



Higher Education Preference of Higher Secondary Students in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Higher education helps to avoid many social evils. It also help to develop good citizenship and good personality. In Kerala , there is tendency for diverting the students to two specified field of higher education, such as, medical and engineering. Higher education preference stands for the course preference of higher secondary students for higher education. The investigation was aimed at identifying the higher education preference of higher secondary school students in Kerala. A preliminary interview with students, parents and higher secondary teachers were conducted to get an overall idea about the nature of the problem. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire administered to 900 higher secondary students in two districts of Kerala such as Kozhikode and Malappuram. Interviews were conducted with 20 each of students and their parents and ten higher secondary teachers. Percentage analysis was used for analysis of data. Most preferred career for boys is military field and least preferred career for boys is agriculture. Most preferred career for girls is teaching and least preferred career is clerical field. Among students of science stream, the most preferred career is medical and engineering fields. Among commerce stream the most preferred career is military field, and computer field. The least preferred career is agriculture, it is also found that in commerce stream. Among students of humanities stream most preferred career is teaching and least preferred career is clerical field.

Key words: Higher secondary, Higher Education, higher education preference, students, Students preference, career preference.

Introduction

Education is the interplay of the educator, the educand and the social forces. The educator tries to modify the personality of the child in the light of the needs of the individual and the society to which he belongs. Higher education is an education that follows a competition of a school providing a secondary education. According to Good (1973), "higher education is ' instruction offered to persons of considerable intellectual maturity, usually requiring previous preparation through secondary school". Higher education includes all education above the level of secondary school given in colleges, universities, graduate school, professional schools, technical institutions, training colleges and normal schools'. In many developed countries a high proportion of the population now enter higher education at some time in their lives . "Higher education refers to tertiary education of an academic level higher than that attainable on completion of a full secondary education. The education above the instructional level of the secondary school , generally with grade 13, which is provided by colleges, universities, graduate schools professional schools and other degree granting institutions" (Maqbool A.,2008). Higher education is therefore very important to national economies. In general higher education and training that take place in a university, college or institute of technology. Professional level education is always included within higher education. Higher education enjoys an important place in the development of any country. Higher education is not a fundamental right, it is essential for the culture, social and economic development of nation. Today developed nations are differentiated from underdeveloped nations on the basis of knowledge power.

The aims of higher education in India have not been well defined and specified much after independence. We are still imitating the age old colonial system of higher education and catering to the Macaulian aims indirectly or directly. The issue of access in higher education suffers from two problems, that is the questionable quality of enrolled students in educational institutions and the lack of institutions for aspirant students not enrolled in higher education. with the formal structure higher education in India has undergone drastic expansion since independence with 450 Universities,20000 colleges,106 lakh students and 4.6 lakh teachers. At present its huge structure has made India the third largest system of higher education in world after United States of America and China.

Higher education helps to avoid many social evils. It also help to develop good citizenship and good personality. The unemployment of those who have completed university education and the high cost of higher education is an important reason for creating negative attitude towards higher education.

Need and Significance of the Investigation

Shajimon (2005) studied the vocational preference of higher secondary school students in Malappuram district. The study found out that the public sector is the most preferred sectors of vocation, self employment is still an unattractive option. For boys, foreign sector is preferred than private and co-operative sector. The number of educational institutions are increased.

Zeenath (2009) investigated the attitude towards higher education among higher secondary school girls of Malappuram district. The study found out that majority of the students are having an average level of attitude towards higher education.

Sarafunnisa(2003) conducted a study on Attitude of parents towards higher education of girls in Malappuram district. The study found that the parents of girls in Malappuram district have only moderate attitude towards girls higher education. It is also found that the attitude towards girls higher education among Muslim parents is lower than that of Hindus and Christians and the

attitude of low socio economic status group is less than that of high and average socio economic status groups.

Ambili (2007),investigated the vocational interest of higher secondary school students with different levels of self esteem. The study found out that the vocational interest of higher secondary school students vary with different levels of self esteem. Students with high self esteem are open to adventurous vocations. Students with average self esteem tend to remain in familiar jobs. But students with low self esteem are interested in jobs involving physical exertion.

There is a large number of unemployed among educated persons in India. The unemployed and temporarily out of job youth, are frustrated in the absence of social insurance. It creates social problems like racketing of jobs, late marriage, cult of violence etc. Educated unemployed is a reflection on the weakness of our economic policy. As many as 2,71,836 students qualified for higher studies in Kerala Higher Secondary examinations. The pass percentage was lower at 79.39 per cent compared to last year's pass percentage of 81.34 per cent. A total of 3,43,420 students appeared for the examinations (Sarafunnisa,2003).

In Kerala , there is tendency for diverting the students to two specified field of higher education, such as, medical and engineering. In 1971 to 1981 the faculty wise enrolment of girl students are commerce (19%), agriculture (3.8%), medicine (33%), law (10.2%) etc (Sharma R N& Sharma R K ,2002). In majority cases, the selection is not from the side of the students but from that of their parents. Parents do not know or do not consider preferences. In such situations, it is inevitable to check the preference of higher secondary students towards higher education. It is necessary to find out whether the family background directly influences the preference towards higher education of higher secondary students in Kerala.

Higher education preference

Preference of higher secondary students to enroll for courses beyond higher secondary level, which is provided by colleges, universities, graduate schools, professional schools and other degree granting institutions (Maqbool ,2008). In this investigation, Higher education preference stands for the course preference of higher secondary students for higher education.

Objectives of the Investigation

The objectives of the investigation were the following.

- To find out the preference of higher secondary students towards higher education.
- To study the influence of family of higher secondary students towards preference to higher education.
- To identify the reasons for their preference to higher education.

Design of the study

The main objectives of the study were to find out the higher education preference of higher secondary students, to study the influence of family of higher secondary students towards preference to higher education and to identify the reasons for their preference to higher education. A preliminary interview was conducted with few students, teachers and parents to identify various aspects of higher education preference, as literature in the area was scarce. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire for students and the investigator also conducted interview with higher secondary students , parents of higher secondary students, and higher secondary school teachers. The data was analysed using percentages and verbal descriptions.

Method of Study

Methodology is the systematic theoretical, analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. In this study the investigator conducted qualitative research for collecting relevant data.

The systematic collection of data from populations or samples of populations through the use of personal interviews or other data gathering devices are called surveys. In the present study, a survey of selected higher secondary school students in Kerala are conducted. Survey is used to study either human or non-human populations. 'The survey method gathers data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. It is not concerned with characteristics of individuals as individuals. It is concerned with the statistics that result when data are abstracted from a number of individual cases, it is essentially cross sectional'(Best &khan, 2006).

Tools and Techniques Used for the Investigation

A preliminary unstructured interview was conducted with few students, their parents and teachers of higher secondary level. The aim of the interview was to to collect basic aspects about higher education preference of students at higher secondary level, and various factors influence their preference. The data obtained through the interviews was utilised for the development of the tools.

The following tools were used for the investigation.

- Questionnaire for the higher secondary students.
- Interview Schedule for higher secondary students
- Interview schedule for parents of higher secondary students
- Interview Schedule for Higher secondary teachers.

Questionnaire For The Higher Secondary School Students

A questionnaire for the higher secondary students was developed for gathering information about higher education preference of higher secondary students and the reason for their preferences. The questionnaire contains 50 questions in closed and open types was constructed by establishing construct and face validity.

Interview schedule for higher secondary school students.

The investigator conducted an interview with higher secondary school students for gathering information about their preference of higher education and to find out whether the family background directly influence their preference.

Interview schedule for parents of higher secondary school students.

The investigator conducted an interview with the parents for obtaining information about the higher education preference of higher secondary students. And to find out the reason for their preference to higher education.

Interview with schedule for higher secondary school teachers.

The investigator conducted an interview with the higher secondary school teachers for gathering information about higher education preference of higher secondary students.

Sample and Sampling

Random sampling was used to select a sample of 900 higher secondary school students drawn from six higher secondary schools including government, aided and unaided by considering different options like science, commerce and humanities. The sample for preliminary interview comprised of ten each of students and their parents, and six higher secondary teachers. The sample for final interview comprised of 20 each of students and their parents, and ten higher secondary school teachers.

Statistical techniques used for analysis of data.

Preliminary analysis and percentage analysis were the techniques. The data collected through interview was analyzed using verbal description.

Analysis

Table 1

Career preference of higher secondary school students in Kozhikode

Item	BOYS						GIRLS						Boy s%	Girl s%
	Sci enc e	Com mer ce	Hum aniti es	G o vt	Ai ded	Un aid ed	Scie nce	Com mer ce	Hum aniti es	G o vt	Ai ded	Un aid ed		
Doct or	8	-	-	5	2	1	30	-	-	1	10	1	3	13
Engi neer	19	4	6	1	8	3	14	8	2	1	6	7	13	11
Busi ness	4	10	8	4	9	9	3	4	6	2	5	6	10	6
Bank ing	3	5	6	5	6	3	5	6	5	7	2	7	6	8
Com pute r	7	10	13	6	7	17	4	12	10	1	9	2	13	12
Milit ary	13	28	26	1	18	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	-
Medi a	-	2	4	4	2	-	7	2	11	9	7	6	3	10
Teac her	5	3	9	5	5	7	18	5	26	1	18	15	7	23
Clark	4	7	3	3	7	4	-	5	-	1	2	2	6	2
Agric ultur e	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Civil Servi ce	5	4	5	5	7	2	8	6	3	7	4	6	6	8
Othe rs	1	2	4	2	1	4	-	12	-	-	4	8	3	6

Table 2

Career preference of higher secondary school students in Malappuram

item	Boys				Girls				Boys %	Girls %				
	science	commerce	humanities	govt	aided	unaided	science	commerce			humanities	govt	aided	unaided
Doctor	18	-	-	8	4	6	17	-	-	12	4	1	8	8
Engineer	21	7	1	1	9	6	15	4	2	9	9	3	13	10
Business	5	18	4	3	8	16	7	11	6	6	7	11	12	11
Banking	5	9	2	1	12	3	8	18	9	5	24	6	7	16
Computer	6	10	5	9	4	8	10	8	9	11	6	10	9	12
Military	12	11	19	1	19	9	-	3	-	1	2	-	19	1
Medica	-	4	11	3	7	5	1	2	9	3	2	7	7	5
Teacher	2	7	9	9	6	3	14	14	16	18	16	10	8	20
Clark	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	6	9	1	6	8	1	7
Agriculture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Civil service	12	7	9	1	9	7	4	6	7	4	5	8	12	8
others	2	1	6	6	1	2	2	2	-	2	1	1	4	2

Table 3

Higher education preference of higher secondary school students

item	kozhikode								Malappuram							
	science		commerce		humanities		total		science		commerce		humanities		total	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	Boys %	Girls %	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	Boys %	Girls %
General education	7	32	20	31	21	36	21	46	13	26	21	42	31	42	29	50
Professional education	30	26	22	8	19	8	31	20	49	45	30	21	5	8	37	34
Technical Education	25	24	25	17	28	11	34	25	18	7	21	9	28	17	30	15
Others	8	7	8	4	16	8	14	9	3	-	4	2	2	-	4	1

Major Findings

Most preferred career for boys is military field(29.26%) and least preferred career for boys is agriculture (.44%). Most preferred career for girls is teaching field (23%) and least preferred career is clerical field that is two percentage . It is also found that in science stream, the most preferred career is medical (24%) and engineering field (21%). Among commerce stream the most preferred career is military field (21%), and computer field (16%). The least preferred career is agriculture, it is also found that in commerce stream the most preferred career for boys is military (37%) and for girls it is computer field (20%). Among humanities stream most preferred career is teaching (24%) and least preferred career is clerical field that is two percentage. It is also found that in arts stream the most preferred career for boys is military (31%), and the most preferred career for girls is teaching (41%).

It is found that for students in government schools, the most preferred career is engineering (18%), and those of aided schools is teaching (17%) and among students of self financing institutions the most preferred career is military (23%).

Among students of science stream most of the boys prefer engineering, and most of the girls prefer medical field and the second preference for boys and for girls is vice versa. Among students of science stream the order of preference for higher education is professional education (35%), technical education (31%), general education (25%), and other courses (nine percentage). Most preferred higher education choice for boys is professional education, and for girls it is general education. Among students of commerce stream, the most preferred career is business and banking, and the least preferred career is driver, and police. Among students of humanities stream, most of them prefer teaching as their profession and few students prefer engineering as their profession. Most of the boys prefer the military field and the most preferred career for girls is teaching .

The order of preference of boys for their higher education is professional education (37.3%), technical education (29.7%), general education (28.9%), and other courses (4%). The order of preference for girls for higher education is general graduation (50%), professional education (33.79%), technical education (15.07%), and other courses one percentage. Most of the students prefer higher education courses on the basis of their mark in higher secondary examination. Majority students are interested to do part time jobs along with their education, as majority of students are interested to do higher education through distance mode.

Majority of the parents are not ready to spend large amount for getting admission to favourable course for higher education. Most of the students are not interested to take educational loans for higher education and 37% of students are interested to take educational loans for higher education.

Majority of students are not interested to follow parent's job. Only 23% students are interested to follow their parent's job. It is found that, most of the students are interested to work in public sector than in private sector. Only 37% students are interested to do agriculture and self employment.

Majority higher secondary school students need guidance for selecting appropriate course for higher education. About 85% of the students need guidance for selecting course for higher education. Majority students are collecting information about courses of higher education from different sources. It is of interest that majority of the students are influenced by the advertisements on higher education institutions and about 70% of the students are interested to achieve higher education outside Kerala. Boys are more interested to go outside Kerala than girls for achieving higher education.

It is found that among the total male students only 34% considering salary and status when selecting course for higher education. And among the female students only 17% are considering salary and status while selecting course for higher education, but they believed that professional education is better than general education and science subjects are better than arts subjects.

Findings based on interview

The findings from interview have supplemented the findings based on data available through the questionnaire. Majority of higher secondary school students of science group wish to become doctor or engineer. The most preferred career for girls is teaching field. Majority of students prefer medical and engineering field because of high social status and salary. Some students prefer career because of their interest. And some students select their career because of their subject of study. Some students are interested to meet higher education expense by doing part time job. The students who prefer medical and engineering field are more interested to take educational loans. Some students prefer higher education on the basis of a preferred career, and also some others on the basis of social status. Most of the students are not interested for higher education in arts subjects. Because it is very difficult to attain a job and the theory in arts subjects are too difficult to understand. Most of the students are interested to do higher education outside Kerala because they believed that, institutions outside state offered job after course completion and comparatively less scope in Kerala.

Most of the parents wish their children may become doctor and engineer. Some parents are interested in government fields such as, IAS, IPS, Police etc. most of the parents are not interested that their children to follow their field. Most of the students ask doubts about higher education. Most frequently asked questions are about the scope, the course that have high scope of employment opportunity. Higher education institutes, stability in employment, quality of higher education institutes, fees, about educational loans.

Conclusion

The result of the investigation shows that most students prefer popular courses such as engineering, medical-related courses or a job in military for boys and teaching for girls. Family factors such as mother's occupation are not considered factors considered by students in choosing a course. Students' preference of course is a personal choice and not much affected by family or parents' decision. Regarding family income most of the students believed that the family income influence higher education. The findings shows that majority of students believed that professional education is better than general education. And most of the students give more importance to higher education in science subjects. They believed that science subjects are better than arts subjects. Result shows that the aim of higher education is to attain a job. Professional

education is easier to attain a job than general education. And among the total students 50% students are attending career guidance classes based on higher education.

Girl students give first preference to general graduation, second to professional education like Medicine, and third to technical education and at last to other courses.

Advertisements play an important role in the choice of courses and institutions. It may be because of this reason; many students wish to go outside the state for their higher education. Though students have certain level of awareness about higher education, comprehensive career guidance is required for them.

Though many students wish to take part in part time job along with their higher education, majority of them do not get enrolled for ASAP, a skill acquisition programme.

Most of the students are interested to do higher education outside Kerala because they believed that, institutions outside state offered job after course completion and comparatively less scope in Kerala. Some students believed that in other states fee is very high than Kerala. Most of the parents wish their children may become doctor and engineer. Some parents are interested in government fields such as, IAS, IPS, Police etc. most of the parents are not interested that their children to follow their field. Most of the students ask doubts about higher education. Most frequently asked questions are about the scope, the course that have high scope of employment opportunity. Higher education institutes, stability in employment, quality of higher education institutes, fees, about educational loans.

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