The Tribal Education in India, Status, Challenges and Issues

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Abstract: This article is a conceptual frame work and understanding related to tribal education in India scenario by the guide and researcher conducted study with both primary and secondary sources of data. The present structure of the society and its diversity within the cave of caste system in India projected through critical analysis. Integration of development theory and practices contextually in India and special need focusing towards the tribal education policy, prospects and need also. The first hand experience of different social reformers, educators and the researchers perceptions are also critically examined with statement forms in the article. Suggestions and need based education in the provision of Indian constitutions are drawn time to time in order to strengthen the need based education specific to Tribal Education system of India. Lastly the suggestions are also given for the uplift of the provision as tribal education of India. However, based on the analysis of the factors contributing to non-enrolment and/or dropout and descriptions of case studies, it is evident that there needs to be more philanthropic investment outside the classroom too. This would provide a solid foundation that leverages these assets and develops stronger individual potential that can transcend the barriers experienced by tribals today.

Keywords: Tribal Education; Education Policy; Constitutional Rights; UNESCO etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education from elementary level to technical higher education can able to bring the world to a single platform where competency and individual potentiality give the worth of living. The Vision 2020 of India and the competitive challenges in globalization race of the world meet the platform of development. Human rights abuse is ‘normal’ in most of our countries. Many people have been killed, maimed and tortured. Peaceful demonstrations are stopped with guns by the authorities. Evidence abounds in most countries for everybody to see. The judicial system in most of our countries lacks the needed independence and fairness. Judges who do not kowtow to the whims and fancies of the government in power are either sacked or murdered under mysterious circumstances. Most suspects do not get fair trials in court and many unfortunate citizens are imprisoned even without trial. Political opponents are often the said victims of this abuse of human rights. Most governments in our part of the world have monopolised state press and electronic media, and deciding on which news item is to be published/aired or not. Most often the parties of the other side of the political divide are prevented from benefiting from these facilities without censorship. They are never seen as alternative future governments but as political enemies. Due to the high cost of education, poverty and lack of materials and (school) structures, our cities are full of street children, who end their day sleeping on verandahs and Kiosks, not knowing where the next meal will come from.

On the 50th anniversary, 10th December 1998, we resolved to treasure and uphold the tenets of the Universal Human Rights Declaration for the benefit of all and resist human rights violations of any kind wherever they may rear their ugly heads, let us keep that pledge.
"You can only kill the messengers. 
You cannot kill the message.”  Ken Saro – Wiwa

Failure to end the global crisis in education makes sustainable development impossible by denying nearly a billion people the ability to make informed choices about their lives, their families and their societies. The Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development recognises that education is critical to sustainable development, and reiterates existing international commitments to the Education for All goals and strategies agreed in Jorntien in 1990 and again in Dakar in 2000 - including universal primary education by 2015.

However, the world leaders gathered in Johannesburg must do more than repeat old promises. Two years after Dakar, aid to education still languishes at pitifully low levels and 125 million children are still out of school (UNESCO report 2002, Bangkok). In order to ensure that all girls and boys can complete a full course of schooling, governments attending the summit must take decisive new steps to deliver on the promises they have already made. The Global Campaign for Education, a broad alliance of child rights activists, NGOs, and public sector and teachers' unions, with members in more than 150 countries, demands that in World Conference, Johannesburg(14-18 April 2002):

2. BACKDROP OF TRIBAL EDUCATION
The Fifth Schedule of the constitution mainly states the provision to the administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes such as: Executive power of a State in Scheduled Areas; Role of Governor in the administration of Scheduled Areas; Constitution and function of Tribes Advisory Council; Law applicable to Scheduled Areas; and Amendment of the Schedule. The Sixth Schedule of the constitution, under Articles 244(2) and 275(1) of the constitution mainly states the “Provisions as to the Administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram”, inter alia, with reference to: Autonomous districts and autonomous regions; constitution of District Councils and Regional Councils; Powers of the District Councils and Regional Councils to make laws; Administration of justice in autonomous districts and autonomous regions; Powers of the District Council to establish primary schools, etc.; Powers to assess and collect land revenue and to impose taxes; suspension of acts and resolutions of District and Regional Councils; Dissolution of a District or a Regional Council.

3. EDUCATION OF SCHEDULED TRIBE CHILDREN
Scheduled tribes constitute the statutorily weaker section of society and form a distinct target group under the existing pattern of planning. Due to determined efforts of the government at the central and state levels, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of ST children has increased considerably at elementary levels of education, even more as compared to their non-tribal counterparts, e.g. the (GER) of ST children at primary stage is 137 as against 116 of their non-tribal counterparts. The corresponding figures for Upper Primary stage are 88.9 as against 85.5; and for elementary stage are 119.7 as against 104.3 (Statistics for School Education 2010-2011). Thus, the participation of these children is now more or less in proportion to their share in population at the elementary school level. Dropouts, though declining over years, are significantly large at this level: the dropout rate of ST children at primary school level is 35.6% as against 27% of their non-tribal counterparts.

4. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS
The situation of education of tribal children is related to the quality of education in general, and not solely to being tribal. Of course being a tribal also means that most of the time they are also poor; they live in areas where the provision of education is very weak. So the situation is not only because they are tribals but because of various inter-related issues. Empirical evidence suggests that tribal children possess the basic cognitive abilities and psychological dispositions for successful participation in schools; and their low achievement levels are attributed to school-related variables as would apply to non-tribal students (Gautam, 2003; Reported in Bagai and Nundy, 2009, p.11). Poor performance of tribal students and the below average situation of primary education in tribal areas is driven by inter-related factors, which can broadly be grouped in to: (i) internal factors; and (ii) external factors.
5. **INTERNAL FACTORS**

Internal factors are intrinsic to the structure of the education system, e.g. content and pedagogy, teacher absenteeism and attitude, language of instruction, incentives, limited ownership of education by the community, and can be addressed through appropriate programs.

1. **Language of Instruction**

Tribal children have limited contact with the state language, and tend to speak in their home language. Tribal children of Odisha have reported to face language related problems during initial years of schooling (class- I and II); they fail to understand and communicate in Regional language, which is their second language, with their classmates, inmates and teachers (Pradhan and Pattanaik, 2011). Government schools use the state language for teaching and communication, which is most often not familiar to a tribal child at the pre-primary and primary levels. They are, thus, unable to fully comprehend classroom teaching and activities, read in the state language or understand the texts properly.

Gradually introducing the state language can improve the child’s potential in mainstream education systems. The use of the tribal language in the initial years can develop a sense of comfort for the tribal child. It must be the first language and taught as a means of acquiring knowledge of tribal culture, ethnicity, literature and the arts. The medium of instruction cannot only be the local language, because of practical constraints. It must, however, start with that. The study conducted by Pradhan and Pattanaik (2011) revealed that tribal students did not show interest to pursue formal education in their home language(s). They opined that education in the medium of their home languages (tribal languages) would not help them to expand the horizon of their knowledge. More importantly, classroom transactions must be such that they show respect for the child’s language, identity and social background.

2. **Curriculum Content - Local Adaptation of Methods and Materials**

Educational content should be molded in the “relevant” culture of the community. Research in child development and pedagogy has indicated that a young child learns concepts better if these are embedded in contexts that are meaningful, i.e. contexts that are local and familiar. The words, terminologies, messages, topics reflected in the syllabus and textbooks are most often alien to tribals. The new National Curriculum Framework, however, recommends a plurality of textbooks meant to create a theoretical space for local specificity. There is a growing focus on workbooks that supplement the learning process in various subjects, and can encourage children to undertake assignments outside the classroom (e.g. conduct science experiments at home with local materials). Other teaching aids to make learning more fun and creative include puppets, model making, singing and drama.

**Multi-grade Multi-level (MGML) Curriculum**

Approximately 80% of rural schools are multi-grade. Children that are drawn into a class, irrespective of their abilities, often exhibit different learning levels, which need to be addressed via appropriate teaching methodologies. The curriculum being followed by the Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources (RIVER) is an excellent example of MGML curriculum.

3. **Teacher Training and Pedagogy**

Children, in tribal/scheduled areas, are taught by teachers who may or may not be from the tribal community. The presence of tribal teachers, especially from the same community, has shown and improved school participation of tribal children, as these teachers understand and respect the culture with greater sensitivity. Assuming that tribal teachers are a more natural fit, many states have appointed community teachers or para teachers. However, special training on both course materials as well as appropriate conduct with tribal students has to be undertaken even if the teacher has tribal origins.

a. Tribal children are docile.

b. Non-tribal children are good in Mathematics.

c. Tribal language is not the language of power.

d. Tribal language is not spoken or used by others.
e. Tribal language is parochial, and not recognized.
f. Spoken language is limited to the community.
g. Tribal language is inferior to the regional language.
h. Tribal girls are slow in comprehension compared to boys.

Training and capacity building has to be undertaken on a sustained basis to ensure continued motivation on the part of teachers. Studies suggest that teacher motivation contributes more to the teaching-learning process than teacher competence. For maximum effectiveness, teacher training has to be an ongoing process, and not a one-time effort. In addition to training, capacity building of teachers on academic competence and pedagogy is needed. The following are the key elements of teacher training and pedagogy:

**Training on Material Use**
- Orientation on local tribal dialects and use of local material for TLM;
- Development of resource training manuals to assist in classroom teaching
- Tribal primers can be supported by picture dictionary, teacher’s handbook, conversational chart and self learning materials for teachers
- Training in the use of interactive, child-centric and gender-sensitive methods of teaching in multi-grade classrooms

**Changes in Perception of Teachers about Tribal Children**
- Sensitization to cultural, cognitive and behavioral strengths of tribal children
- Emphasis on attitudinal training of teachers
- Increase motivation levels of teachers can generate interest among tribal children towards education

**Participatory Method of Teaching**
- Encourage students to ask questions, learn through projects/tours, involve students to complete activities prescribed in the syllabus.
- Adopt a process of continuous evaluation
- Emphasize holistic education developing social, moral and spiritual values

Development of appropriate curriculum is a futile exercise in the absence of appropriate training in the use of materials. Research has shown that it is important to train the teachers in the use of dictionaries, flash cards and innovative teaching learning materials.

**4. Community Participation and Ownership**
For the community to be involved in the education process, youth tribal educators and tribal teachers from the community can act as agents of change. They can serve as role models and work together inside and outside the classroom. At the same time, the local tribal community must be empowered, as partners, with a sense of true ownership of the initiative. New and comprehensive ways of engaging communities and/or eliciting participation from communities have to be explored constantly, keeping in mind the changing needs of the community. The following are key elements for effective community participation:

- **Obtain Buy-in from Local Stakeholders:** Gain trust of locals, learn from, and educate them, and build capacity of local tribal youths and community leaders.
- **Assure Community Participation:** Local community can participate and/or can be involved in different activities, e.g. planning exercise; construction of school building; documentation of local folklore, history, traditional medicine etc.; interaction between and amongst the participants, through motivation.
Instill Sense of Accountability and Ownership among Children and Parents: Local community should contribute in terms of cash, kind and labour, for the promotion of education of their children; and own the entire responsibilities of their school, including repair of school building, management of mid-day meal programme, preparation of TLMs, promotion of enrolment, school supervision and monitoring.

Empower Communities: Communities should be empowered to demand appropriate and quality education services from the government through a multi-pronged strategy.

6. CONCLUSION

Education is the single most important means by which individuals and society can build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for their well being. In the context of education of ST children, finding a balance between preserving tribal cultural identity and mainstreaming them seems crucial. It means building education programs that ensure a tribal child’s success in mainstream schools. It is seen that the current education system is mostly designed for the dominant group. Hence, there needs to be investment in creating support mechanisms that supplement the integration of tribal children into the formal education system. The support within the education system may include:

1. Using both tribal and state languages during the pre-primary and primary levels
2. Creating supplementary tribal relevant learning materials
3. Introducing monetary/non-monetary incentives for teachers in tribal areas
4. Addressing the health and nutritional needs of tribal children
5. Improving community participation by training tribal teachers and youth
6. Establishing transitional education centres, which focus on mainstreaming tribal children
7. Creating seasonal hostels and residential schools for children of migratory parents

The support mechanisms listed above address some of the issues facing tribal children inside the classroom. However, based on the analysis of the factors contributing to non-enrolment and/or dropout and descriptions of case studies, it is evident that there needs to be more philanthropic investment outside the classroom too. This would provide a solid foundation that leverages these assets and develops stronger individual potential that can transcend the barriers experienced by tribal’s today.

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