Providing Teacher Volunteers etc. commissioning Anganwadi's at the point of destination of migrant children has also been thought of.

There is inadequate information about migrants and migrant children in the Country. If portals for migrant children are made available in all the States of the Country, it would be possible to track the movements of migrant children and provide required facilities for the continued education of the migrant children.

Whatever the type, intensity, time of migration, it is clear that migrants leave their original place of living to new destinations in search of better economic prospects.

They generally move in groups with their families and children. These migrants face a host of problems in their place of destination mainly in the areas of civic facilities and amenities. They live in unhygienic conditions inviting ill-health. Places where they live may not have drinking water, electricity, toilets etc.

Another major problem the migrants face is the education of their children. If migrants live in place for a longer period, then they admit their children to Anganwadi, primary schools etc. Pre School-Education is an important Human Right which is applicable to the migrant children as well.

As per Right to Education-2009, children in the age group 6-14 years should be given free and compulsory education. Section-6 of the Act clearly mentions that the migrant children be given suitable education by the Government or local institutions close to their living place.

According to Young Live India, the classification of migrant children vary and majority of migrant children submit themselves to migration owing to family migration. According to various sources, country has nearly 20 million migrant children, and migration has had negative impact on their education, health and livelihoods.

Owing to their educational backwardness, migrants generally do not think of the pre-school education which they are supposed to give their children. It also depends on the educational ambience that prevails in the place of migrants.

In the background of National Education Policy-2020, the present research tries to understand the problems and complexities involved in the preschool education of migrant children with special reference to Udupi district of Karnataka State where the influx of migrant labourers and their children is sufficiently large.

3.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To understand the status of preschool education of migrant children in the migrant population dominant pockets of Udupi district.
2. To identify reasons for migrant children not utilising the available preschool facilities.
3. To understand economic, educational and social status of those migrant children (their families) who miss their preschool education.
4. To know the problems of those migrant children who are in the Anganwadi's.
5. To understand the problems faced by Anganwadi workers with these migrant children.
6. To study the challenges that have to be faced by concerned Government Departments such as Department of Women and Child Development, Labour Department, Department of Education/District Institute for Education and Training.
7. To analyse the situation in the context of the recommendations of National Education Policy-2020.
8. To understand the challenges that are there at the preschool level to teach functional literacy and numeracy through innovative methods.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

4.01 Locality where research was undertaken:

Udupi district in the State of Karnataka was the area where the present research was undertaken.

Udupi became an independent district during 1997, carved out of erstwhile Dakshina Kannada district of Coastal Karnataka. The district has seven taluks (Brahmavar, Byndor, Hebri, Kaup, Karkal, Kundapur and Udupi). The total geographical area of the district is 3582 sq.kms. Important rivers of the district include Seeta, Shambhavi, Varahi, Swarna, Gurupura, Chakra, Gangolli and others. District receives an annual average rainfall of 4,300 mm. District has 90 km coastline. Major livelihood options in the district are agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, animal husbandry (dairy), village and home industries, small and medium industries and various service industries. Shivalli industrial area has many small/tiny industries.

The population of the district is 11,77,361 (2011 Census); total number of families is 2,53,978. Children in the age group 0-6 in the district is 1,03,160 which accounts for 8.76% of the total population. The percentage literacy in the district is 86.26.

District is leading in Banking and Cooperative movement. People of the district speak different languages (Kannada, Tulu, Konkani, Urdu, Byari, Malayalam, Marathi etc). District receives migrant population in big numbers from North and Northeast Karnataka districts apart from others including other States.

Udupi district has a total of 1,192 Anganwadi's, of which 1,048 are own buildings, 72 are in school buildings and 71 in other ownerships. There are 195 Anganwadi workers and 195 helpers in the district.

SELECTION OF ANGANAWADIS FOR THE STUDY:

The migrant labourers, generally stay in groups (camps) from where they go for work. Anganwadi's close to these camps were mainly selected as these Anganwadi's are supposed to entertain migrant children living in the migrant camps. Majority of the camps are in taluks/places where labour opportunities are more.

Thirty (30) such Anganwadi's were identified for the purpose of study.

Following is the 30 Anganwadi's which were identified for the study purpose.

4.02 Primary data/information:

Keeping the various objectives of the study in view, a structured questionnaire was designed to collect data/information from the Anganwadi workers/helpers, parents of the migrant children and other concerned stakeholders in the context of preschool education of migrant children.

4.03 Secondary data/ information:

To support (or oppose) the primary data/information, secondary data/information was collected from the concerned Government/ Private bodies such as concerned employees/staff from the Department of Women and Child Development (District

officials, Child Development Project Officer, Senior Supervisors, Supervisors), Concerned Officials at Zilla Panchayath, Concerned Officials of Department of Education/District Institute for Education and Training, Officials of Department of Labour apart from magazines/research papers etc. Information was also collected by observation and discussion.

4.04 Tabulation of data/information and analysis:

Data/information thus collected from primary, secondary sources and observation were tabulated for the purpose of analysis.

4.05 Observations/findings/field realities:

The Study threw light on the following areas.

Two types of migrants were observed in the district. They are-

- a. Migrants who have come to Udupi district different districts of the State (Karnataka).
- b. Migrants who come from other States of the Country to Udupi in search of livelihoods.

Migrant labourers who come to Udupi district, generally come from North and North East districts of the State such as Gadag, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Haveri, Raichur, Bidar, Kalburgi etc.

Those who come from outside the State generally come from States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttara Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, West Bengal, Maharashtra etc.

It was observed from the study that migrants who come to the district from other districts of the State could be classified as those -who stay in the district temporarily and get back to their native villages and those who stay in the district for a longer period.

Those whomigrate seasonally are those who come to the district when it does not rain in their area and agriculture may not be possible in their native village. They get back to their native land when it rains there and agriculture is possible. Most of these people own small land holdings. The other category of migrants do not migrate seasonally, stay for a longer period involving in small time jobs/livelihood activities. They send their children to Anganwadi's/primary schools/high schools. And few families even to colleges.

Oflately, female members of the migrant's families are found doing cleaning and other jobs in hotels apart from working as domestic servants and serving in other service sectors.

Men migrants mainly work in construction sector and other service sectors.

Those who migrate from other States to the district generally work as skilled workers in small scale/tiny sector industries. Their duration of stay in the district is unpredictable. They generally stay in rented rooms/houses and not in camps. If they come with their families, they admit their children to preschools-duration of the child's stay in the pre-school is uncertain.

5. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE MIGRANTS:

It was observed from the study that the perday wage migrants get in Udupi district is very much higher than what they would have got in their native places, as there is acute shortage of labour in Udupi district. Though these are informal groups, the wage structure is almost same. At times, these groups are observed to work under leaders who take them to work point and make payments. Otherwise, these migrants join at a place from where they are picked by the people who want their services.

It was clear from the study that majority of these migrant families lead a simple life, spend as minimum as possible and save money during their stay as migrants. Many send the savings home to meet certain expenditures/clear debts/construct houses/take up repair works etc. Women wage earners seem to save more and use savings for house hold expenditure including health and education of the family members/purchase dressmaterials, gold etc

6. DWELING CONDITIONS/SOCIAL STATUS OF MIGRANTS:

It was observed in the study that migrants who come from North and North East districts of Karnataka stay in certain areas (migrant camps) by paying rent for the land on which they construct temporary sheds and reside in those sheds with their families. These sheds are devoid of minimum facilities such as drinking water, electricity, lavatory, natural sun light, air etc. Hygienic conditions that prevail in these colonies are ,also bad that they invite different diseases affecting the children most. As these colonies are within the towns, they may create health hazards in the towns as well. The district authorities do not seem to have any plan to address this problem.

6.01 Findings, essentially emerged from pre-schools (Anganwadi's):

Consolidated findings which emerged from the Anganwadi's which were subjected to investigation in the present study are as hereunder:

1. Admission of migrant children in those Anganwadi's which were close to migrant camps or houses where migrants stay was observed.
2. 60% of the Anganwadi's studied had migrant children admitted.
3. 15% of the studied Anganwadi's had only migrant children (Anganwadi's at Beedinagudde, Ranger Compound, Pragathi Nagar, Rajeev Nagar, Bijapur Colony).
4. In one of the Anganwadi's, it was observed that apart from migrant children, Anganwadi worker and the helper were also from North Karnataka.
5. In 20% of the studied Anganwadi's, migrant children were not found.
6. In 80% of the Anganwadi's studied, the number of migrant children varied; variation was between two and six children.
7. Certain Anganwadi's, the number of migrant children decreased from the initial numbers.
8. It was observed in the study that the children of those migrants who have stayed in Udupi district for long, had completed their pre-school, got admitted to primary and higher schools and had continued their education.

9. It was also learnt from the study that one of the reasons for the decrease in the number of migrants children the children is that children were moving to other schools with the vehicle facility which was provided by the said preschool.
10. It was observed from the study that children of migrant labourers who work in activities such as stone crushing, brick making, cement manufacturing etc. Get admitted to nearby pre-schools and stay there for a while and leave the schools (Anganwadis at Korangrapady, Dendurukatte, RajeevNagara, Kakkunje, Markodu etc)
11. Study observed that those migrant children from other States did not stay longer in the Anganwadi's.
12. Migrant children were not found in private Anganwadi's and balawadis.
13. It was learnt from the study that the medium of instruction though is Kannada, the children who speak Tulu, Konkani, Urdu, Byari at home did not have communication problems with the Anganwadi staff and fellow-children.

Nevertheless, those migrant children whose mother tongue is totally alien (Assamese/ Bengali/Oriya/Marathi etc) were observed to have some problem in communicating with the Anganwadi staff and fellow children. these migrants did not stay in Anganwadi's for long, hence the impact of language on them was minimum.

7.ISSUE CONNECTED WITH IDENTIFYING THE MIGRANT CHILDREN AND ADMITTING THEM TO ANGANAWADIS:

Information about the arrival and departure of migrants is not available with the district administration; hence the problem in tracking the movement of migrant children in the district.

Nevertheless, it was learnt from the study that the staff of the Department of Women and Child Development (Anganwadi workers, supervisors, Others) have been conducting surveys in these Anganwadi areas, especially in and around migrant colonies/dwelling areas of migrants to identify migrant children who are out of pre-school and get them admitted. This survey is done regularly, yet, quite a few migrant children are getting missed.

7.01 Problems that are being faced by the Anganwadi's in the context of migrant children:

1. Despite all possible and best efforts from Anganwadi's, quite a few migrant children could not get admitted to pre-schools.
2. It was learnt from the study that continuity of migrant children was a problem. The migrant children leave Anganwadi's without informing the Anganwadi's and get back to their native places/elsewhere. There is provision to take a letter from the Anganwadi before leaving the place and produce the same to another

Anganwadi where they go. But migrant parents do not avail these letters and just leave the place and disappear which leads to inadequate tracking of the movement of the migrant child.

3. It was observed from the study that even those migrant children who got admitted to Anganwadi's continuously absented themselves for the pre-school.
4. It was understood from the field work that if there is a school drop out girl child at home, other small child/children were left at home under the supervision of the girl child avoiding migrant child/children attend Anganwadi. Lack of awareness about the importance of education amongst parents is mainly responsible for this.
5. It was also observed from the field work that the migrant parents leave for their work in the early hours of the morning leaving their children in the Anganwadi area before the pre-school is opened. In the absence of Anganwadi staff, the children get involved in all sorts of unwanted activities, creating nuisance in the neighbourhood.
6. It is learnt that migrant children, in many cases are sent to pre-schooling as they get mid-day meals free rather than providing them educational foundation. This happens owing to the lack of awareness of parents on the importance or requirement of pre-school education to their children.
7. With regard to the provision of functional literacy and numeracy to children using variety methods, it was found that most of the Anganwadi lacked these skills and there is a need to provide training to these workers in this area.
8. Anganwadi workers were found to be using rhymes, story telling, games, dance etc. to teach certain basics of literacy and numeracy.
9. Migrant children coming from other States found these techniques comparatively difficult owing to language problem, but could mix with others while dancing/playing etc.

7.02 Problems that are being faced by the district administration in the context of pre-school education of migrant children:

One of the major problems with the migrant children who come to district from other districts and states is paucity of information about them and their parents. No department has such important data. The Labour department has information only about those migrant labourers who work in construction sector/factories, that too if they register their names. No information about a large number of migrant workers and their children who work in informal sectors. There is no record for the entry and exit of the migrants from within the state and outside. The Department of Women and Child Development is also not able to maintain such details.

In the absence of such crucial information, addressing the problem with any old or new dispensation becomes difficult.

8. IN THE LIGHT OF THE STUDY DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION MAY PONDER OVER THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM:

1. There is an urgent need to collect correct information about migrant parents and children who enter the district and exit from other states and other districts of the state
2. Department of Labour, Department of Women and Child Development, Department of Education/ DIET, Zilla Panchayat, under District Commissioner's guidance may have to tackle the problem.
3. In the District Progress Committee Meeting, the problem related to pre-schooling of migrant children is to be discussed, progress be reviewed.
4. If there is paucity of staff in the concerned Departments, the district administration may think of using the services of NGO, educational institutions volunteers research institutions and the like to collect data/ information pertaining to migrant population including migrant children in the district. With the information on hand, it would be possible to plan for migrant population including pre-school education of migrant children. As introduced in other programmes (NRLM) volunteers such as Krishi Sakhi/ Pashu Sakhi, Bala Sakhi volunteers may be appointed to assist Anganwadi's in admitting children in general and migrant children in particular.
5. It is highly desirable to introduce a portal for migrant population to track the movements of migrant children and to provide them required pre-school education.
6. Portal will help the district administration to plan for migrant parents as well as migrant children'
7. The dispensations which have been tried at different places in the country at different points in time may have to be visited again and the suitable ones need e tried/new ones tested.
8. 9. There is a need to train Anganwadi workers especially in the use of various methods to make migrant children have hold on functional literacy and numeracy(expected level).
9. Through extension and outreach programmes the staff of the Department of Women and Child Development have to make migrant parents understand the importance and requirement of pre-school education for their children.
10. I maximum migrant children are from North and Northeast Karnataka, the administration may think of appointing Anganwadi staff from that region only.

9. CONCLUSION:

It is clear from the present Research that the pre-school education of migrant children is to be considered as a long-term programme. The progress achieved in the Country in this area is not discernible at the present juncture, which is nearly true at Udupi district of the State of Karnataka.

Looking at the complexities of pre-school education of the migrant children, it is very clear that there is no panacea available to solve the problem that easily. There is no point in blaming any department, as concerted efforts of all the concerned departments may start yielding results gradually.

Various dispensations which have been tried and tested at various places at various points in time may have to be tried again. The impact of these dispensations shall be known only after trials. Those dispensations which can be replicated may be scaled up.

Most important of various issues is the way to track the movements of the migrant children not just within the State, but outside the State as well. Availing the help of technology (portal) may have to be thought of.

It is the duty of the Government, NGOs, Voluntary Agencies, Corporates, Other interested people to see that the migrant children are provided pre-school education which forms the foundation for their education later during their lives. Bringing these children to the mainstream should become a national priority. Education is a Human Right and migrant children cannot be kept outside purview of this Human Right.

It is hoped that the Udupi district administration would make use of the outcome of the present research to deduce the intensity of the problem, though not completely eradicate it.

REFERENCES:

1. Census of India-2011, Ministry of Statistics, Government of India, New Delhi.
2. Constitution of India (1950), Government of India, New Delhi
3. <http://www.karnataka.Com/govt/migrant> workers in karnataka.
4. <http://unicef.org/India/what> we` do/early childhood education
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migrant> education
6. National Sample Survey-2007-2008, Office of the National Sample Survey, Government of India, New Delhi.
7. Right to Education-2007, Ministry of Education Government of India, New Delhi
8. Sara Iep, Sanjana, Raj Mohan (2019), Ensuring Education for Migrant Children, Young Live India, UNICEF, India.
9. Udupi District at a Glance-2021-2022, District Statistical Officer, Zilla Panchayat, Rajat Hadri, Manipal.
10. Udupi District Human Development Report-2008, Department of Planning, Programme Monitoring and Statistics, M, S Building, Government of Karnataka, Bengaluru.

(NOTE: This paper was presented at the Regional Seminar on 'Early Childhood Education' held at Azim Premji University at their Bengaluru Campus between 24th and 26th of August, 2023).
