



Modifying the education system for children of migratory pastoralists of Jammu and Kashmir State of India for equitable growth

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Abstract

Children whose elders are actively engaged in pastoralism are becoming more and more demanding when it comes to their schooling. Poverty-stricken households view education as a means of escaping their situation, whereas pastoralist households view it as a means of sustaining their system of production in a world that is becoming more interconnected. Education systems, on the other hand, are still focused on "educating pastoral children out of pastoralism" and are failing to adapt to this change in demand. Programmes for education intended for sedentary individuals are typically expanded to include pastoralists, and they are predicated on a straightforward modification of sedentary models to account for some elements of nomadic living. The greatest transhumant population in the world is found in Jammu & Kashmir. The *Gujjars* and *Bakarwals* make up the majority of the population in this part of the Himalayan valley and are the third largest ethnic group there. *Bakarwals* are people who herd sheep and goats, whereas *Gujjars* raise big ruminants like cows and buffaloes. The *Chopans* are a group of semi-nomad people who traditionally raise sheep in Kashmir for their meat and wool. For four to six months, the pastoralists migrate to the southern regions of the state, where they can find suitable climate conditions for their livestock to graze. Their children's education is their main issue because of the disparities in the curricula. A study was conducted on the possibility of opening mobile schools to provide children from migrant populations with a uniform education. Children from mobile schools outperformed those from stationary schools in terms of intellect. When compared to sedentary schools, the dropout rate from mobile schools was noticeably lower. In addition, a number of other socio-economic and ecological factors were investigated for overall welfare of the ethnic groups.

Introduction

Pastoralists have had difficulty sustaining their way of life (Waller 1999). They are traditionally semi-nomadic and nomadic herders who rely on their livestock as a source of income, cultural prestige, and sustenance (Gustafson et al. 2011, Lybbert et al. 2004). Although pasture and water availability has received much of the attention in research on the drawbacks of the traditional pastoral system, education for children is also essential to sustained livestock production and livelihoods. The need for education is growing quickly among pastoralists, particularly children who work directly in the field. In an increasingly globalised society, households actively engaged in pastoral production saw education as a means of sustaining their production system, while impoverished households view it as a means of escaping poverty (Siele et al. 2011). However, educational systems continue to focus on "educating pastoral children out of pastoralism" and through formal schooling, failing to adapt to this change in need. Education programmes for pastoralists are often based on a straightforward adaptation of sedentary models to certain characteristics of nomadic living, and they are typically an extension of those created for sedentary people. Productive households are thus forced to choose

between continuing the family business and obtaining access to formal education, which is a detrimental trade-off. Historically, pastoralists have been marginalised. "The greatest poverty rate and the least access to essential social services are found in nomadic pastoral areas (Allen 2017)". Therefore, a study was conducted to examine the significance of mobile schools for the children of pastoralist. Mobile schools were established by the Jammu and Kashmir government for children from pastoral families, however they are only operational for around six months during the winter when pastoralists are not at home. Short-term teachers receive a set wage that is significantly less than that of their permanent counterparts.

Methods

A study was conducted on the possibility of opening mobile schools to provide pastoralist children from migrant populations with a uniform education. As a case study, 50 pastoralist children were selected, at random, 25 each from mobile and stationary school. The study was conducted from 2019 to 2023 for five years. Both formal and informal questionnaires were utilized to gather information from the elders, temporary teachers, and schoolchildren about the pastoralists' migration and educational system. To gain a thorough understanding of the migratory system, previous research publications and existing literature were examined.

Results

Dropouts and passing rates

The findings revealed that, compared to mobile school children, the number of dropouts among pastoralist schoolchildren was substantially greater if they were stationary schoolchildren (Fig. 1). Children attending mobile schools tended to pass more often (Fig. 2). It was discovered that the dropout rate for children attending mobile schools was one student in each of classes three and four, and two in class five. In contrast, at the class 2, 3, 4, and 5 levels, the dropout rates were 1, 8, 3, and 8 pupils, respectively, in sedentary schools. In mobile schools, the passing percentage was 100, 98, 96, 92, and 90, whereas in sedentary schools, it was 100, 96, 76, 68, and 50. Children who dropped out of school were viewed as failing pupils.

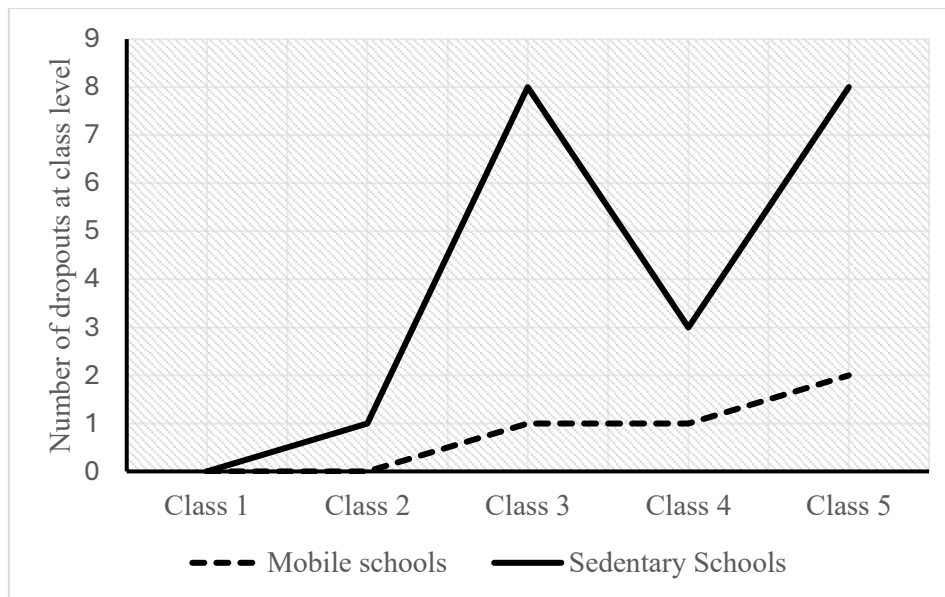


Fig. 1. Number of dropouts at class level

New mobile schools

The state government began mobile schools, though they are still in their infancy, after realising the difficulties faced by pastoralist schoolchildren. According to the information that is currently available, the guidelines in this regard are as follows: (i) the teacher will be an educated member of the moving tribe with the highest qualification; (ii) he or she will receive INR 10,000 as a salary for only six winter months; (iii) the teacher should have his own livestock and move with the other tribe members; and (iv) the government will provide a tent, a table, a chair, a mat, and books to facilitate the teacher and the students at the start of the session. It was

also difficult for the parents to leave their kids emotionally and without proper care at home. Because there were no mobile schools, the kids who accompanied their parents didn't go to school. Many studies show that the domination of the school-based system itself is to blame for the historically dismal record of offering pastoralists access to high-quality education.

Major constraints

Parents, teachers, and school children brought attention to the challenges they encounter while switching from mobile to stationary schools, and vice versa. The main limitations were things like different curricula, dealing with new teachers, admissions processes, altered school environments, etc

Discussion [Conclusions/Implications]

The primary cause of the increased dropout rate among children of mobile pastoralist from sedentary schools was their insistence on going with their parents when they moved to the plains in the winter. Leaving their children at home, emotionally and without adequate care, was difficult for the parents at the same time. In the lack of mobile schools, the children who went with their parents did not pursue further education. A large body of research indicates that the historically poor record of providing pastoralists with access to high-quality education has been caused by the dominance of the school-based system itself. To date, the school-based system's structure and culture have been restricted to the "classroom" model of instruction and have not provided education as an alternative to pastoralism. A needless obstacle to learning is created for children in pastoralism by school-based services. They do not, however, want to replace pastoralism or undermine it because of its basic requirements. There isn't currently a service supply to meet this type of demand. This must be adjusted.

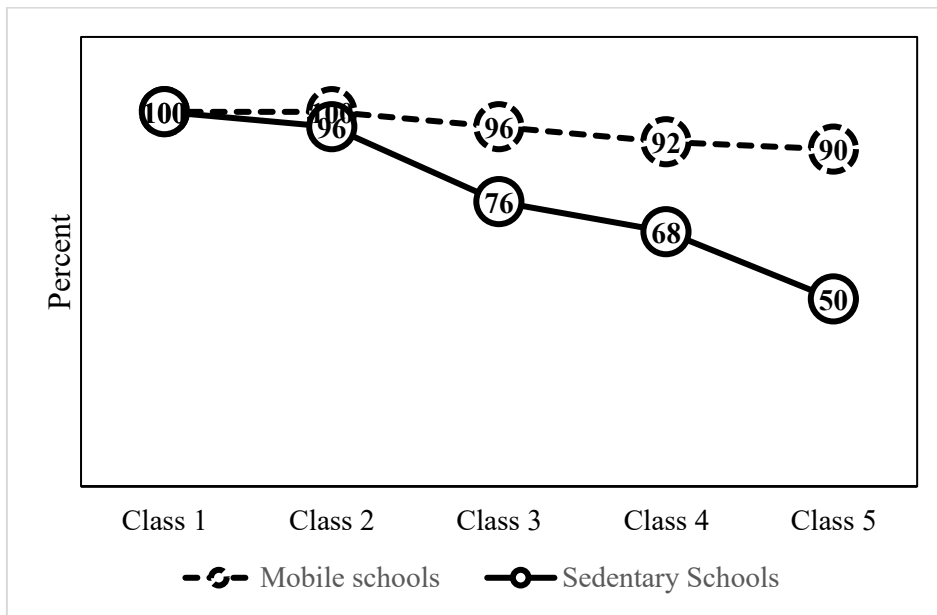


Fig. 2. Passing rate from mobile and sedentary schools
Note: Considered dropouts also.

A deeper comprehension of the role that mobility plays in pastoral production is necessary for effective educational inclusion measures. This must entail avoiding the disadvantageous trade-offs pastoralists face when their sole choice for obtaining "modern" education is a school-based model of provision that requires them to make concessions with pastoral produce and eliminates their means of subsistence within pastoralism. Instead of creating new avenues for advancement, this strategy restricts them. Putting the blame on pastoralists for their poor school attendance has diverted policymakers' attention from the fact that the educational system is, by definition, keeping prospective students out of the pastoral system.

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