

THE REASONS FOR DROPOUTS OF ADULT LEARNERS FROM ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES IN KERALA – A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the reasons for the dropouts of adult learners from the equivalency classes under non-formal education conducted by Kerala Saksharata Mission. Kerala State Literacy Mission (KSLMA) is a registered society- sponsored by the government of Kerala, which coordinates and implements the adult and continuing education programs of the state. Statistical survey method like preparation of questionnaire is used in this paper and the data is collected from two types of respondents like the adult learners and their teachers. Based on this study, I find that above 50% of the adults learners are drop outs from the class due to many reasons. The suggestion to improve and overcome this problem is to create a suitable atmosphere in the class by giving maximum facilities in the class rooms and financial support. The Socio –economic status of the adult learners is the main reason of dropouts from the adult education centres.

Keywords: *Adult education, Drop-outs, Questionnaire, Respondents, Statistical survey.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Kerala is the first state in India, which has successfully completed total literacy and post literacy campaign in all the fourteen districts. The outcome of their campaign can be sustained only when they are effectively followed up with continuing education program. Experience in Kerala indicated that in spite of successful completion of total literacy campaign and post literacy campaign there where a good number of illiterate and semi-literates who dropped out at literacy centers. Such a situation, it was felt not conducive for promoting and sustaining literacy. Hence continuing education program was introduced in Kerala.

The continuing education scheme of National Literacy Mission (NLM) envisages different types of programs which would provide neo literate an opportunity to acquire different skills and their move towards self-sustenance and self-reliance.

Following are the types of programs expected to be offered by the adult education centers:

- ❖ Basic Literacy program
- ❖ Equivalency program
- ❖ Skill development and income generating program
- ❖ Quality of life improvement program
- ❖ Individual interest promotion program

Adult education is one of the areas of continuing education program, which has become a popular movement in Kerala. The equivalency program for class IV was started in Kerala in 2000 and 12 batches have successfully completed this program. In 2016, Kerala was declared as the first state which has acquired the **total primary education** in India. The equivalency course for class VII was started in 2005 and completed 10 batches now. Equivalency program for Class X started in the state in 2006 and completed eleven batches. The first batch of equivalency course for class XII has started in 2015 has completed their course in 2017. In these adult education programs, adult learners face so many problems. So the study about the problems faced by adult learners is very important to find out the reasons for dropouts. Kollam district is one of the districts in Kerala where equivalency classes for adults are conducted in a very good manner.

The main reason for choosing Kollam district for the study is that Kollam is a mixture of various cultures and livelihood; i.e. in the east, Adivasis and Tamilians, at the western area fishermen and coir workers and also the huge number of cashew workers are residing at different parts of the district. Kollam is the district which implemented the continuing education projects with the great support of the local self-governments. If a project like this can be completed successfully in Kollam district, we can achieve success in making Kerala a complete literate state with the wholehearted support and leadership of respected persons from all areas.

Objectives of the study:

- ❖ To study the reasons for drop-outs from the classes.
- ❖ To identify the socio-economic profile of adult learners.
- ❖ To study the reasons for joining the equivalency program.
- ❖ To study the problems faced by adult learners.
- ❖ To study the teaching\ learning activities of the program.

II RESEARCH DESIGN AND METODOLOGY

Statistics is branch of mathematics which deals with the collection, analysis, interpretation, presentation and organization of data. A field of applied statistics of human research surveys, **survey methodology** studies the

sampling of the individual units from a population and the associated survey data collection techniques, such as questionnaire construction and methods for improving the number and accuracy of responses to survey.

2.1 Survey methodology:

2.1.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are the most commonly used tool in survey research. It is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of collecting information from respondents. Usually, a questionnaire consists of a number of questions that the respondent has to answer in a set format given to the respondents. There are two types of questionnaires, closed ended and open ended, in which the closed ended questionnaire consists of multiple choice questions and the respondents can give explanations in the open ended questionnaire.

2.1.2 Methods of Data collection

Two sets of questionnaires were prepared separately for the adult learners and their teachers with 30 closed ended questions.

Population and sample

Kerala state has been selected as the population of the study and from among fourteen districts, Kollam district has been taken as the sample.

Sample and sample size

The samples of adult learners and their teachers were chosen from some selected centers of equivalency classes for adults from rural and urban areas in Kollam district. A sample of 110 adult learners including seventh, tenth and twelfth equivalency classes was taken and samples of 20 teachers were selected as respondents.

This paper is mainly intended to find out the reason for dropouts from the equivalency classes and I expect that this study will have significant implication for improving the attendance of the learners in the class and also improving the teaching learning activities.

III BASIC LITERACY PROGRAMME

The literacy rate of Kerala State is 94.6%, and around 5% of the population is illiterate. Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority (KSLMA) conducts basic literacy classes to the illiterates. This program is known as 'Aksharalaxham'. Kerala Government supports this programme through the CEC and the NCECs.

3.1 Equivalency Course for Class IV

Kerala State Literacy Mission started equivalency program for Class IV in 2000 and completed it in 2015 with the Athulyam project. The classes were conducted by the Preraks and resource persons of the literacy movement. The curriculum, learning materials, training for resource persons, examinations were conducted and certificates were issued by KSLMA with the support of local self -governments. In 2015, Kerala was declared as the “State of total literacy up to Primary education” in India.

TABLE: 1

Details of Adult Learners for Fourth Equivalency in Kerala State

Batch	Year	Registered	Exam. Appeared	Drop Out	Passed	Percentage
I	2000	2600	1712	888	1600	93.46
II	2003	13200	12105	1095	11865	98.02
III	2004	12505	11447	1058	11350	99.15
IV	2007	18045	11230	6815	11000	97.95
V	2008	10245	5496	4749	5313	96.67
VI	2009	7622	6564	1058	3817	58.15
VII	2010	23108	12324	10784	10592	85.95
VIII	2012	16809	9178	7631	6345	69.13
IX	2013	6073	3916	2157	2911	74.34
Athulyam	2010-11	69750	63713	6037	57551	90.33

3.2 Equivalency Course for Class VII

The second stage of equivalency course is seventh standard in Kerala State. This course started in 2003 and now nine batches are completed. School dropouts and those who have passed the IVth equivalency course are the beneficiaries of this program. KSLMA aimed at to achieve cent percent equivalency in VII standard by the year 2019. TABLE: 2

Details of Adult Learners for Seventh Equivalency in Kerala State

Batch	Year	Registered	Exam Appeared	Drop out	Passed	Percentage
I	2005	13834	11631	2203	11082	86.68
II	2007	10928	5952	4976	4343	82.46
III	2008	9482	4929	4553	3985	80.85
IV	2009	7429	5062	2367	4020	79.40
V	2011	13788	8414	5374	7098	84
VI	2012	11145	7023	4122	6004	85.50
VII	2013	8180	5574	2606	5199	93.27

3.3 Equivalency Course for Class X

The third stage of equivalency course in Kerala State is 10th equivalency course which is equivalent to formal SSLC. The qualification for joining the 10th equivalency course is the pass of VII standard of the formal system or pass of the VII equivalency course. School dropouts from eighth standard to tenth standard also register for this course. The age for joining this course is seventeen years. It started in 2006 and completed its eleventh batch in 2017. KSLMA supplied the study materials and conduct the course, examination and certification by Kerala State Pareeksha Bhavan.

Thousands of adults join the equivalency course for their better future. There are many benefits for the adults by passing the Xth equivalency program, who is already working under the government. The last grade Government or public servants get promotion and salary hike by passing this course. The Kerala State Public Service Commission approved this course as a qualification for applying various job vacancies and promotion in Kerala Government Services.

Even if these adults have many benefits by passing the equivalency course and thousands of adults join the courses every year, above 50% of them drops out from the courses. So I would like to find the main reason behind the dropouts. The news about the dropouts from the equivalency classes came in the newspapers says that around 52% of them drops out from the courses, which gave me an inspiration to search for the reasons of the dropouts. The news came in Indian Express on 7th January 2018 about Class X equivalency course is displayed below.



Figure 1: Response of the learners regarding Personal Problems

TABLE: 3

Details of Adult Learners for Registered for Tenth Equivalency in Kerala State

Sl. No.	Year of Batch	No. Registered	Attended Exam	Drop out	Passed	Percentage of Pass
1	2006-07	2819	1693	1126	1088	64.26%
2	2007-08	12710	6315	6395	3235	51.37%
3	2008-09	15781	8359	7422	5790	65.17%
4	2009-10	27729	15054	12675	8391	55.79%
5	2010-11	34548	17935	16613	10894	60.74%
6	2011-12	32958	16639	16319	12425	74.67%
7	2012-13	40021	18542	21479	14558	78.51%
8	2013-14	37244	20042	17202	16809	83.86%
9	2014-15	33217	18419	14798	15283	82.97%
10	2015-16	31226	18103	13123	14995	82.83%

The table given above shows that almost 50% of the adults registered in every year is dropping the courses due to many reasons in their life. This study and analysis helped me to find many reasons in their life to quit the course.

This is explained under the heading ‘the problems faced by the equivalency learners’. The details of the adult learners registered for tenth equivalency course for the last 10 years is listed in the following table.

3.4 Plus Two Equivalency Course

Plus two equivalency courses are started in 2015 firstly in India at Kerala. The first batch has completed successfully. The tenure of the course is two years. The examination is conducted in each year. The registration and classes are conducted by the KSLMA and the examination and certification conducted by Kerala Higher Secondary Board. The eligibility to register the course is for those who pass the regular SSLC or Tenth equivalency and the dropouts from Plus two or Pre-degree. At the time of submission of application, the candidate must complete 22 years of age. The dropouts of Plus two or Pre-Degree can also join this course. The department of higher secondary education conducts examinations and issues certificates. This course is a model for the country. The success of this course will give a new face for the continuing education process of the country and the world.

3.5 The problems faced by the learners

The equivalency classes for the adults in different centers are conducted mainly on Sundays and public holidays. The equivalency centers are some selected schools, where regular classes and some other selected training courses are conducted. In this study, I observe that the main reason for dropouts of the adult learners from the equivalency classes are ‘the engagement in other labours by the learners, financial problems, lack of interest, lack of refreshment, complication of learning modules, the atmosphere of the class room, and the schedule of classes is not suitable for the learners’. I also noticed that the caring of the their children, lack of interest of family members, certain bars in their family, lack of time for studying the lessons, people laughing on studying in the old age, physical condition is not good for attending the class from morning to evening, the negative approach of the colleagues, fear of questions from the teachers, lack of concentration, and their eye sight etc. are preventing them to actively participate in the classes. The teaching is not understandable, the teachers not care all of the learners equally, fear of examinations, continuing evaluation, lack of sanitary facilities, darkness in the classroom, and they think that the learning at this time is a waste.

IV DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

4.1 Based on the Questionnaire prepared for the Learners

A questionnaire consisting of 30 closed ended and some open ended questions were prepared and was circulated among the adult learners of different classes in different centers of Kollam district. Based on their responses, the data was classified into four groups such as Personal problems, Academic problems, Organizational problems and

financial problems. Graphical method is used to interpret the data obtained from the respondents considering each groups and it is shown in the following graphs. Based on this data, I could observe that 68% of the adults were females and the rest males. They belong to different age groups ranging from 26 to 60 years. They include single, married and widow or widower. These adult learners had to choose the equivalency courses due to many reasons like failure from the regular courses, long absenteeism, dropouts from schools etc. They had to choose the equivalency courses for the sake of their promotion or for the fulfillment of their desire to pass the examination and to get some social status in the society.

The graph shown below depicts in detail that many of their personal matters affect their studies a lot and reduces their interest to attend the class regularly. Lack of memory power and eye sight makes the learners to give up the interest in their studies in the old age. Some of the learners are not getting enough moral support from their family members. Not only that, during the old age, they are finding it very difficult to study the topics and is not easy to remember whatever they learn. Most of the women leaners, find it difficult to attend the class since there are no one to take care of their children. Personal problem becomes one of the main reasons for dropping the course in between, even though they have many benefits in doing the course.

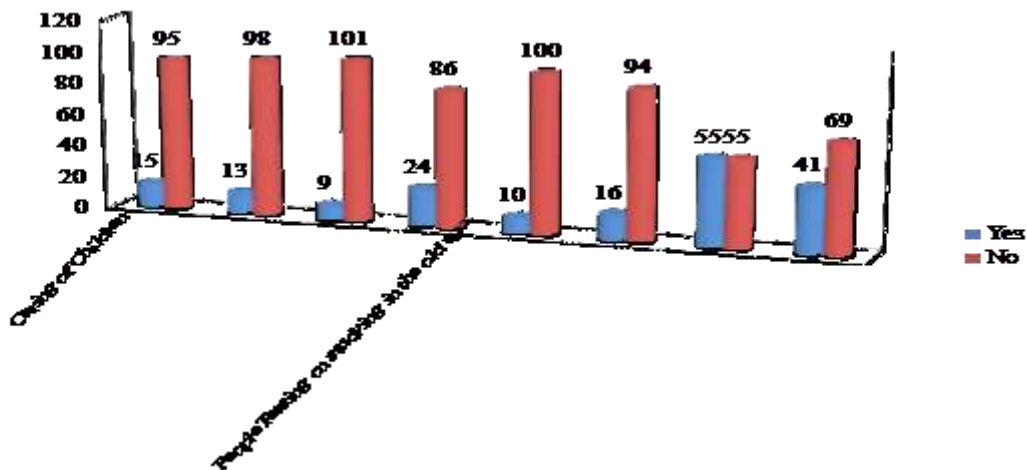


Fig. 1: response of the learners regarding personal problems

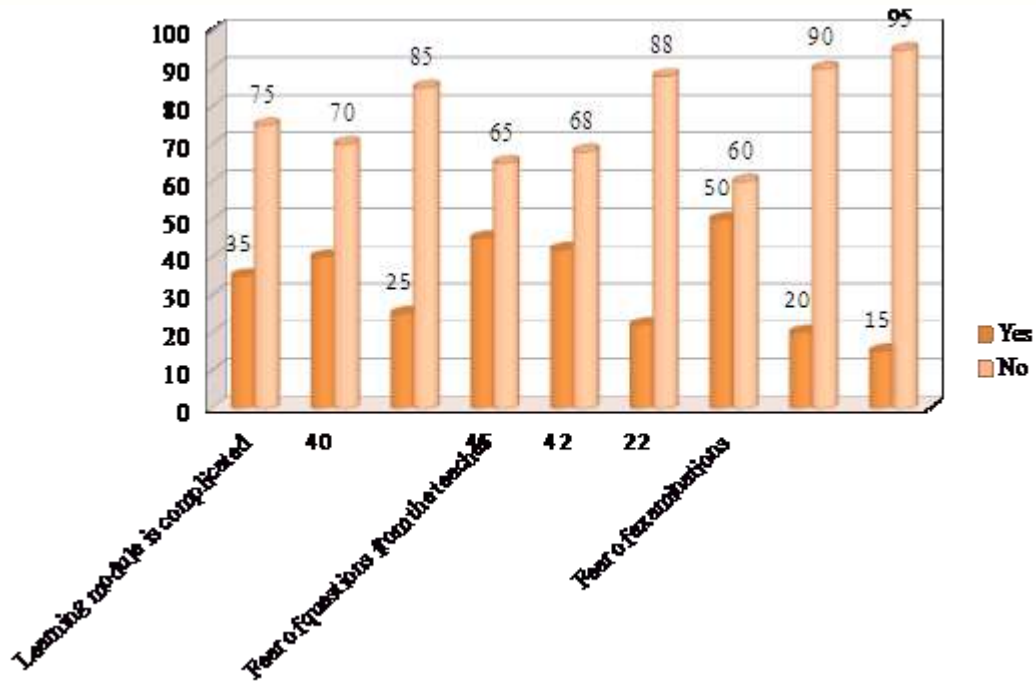


Fig. 2 response of the learners regarding academic problems

The above graph shows that academic problems matters a lot to drop out from the equivalency courses, so it is better to revise the curriculum and make it easily understandable by the adult learners.

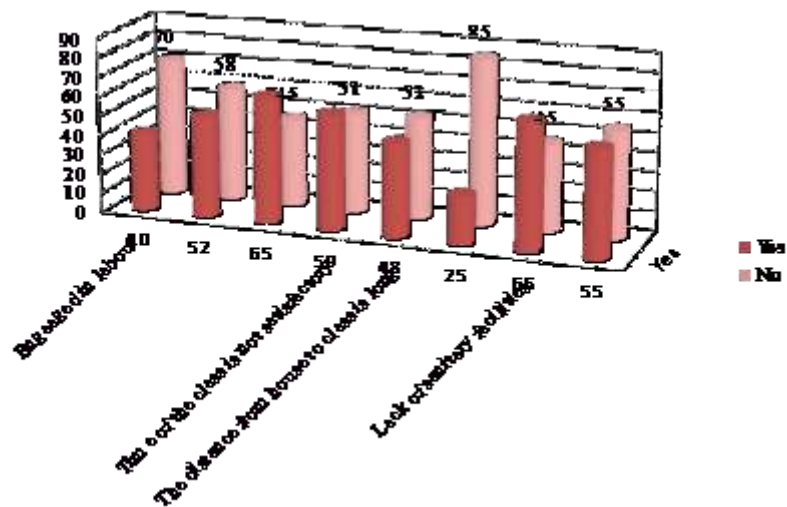


Fig 3. response of the learners regarding organizational problems

In order to make interest in the learners, the organisation of the classes should be well ordered, and the atmosphere of the class rooms must be improved for the attention and attraction of the learners.

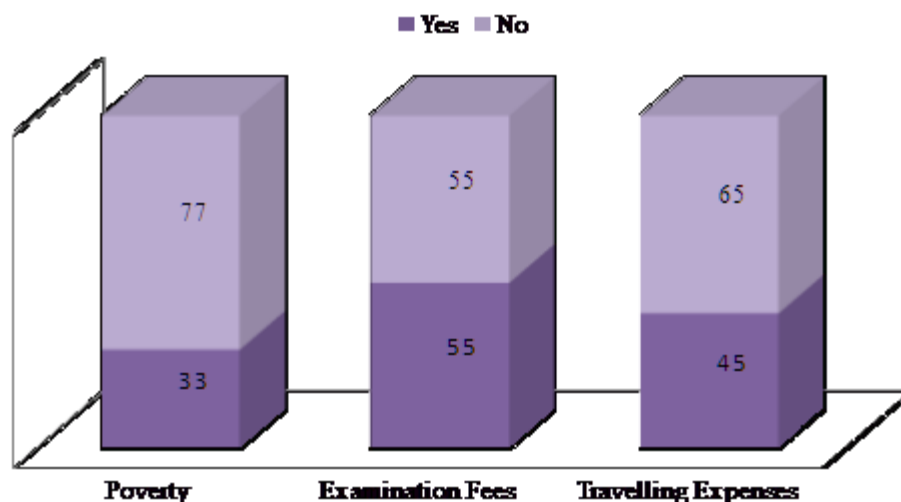


Fig.4 response of the learners regarding financial problems

As most of the learners are coming from the poor family or they are being the main source of money, they cannot afford the cost of study materials and all other expenses related to this. This shows that financial problems also become one of the reasons for dropouts at some extent.

4.2 *Based on the Questionnaire prepared for the Teachers*

The teachers engaging classes for these adult learners are chosen from different Higher Secondary schools and literacy workers. A separate questionnaire was prepared for the teachers with some closed and open ended questions. Their responses were classified into two groups such as Academic and Personal problems. The details of the teacher’s responses are shown in the following graphs.

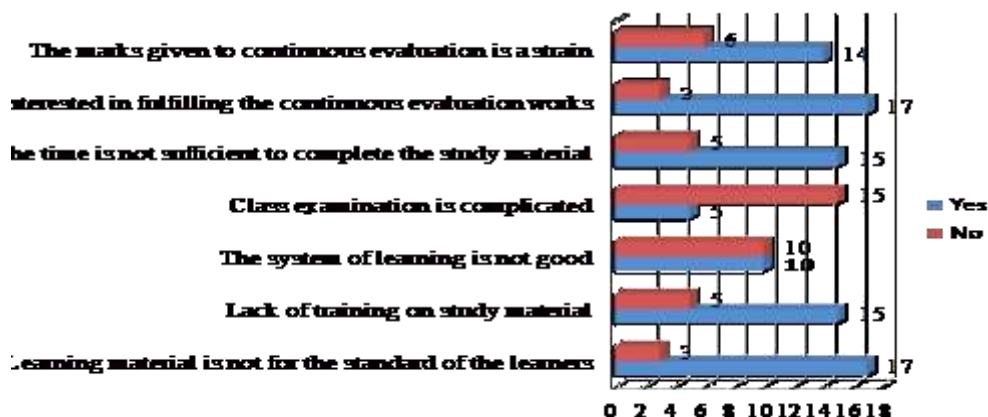


Fig. 5 response of the teachers regarding academic problems

Based on the teachers' responses, academic problems have a great role in the adult learners to be away from the classes. Their responses give strong support to the learner's opinion about the academic problems. In relation with the personal problems, the teacher's responses are giving great evidence in believing that the personal problems of the learners, affect a lot to make decision to quit from the course. The graph showing the details regarding the personal matters is given below.

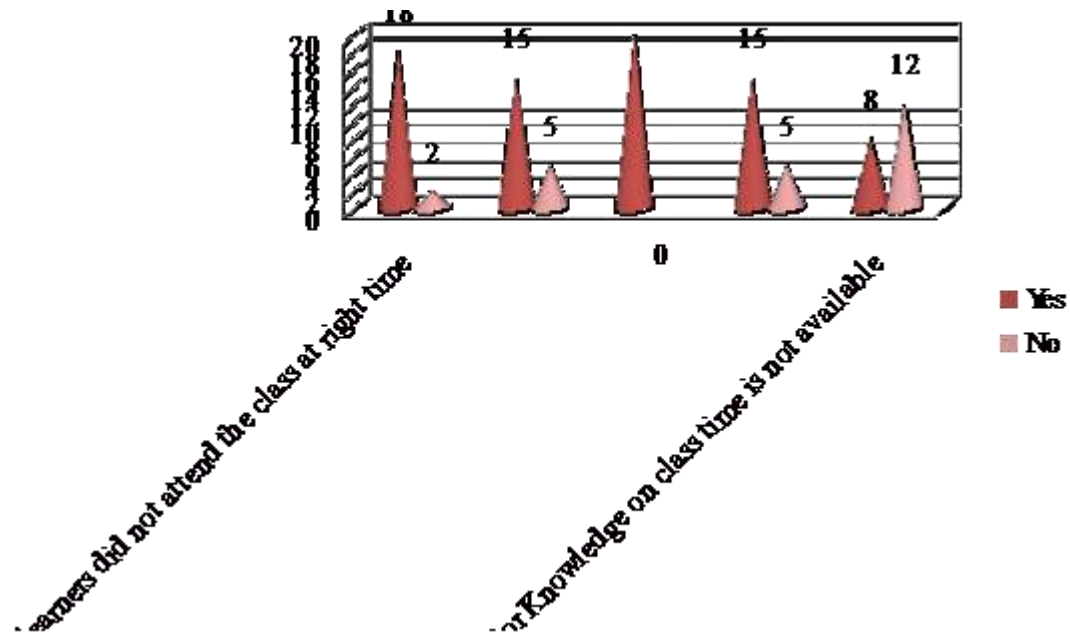


Fig. 6 response of the teachers regarding personal problems

V SUGGESTIONS

1. Create a suitable atmosphere in the class by giving maximum facilities in the class rooms. Start mid-day meal for the learners. Change the class time at the evening or two hours per day.
2. Supply the learning materials at proper time. Simplify the learning materials of the standard of equivalency learners especially on General Science. Adopt participatory approach in the teaching and learning system. To include environmental and participatory self-reliant ideas in the study module. Supply computers and other instrument to the classes for the betterment of the course and to conduct study tours to knowledge centers for acquiring new knowledge. Give proper training for the teachers on andragogy.
3. Give counseling for the learners with their problems and to conduct program to improve personality development of the learners. Start vocational training programs along with the equivalency program for adults.

Give grace marks or concession of marks to the learners of the equivalency courses for the selection of jobs in the government and private sector. Give importance to continuous evaluation.

4. Set up a labor supply unit under the DLM or Block Literacy Mission with the involvement of equivalency learners and co-coordinators to overcome the unemployment problem of the learners.
5. Create social atmosphere to attain the slogan of 'education for all and education for ever'. Empower the school students on lifelong learning.

VI CONCLUSIONS

Kerala is the first state in India to declare total literacy up to Primary level. Kerala State Literacy Mission and Local bodies play an important role in this field. Through this adult education programs, we can attain the goal of total literacy up to 10th and 12th standards within years. The study of the problems faced by the adult learners will help to acquire total literacy up to 12th standard through the equivalency programs in Kerala state in India. Our state has been recognized as a world training institute for the equivalency projects in non-formal education. The equivalency projects can attain even greater achievements only through democratic development. Proper and continuous innovative programs would go a long way in stabilizing the equivalency programs of the state of Kerala.

The equivalency courses and classes are one of the important non-formal education systems in Kerala. The model of non-formal education in Kerala State gives light to the Indian non-formal education system. India is a large country having a wide chance in the field of non-formal education. This will give the researcher a very high and vast area on research. Major issues for the sustainability of the equivalency classes for the adults can be studied in detail. The Socio-economic status of the adult learners is the main reason of dropouts from the adult education centres.

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