

Tribal Needs and Expectations: National Policy for Education

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Received on 06.06.2017, Accepted on 13.06.2017

Abstract

Education has been institutionalized in the form of formal education in the schools and higher educational institutions in the remote and tribal areas gradually with the changing educational policies and programmes in the independent India with the advent of developing educational infrastructure and awareness in the remote areas. This resulted in the gradual increase in the percentage of literacy rate. But, perhaps tribal groups, especially PVTGs, could not come up effectively in full pace with their cohabitants and become part of this developing change in their villages and surroundings, due to their situational demerits. Moreover, there is a need of reform in educational policy and system for tribal communities, especially PVTGs as per their cultural needs and expectations for increasing literacy rate along with better awareness and cultural sustainability. This paper deals with the issues related with the low level of literacy in Central India along with suggestions and suitable examples from the study area.

Keywords: Informal Education; Cultural Needs; Cultural Sustainability; Dialect; Docent; Vocational Education.

Introduction

India is a vast country with a number of caste and communities, faiths and occupations. The scheduled tribes are one of them. The Census of India, 2011 has notified 705 scheduled tribes in 30 States / Union Territories in India. The total population of the scheduled tribes in India is 10,42,81,034 [1] which forms 8.6 per cent of the total population of India. There are 75 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in central list of India.

Sex Ratio among the scheduled tribes of India is 990. The literacy rate among scheduled tribe population of India is 58.96% (round off 59%), out of which 68.53% are males and 49.35% are females. The

Gonds and the Bhils are the major tribal groups in India and majority of them are settled in Central India.

Education is a powerful means of development in any community. Various formal and informal forms of education exist in different societies. Education remained a very vital aspect of society since time immemorial, when it was either in the formal educational form of Gurukul shiksha and temple education or in informal educational form of youth dormitories, such as, Ghotul of Muria Tribe, Dhumkeria of Oraon, etc. Education has been utilized as a significant means of bringing deprived sections of the society into the mainstream. Education has been institutionalized in the form of formal education in the schools and higher educational institutions in

the remote and tribal areas gradually with the changing educational policies and programmes in the independent India with the advent of developing educational infrastructure and awareness in the remote areas. This resulted in the gradual increase in the percentage of literacy rate. But, perhaps few tribal groups, especially PVTGs, could not come up effectively in full pace with their co-habits and become part of this developing change in their villages and surroundings, due to their geological, environmental and situational demerits. Agaria and Baiga tribe are example of such groups residing in the adjacent part of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Literacy rate among the scheduled tribe population in different states and Union Territories (UTs) also varies significantly, such as, Andhra Pradesh 49.2%, Arunachal Pradesh 64.6%, Assam 72.1%, Bihar 51.1%, Chhattisgarh 59.1%, Goa 79.1%, Gujarat 62.5%, Himachal Pradesh 73.6%, Jammu & Kashmir 50.6%, Jharkhand 57.1%, Karnataka 62.1%, Kerala 75.8%, Madhya Pradesh 50.6%, Maharashtra 65.7%, Manipur 77.4%, Meghalaya 74.5%, Mizoram 91.5%, Nagaland 80.0%, Orissa 52.2%, Rajasthan 52.8%, Sikkim 79.7%, Tamil Nadu 54.3%, Tripura 79.1%, Uttar Pradesh 55.7%, Uttarakhand 73.9%, West Bengal 57.9%, Andman & Nicobar Islands 75.6%, Dadra & Nagar Haveli 61.9%, Daman & Diu 78.8%, and Lakshadweep 91.7%. Among the states of India Tripura has the highest and Andhra Pradesh has the lowest literacy rate among the scheduled tribes. Similarly, among UTs of India Lakshadweep has the highest and the Dadra & Nagar Haveli has the lowest literacy rate among the scheduled tribes [1]. Comparatively, in the states of Central India the literacy rate of scheduled tribes is lesser than other parts of India. This is high time to find out and project the reasons for less literacy rate among scheduled tribes in Central India to reorient the implication of National Policy of Education as per the needs and expectations of the scheduled tribe groups of these areas. This will lead to the ultimate goal of greater social benefit.

Tribal Oriented Educational Policies in India

National educational index is 0.563. Educational index of Chhattisgarh is 0.526. Education of ST children is crucial for total development, and above all, empowerment of the tribal communities [2]. An important development in the policy towards education of tribes is the National Policy on education (NPE), 1986 and the Program of Action (POA), 1992 recognized the heterogeneity and diversity of the Tribal areas while understanding the importance of instruction through mother tongue and

need for preparing teaching / learning materials in tribal languages. In seventh five year plan (1985-90) emphasis was laid on educational development of the STs and the ninth five year plan decided to empower the socially disadvantaged groups including STs as agents of socio- economic change and development. There was special emphasis on education in 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012). In 11th Five year plan Planning Commission has constituted number of Working Groups for the formulation of Eleventh Five Year Plan pertaining to the Ministry of Human Resources Development. One of them is Working Group on 'Development of Education' of SCs/STs/ Minorities/ girls and other disadvantaged Groups. In 11th Five Year Plan it was decided that up to 2007 every child should attain school. Following aspects were the important issues of this plan period:

1. There should be one primary school with two teachers in every one kilometre area having 25 children of school going age.
2. 500 new Ashram schools will be opened.
3. Building more upper middle schools and hostels in every block level area.
4. Promotion of girl education through different schemes.
5. Increase in scholarship.
6. Vocational educational schemes.
7. Mid-day meal.
8. Free distribution of text books to every girl student up to the upper middle schools.
9. Building more school buildings, Ashrams and hostels.
10. Renovation of schools in every area.

Area of Study

The survey is done utilizing the scientific research methods in few pockets of Dindori and Anuppur districts in Madhya Pradesh and Kawardha and Bilaspur districts in Chhattisgarh. The concentration of the current study is mainly on the Agaria and Baiga tribes of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh residing in the bordering areas of both the states. In Madhya Pradesh, there are 43 scheduled tribes and their total population is 1,53,16,784 [1] which form 14.7 per cent of the total scheduled tribes' population of India, whereas the 21.1 per cent of the population of the state is scheduled tribe. Likewise, there are also 42 scheduled tribes in Chhattisgarh and their total population is 78,22,902 [1] which is 7.5 per cent of the total scheduled tribes' population of India, whereas 30.6 per cent of the population of the state is

scheduled tribe. The scheduled tribe literacy rate in Chhattisgarh is 59.1% out of which 69.7% are male and 48.8% are female. The scheduled tribe literacy rate in Madhya Pradesh is 50.6% out of which 59.6% are male and 41.5% are female.

Research Methodology

The various Anthropological scientific research methodologies and field techniques are applied for the collection of data in the current study, such as, observation, interview, schedule, focused group discussion, case study method, photography, etc. Qualitative and quantitative both types of methods were used.

Primary information with reference to selected parents of tribal communities and primary school teachers were collected with the help of structured questionnaire and schedule followed by personal interview and observation. The gathered information from primary and secondary level sources are being analysed and tabulated with the help of simple method of statistical tools and techniques for writing the final report.

Situational Analysis

The main goal of the education and educational system of India was laid down in the National Policy of Education in 1968. "The National Policy of 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in post-Independence India. It aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national integration. It laid stress on the need for a radical reconstruction of the educational system, to improve its quality at all stages and to give much greater attention to science and technology, the cultivation of moral values and a closer relation between education and the life of the people Education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit - thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our constitution." [3]. It was designed to improve the quality of life and wider knowledge and better sense of values, culture, acceptance and secularism. We have come a long way ahead and still trying to achieve the ultimate goal. Education develops manpower for different levels of the economy. It is also the substrate on which research and development flourish, being the ultimate guarantee of national self-reliance.

While surveying it was observed that we are still lacking behind the goal of current education policy. Cultural aspect of tribal communities is not properly looked after in the current educational system which is resulting in disinterest in formal education and school dropout. Moreover, tribal communities, specially PVTGs are unable in cope with the formal education system at large because they are unable to grasp the aspects which they have not seen or heard at all. That is why informal education with the help of audio-visual material and docents will be more fruitful for them, specially at the initial stage of education. This form of audio-video material can also be much more utilized in higher education. A team of scholars and teachers can be formulated for development of audio-visual material for the common curriculum, which can be utilized online as well as offline.

Non-functionality of many Anganwadi Kendras are also observed in the study area which is causing problem for girl education, adult education and pre-school orientation of children. It provides a support service for universalisation of primary education, to enable girls engaged in taking care of siblings to attend school and as a support service for working women belonging to poorer sections.

The non-interest or sullenness of the teachers of government schools in the rural areas is also one of the major reasons for dropout of the tribal students. They are still using monotonous means of imparting education. New technologies including mobiles and computers have not reached the rural areas due to various reasons and it is destructing to the interest of the teachers and the students. Teachers' training is a must in this regard. Recruitment of more local teachers from scheduled castes and tribes will prove fruitful for developing educational effectiveness as they know the local culture and needs. One observation in this regard is of excessive drinking of liquor by the tribal teachers and their absence from the schools. They are spoiling their enhanced income as their monthly salaries in drinking liquor all the time. This should be checked as the teachers are the icons to build up the students' personality.

The language of teaching is also one of the great barriers in imparting education in tribal areas. Teaching in non-tribal or non-local dialect also slows down the pace of grasping of tribal students. It again results in disinterest in formal education. Utilization of teachers knowing local dialect and culture will help in eradicating this problem. Ashram schools are more successful in this sense. The curriculum can be modified to include more aspects of tribal culture for better acceptability of formal educational system.

Employment and exposure of educated tribal youth is also one of greatest challenge in our country having large number of population. Along with formal education of traditional subjects, non-formal education of local art, craft, rural technology, agriculture and other skill development training will be more fruitful. More research in the field of tribal culture and indigenous knowledge system should be continued to help in this regard. Now due to lack of skill vocational training, labour work has become major occupation among the tribes [4].

Significant indigenous traditions are gradually vanishing as a side effect of urbanization and modernization which are causing cultural hybridization and degradization and we are trailing towards cultural vacuum resulting in loss of cultural identity, traditions, history, dialects/ languages and various social problems. To rescue this situation, mass awareness need to be generated to preserve the indigenous culture, traditions, identity and heritage. This will help in strengthening the social bonding, unity, values, socio-economic independence, sustenance and protection of the cultural heritage. This will also improve community involvement and community based cultural sustainable development. Culture is well acclaimed as the fourth pillar of sustainable development along with the environmental, social and economic aspects [5]. Preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage is essential for preservation of culture and cultural sustenance. Role of public cultural institutions, especially museums, will be significant in achieving this goal of cultural sustainability. These cultural institutions and museums can be utilized in a better way as centre of informal practical education and awareness.

Causes of Low Level of Education

- *Social Status:* As they eat pig they are considered to be of low social status in the village having mixed population. They are allowed to build their huts at the corner of the village and considered equal to the standard of scheduled castes. Hence, they feel quite uneasy and hesitated while going to school and studying with other upper caste students.
- *Economic Condition:* Due to low economic condition, usually children leave schooling after primary level and get indulged into economic activities to support their family's income.
- *Family business activities:* It was observed during the study that all the family members are involved in some sort of work in their family business, i.e., agriculture, labour work, iron-smithy etc. Hence,

children leave schooling and sometimes not even go to school.

- *Formal Education:* Tribals are living in a very deprived situation in my area of study. Hence, they are not able to grasp the formal pattern of modern education easily. Moreover, bookish language seems to them very unfamiliar as they are habituated of their own dialect.
- *Less Infrastructure:* Though the government is trying to open more and more schools in the remote areas, but, still due to the dispersed settlement in the hilly and forest areas of the tribal families of PVTGs, sometimes it is found that schools are a bit far away from their hamlets. Lack of proper schools in the vicinity is also resulting in the low level of education.
- *Absenteeism of Teachers:* It was also observed during the study that the teachers do not want to go to the remote areas. Hence, sometimes they found absent from their duties. It is greatly affecting the motivation and education of the children.

It was also observed that the girls were found taking care of their younger brothers and sisters instead of attending to schools.

Additional Suggestions and Recommendations

- *Informal Education:* Sometimes formal educational pattern seems to be unsuitable in some cases. Hence, tribal children did not easily grasp the study material. Informal education pattern may be mixed up with the formal one to make the education more effective and easily understandable.
- *Vocational Education:* Vocational education and training should be promoted to strengthen the economic status and chances of economic development.
- *Awareness:* Tribal people, specially living in remote areas and PVTGs, are not fully aware of the importance of education. Gradually educational awareness is developing in the present generation. This may be further developed by mass publicity and counselling.
- *Motivation and Economic Support:* Agaria people should be motivated by providing stipend, economic support, infrastructure support and chances in jobs. Educated persons may also teach.

Conclusion

Literacy rate among the scheduled tribe communities of India is below average, especially

female and PVTG literacy rate. However, a few developed tribal groups like Gond, Meena, etc. and many tribal groups of North-East India are exception to this. Still, lots of effective efforts need to be done to achieve the ultimate goal of tribal education, awareness and cultural sustainability to bring them to the mainstream of Indian society. For this propose informal education along with formal and vocational training will be much fruitful. The education pattern and practice must be designed and reoriented as per special cultural needs of the tribal communities and expectations to achieve the greater social benefit.

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