



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

"A STUDY OF ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF TRIBAL EDUCATION IN INDIA"

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Introduction

India is a home to a large variety of indigenous people. The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2 crores, India has the single largest tribal population in the world. This constitutes 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country (Census of India, 2011). Education is one of the primary agents of transformation towards development. Education is in fact, an input not only for economic development of tribes but also for inner strength of the tribal communities which helps them in meeting the new challenges of life. It is an activity, or a series of activities, or a process which may either improve the immediate living conditions or increase the potential for future living. It is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their well-being. Professor Amartya Sen recently emphasized education as an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy. So, education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. Education is in fact, an input not only for economic development of tribes but also for inner strength of the tribal communities which helps them in meeting the new challenges of life. Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the backward groups in India. Currently, the tribes lag behind not only the general population but also the Scheduled Caste population in literacy and education. This disparity is even more marked among Scheduled Tribe women, who have the lowest literacy rates in the country (Maharatna, 2005). The male-female gap in literacy and educational attainment among the scheduled tribes is significant. Education, especially in its elementary form, is considered of utmost importance to the tribals because it is crucial for total development of tribal communities and is particularly helpful to build confidence among the tribes to deal with outsiders on equal terms. Despite the sincere and concerted efforts by the government for the overall development of the scheduled tribes, they are still far behind in almost all the standard parameters of development. They are not able to participate in the process of development, as they are not aware of most of the programmes and policies made for their upliftment. This is mainly due to the high incidence of illiteracy and very low level of education among the tribal people. Hence, the educational status of the scheduled tribes and the role of governance in this direction are highly essential. It is well known that the educational background of tribes is very discouraging as compared to the rest of the population. So, education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. In this context, the objective of this paper is to analyse the trend of literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rates and Gender Parity Index of tribal education in India.

The following issues of challenge to the tribal people education

1. Poverty
2. Unemployment and underemployment
3. Irrational access to resource
4. Traditional practices
5. Low literacy
6. Poor health cover
7. Poor amenities, services and infrastructure
8. Poor communication
9. Unhealthy cultural environment

10. Low level of skills
11. Unfavorable development environment
12. Lack of market support

Education is the most important instrument for human resource development and has a great significance. One cannot imagine education without schools as it plays a major role in molding the basic ideas, habits and attitudes of the children, with a view to producing well balanced individuals. Schools provide not only education to the children but also keep them away from the social evils. The main problem in schools is the problem of stagnation and drop out phenomena. Education is the key that opens the door of life. It plays a pivotal role in social change and it brings perfection in human life, an upward mobility in social status, radical transformation in outlook and perception. Education is widely accepted as the essential tool for the attainment of the developmental goals and leads to political consciousness, awareness of rights and duties among the people of a nation and it is the most important instrument for human resource development and has a great significance in the context of developing countries. The Indian Constitution identifies and provides special consideration for certain ethnic minority groups, traditionally referred to as tribes or tribals, as Scheduled Tribes (STs) who constitute around 8 per cent of the total population of the country. There are 573 STs living in different parts of the country. Most of the tribal communities have their own languages and culture different from the language spoken in the state where they are located. There are more than 270 such languages. Tribal communities in Kerala are scattered in different districts. Of these the highest concentration is located in wayanad, Idukki and Attappady block of Plakkad District. There are more than 37 tribal communities in Kerala. Scheduled Tribes who have been historically out of the mainstream development initiatives partly due to the still continuing socio-economic barriers and partly due to the inadequacy of the Government programmes in reaching these disadvantaged groups, still find themselves in difficult to compete with other sections of the society. Tribes are very important in constituting the population of the country as they are 8.2 percent of the total population of India. They constitute 3.2 percent of the total population of Kerala. Tribal education has many problems to face as hindrance for development. These are external constraints and internal constraints. External constraints: ST students constitutes 1.2 percent of the total enrollment in schools. The perspective adopted for educational development among tribal communities fails to adequately address the specific disadvantages characterizing tribal population. For instance, the population and distance norms formed by the government have not been beneficial to tribal locations because of their sparse population and sporadic residential patterns. Though Kerala's performance compares well with those of other states. The disparities between the marginalized communities and other social groups in terms of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The disparities increase at higher and higher levels of education, particularly in technical and professional education which provide better access to more remunerative jobs. It is these disparities within the state that matter more in view of the high unemployment rate in the state and consequently the highly competitive nature of the labour market. Further, in formulating policies and programmes for tribal education it is essential to understand the complex realities of tribal life and the expectation of tribals from the system, and this has never been done either by the tribal welfare department or by the education department. Consequently, no worthwhile policy for tribal education has been formed. Because the more pass

percentage rate from the schools of STs can only produces more students for higher education. Besides most of the increase in employment in the country and the state is taking place in the private sector rather than in the public sector. In such a context job reservation for STs in the public sector become less relevant today in accessing jobs by them. Internal constraints: The internal problems of tribal education refer to the quality of school provision, suitable teachers, relevance of content and curriculum, medium of instruction, pedagogy, and special supervision. A majority of schools in tribal areas are without basic infrastructure facilities. Normally, school buildings in tribal areas have thatched roofs, dilapidated walls, and non-plastered floors. Research evidence shows that a large number of tribal schools do not have teaching-learning materials, or even blackboards. In tribal areas the opening of a school is equated with the posting of a teacher and same is the case with 'ashram' schools. Though the demand for changing the content and curriculum to suit the tribal context has been an old one, no serious effort has been made in this direction in any state, except for some sporadic pilot projects. The uniform structure and transaction of curriculum has put tribal children at a disadvantage. Apart from all this lack of awareness of the teachers about tribal culture and environment also force the tribal students to withdraw from education. All these issues are emerging in their primary and high school levels. These constraints force them to drop-out their education at very early levels and higher education will be only a dream for them

Reasons for Drop-out among tribal students

1. **Low socio-economic status:** - Tribals enjoy low socio-economic status. Miller (1988) has identified four major classes of variables such as cognitive variables, physical variables and motivational variables where disadvantaged learners show poor performance as compared with the advantaged groups.
2. **Tribal concepts of pleasure:-** Tribals are giving more importance for their pleasure such as dance, music and other types of entertainments prevalent in the society.
3. **Existence of ethnic stereotypes:** - Stereo typing is a natural and inevitable. It helps us to organize life. But such typing turns in to prejudice or stereotypes when based on little facts and it is used as a mechanism to establish the myth of racial or cultural superiority.
4. **Tribal concept of learning:-** In most of the tribal cultures learning is an active pleasurable event mostly carried on among peers. But the existing system of education does not take in to account their learning style.
5. **Linguistic problems:-**Tribal languages, except a very few, belong to Austro-Asiatic language family and are different from dominant non tribal languages of India which belong either to the Indo European or the Dravidian family. In most of the time tribals face acute problems in language.
6. **Problem of learning English:** - Tribals need for English is great, they face problems in learning than their non-tribal counterparts. For tribals their typical use of regional languages interferes with English. For them English are 5th or 6th languages.
7. **Problems in learning to read:-**Tribals have long oral tradition. Their culture is oral. Their history, myths and traditions are orally handed down from generation to generation. Most of the language does not have scripts of their own; their oral tradition still continues to exist.
8. **Psychological problems:** - Financial problems of the tribals always make the tribals in a very depressed condition. They have lots of wants and but the means to satisfying them is very less. It leads to many psychological issues
9. **Academic and administrative problems:** - Even though the number of programmes for the upliftment of tribal education is many, the percentage of people receiving these benefits is very less. Administrative authorities are always showing very neutral attitude towards the education of the tribals.
10. **Indifferent attitude of tribal parents:** - Tribal parents are mostly illiterate. They always show a very indifferent attitude towards the education of their children. They are interested in providing household responsibilities to their children a very early stage of their education. "The parents of these students

do not have any relationship with the society outside and are unaware of the importance of education. All teachers are talented. Teaching such children is a herculean task". 11. Indifferent attitude of tribal teachers: Teachers do not take much effort to improve the educational level of the tribal students. Lack of communication, high level of absenteeism in the class, bad result in study, lack of attention in classroom by the tribals are some of the factors that has increased the indifferent attitude of the teachers towards the tribal students.

12. **Indifferent attitude of tribal students:** Students clearly said don't like someone forcing me to get up early in the morning. So, I was unhappy to go to school... Subjects like Malayalam and Science are good for me, but, English, Hindi and Mathematics are very tough. I could not follow English and Hindi classes. Whenever I commit mistakes, in front of others, teachers used to scold me, beat and pinch my ears. You ask others; almost 90% of the children have similar experiences. See, their beating caused swelling on my legs. Moreover, the staffs ridicule us by calling, advise Fed up with all these, my two friends and I decided to run away from the school. One day, we climbed on the compound wall and got on to the branch of a tree outside that was almost touching the compound wall, climbed down, and somehow or other managed to reach our settlement", In addition to all the above causes some other causes can also be cited as the background for the reasons for Drop-out.

They are:

1. Extreme level of poverty, deprivation and vulnerability
2. High levels of exclusion, developmental, social and economic
3. Extremely low level of empowerment-political, social and economic
4. Low level of access to entitlement
5. Practically zero participation in development matters with no autonomy in any form of decision-making
6. Poor human development with low level of literacy and access to health care
7. Rapid alienation of assets like land
8. Alarming depletion of social capital especially traditional forms of organization and leadership.
9. Quick deterioration of traditional knowledge system and cultural attainment.
10. Fast increasing tendency to use tribal people as 'cat's-paws in criminal activities like illicit distillation, cultivation of narcotic plants, stealing of forest wealth etc.
11. Dependency-inducing developmental programmes relying on distribution of benefits rather than building up of capabilities.
12. Implementation of ad hoc and stereotyped developmental programmes in the absence of proper planning.
13. Weak delivery system of public services.
14. Very weak monitoring system. 15. High level of exploitation of women by out-side

Suggestions Some suggestions for improvement of tribal education are as follows

- a) **Literacy campaign** - Proper awareness campaign should be organized to create the awareness about the importance of education. Extensive literacy campaign in the tribal dominated districts may be undertaken on a priority basis to literate the tribal.
- b) **Attitude of the tribal parents** - The attitude of the tribal parents toward education should be improved through proper counseling and guidance.
- c) **Relevant study materials in local languages** - All study materials should be supplied in local languages of tribes.
- d) **Appointment of Local teachers and female teachers** - It is suggested to appoint more tribal teachers and female teachers in the tribal areas. The ecological, cultural, psychological characteristics of tribal children should be considered carefully by the teachers in tribal areas.
- e) **Stipends and various scholarships** - Since higher education among the tribes is less, special ST scholarships should be provided to the tribal students perusing higher education, particularly in medical, engineering, and other vocational

streams.

- f) **Residential schools** - More residential schools should be established in each states and districts and extended up to PG level in tribal areas.
- g) **Social security**- Social security of students, especially of adolescent girls is of great concern in residential schools.
- h) **Proper Monitoring** - Higher level officials should check the functioning of schools frequently relating to the teaching methods, working hours, and attendance registers.

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