

UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHEDULED TRIBE CHILDREN

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An attempt has been made in this paper to understand the challenges the Scheduled Tribe children faced for more than six decades in India. References have been made to the functioning of Ashram schools in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh in order to understand some of the disadvantages they face and which need to be addressed in order to bring about holistic and inclusive development among the Scheduled Tribe communities.

INTRODUCTION

The Government of India is committed and deeply concerned for the development of the Scheduled Tribes of the country. Continuous efforts were made in the Five Year Plans. Special programmes are formulated and the central government extends adequate resources for developmental programmes in the tribal habitations. However, the percolation of these programmes and plans at the grass roots has happened to suffer from some hindrances. The population of Scheduled Tribes (STs) according to the 2001 census is 8.43 crores, constituting about 8.2 per cent of the country's total population grown at the rate of 24.45 % during 1991-2001. Of these, about 1.32 million (1.57 per cent belong to Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). The percentage of population of the Scheduled Tribes varies among the states. More than half of the Scheduled Tribes population is concentrated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and Gujarat however the tribal percentages of these states' population vary from about 8 to 22 per cent. On the other hand, several smaller states, notably in the north-east of the country, have much higher percentages (ranging from 64 to 95 per cent), but account for a small proportion of Scheduled Tribes. .

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEDULED TRIBES – AN OVERVIEW

In this land of ethnic and cultural diversity, at one hand of the spectrum we have instances of tribes whose numbers are hardly distinguishable from the non-tribals, who are economically as advanced as other members of Indian society. The examples of some of the advanced tribal groups are the Meena, the Gond and the Naga. At the other end, are the tribes like the Onge, and the Jarawa of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Juang and Bondo of Odisha and the Muria and Madia of Madhya Pradesh. A picture of any of their representative bears a stark contrast to a Naga or the Meena who are considerably acculturated and even advanced economically and organisationally strong. On the other hand, the other communities cited are small in number, weak in organisation and economically poor. The common salient feature of the Scheduled Tribe communities in India is that they occupy tracts of sloppy land, hills and forests, having been ousted from the great fertile valleys. They are, thus, in command of only poor resource regions, which affects immediately their economic conditions. The soil is impoverished and rainfall is erratic. At present also, shifting cultivation has impoverished in these regions. The communication system and other infrastructure in the area is little developed which has led to the isolation of the Scheduled Tribes both from the outside world and from one another. The level of utilisation of technology in the tribal areas has remained abysmally low. The combination of poverty, lack of resources, and low level of technology available has led to almost subsistence economy in greater part of the tribal land.

Agriculture is the most important economic pursuit of a vast majority of the tribal communities. With the given agro-climatic conditions and low level of technology, the productivity is low and the return supports a low quality subsistence economy. The crops mostly grown are maize, millets, oilseeds and pulses. There is considerable scope for raising the standard of productivity. The second major occupation is linked with forest economy. The tribal communities tend to seek employment as daily wage earners from the forest department and contractors in forestry operations. Equally important, they collect minor

forest produce, particularly after the agricultural harvest, and sell it to various agencies. With the near extinction of wild life in the forests, hunting is now more of a pastime than a livelihood. So is the case with fishing. But these two pursuits, namely, hunting and fishing, are still followed by very small communities who are more or less cut off and who may still be considered as in the pre-agricultural stage.

It will be very apt to refer to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India who had a key role to play in the planning and implementing various programmes for tribal development, and bringing them into the fold of nationalism. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Panchsheel (*Five principles*) envisaged the development of people in the lines of own genius, respect of tribal rights in lands and forests, encourage self-management, work through tribal's own social and cultural institutions; indicator of success to be sought in quality of man and not in the amount of money spent remains the most important reference point in the formulation of tribal policies in India. Despite the fact that it is more than five decades of independence and many committees as well as commissions have evolved during these few decades but the Panchsheel propounded by Nehru remains to be very much appropriate for the development of the Scheduled Tribes of India. All the five principles are like five parables protecting the rich culture, tradition and rights of the Scheduled Tribes of India. The doubts with which the Panchsheel has been visualised has been found to be coming true, as there has been continuous exploitation of the Scheduled Tribes, their rich mineral resource forests which being habitations of these tribal groups, their displacement due to developmental work although there are forest acts in place which are deviated in the name of development while there are restrictions for extending the rights to tribal groups for utilising minor forest products have remained a bone of contention due to age old forest acts. It gives abysmally a poor image of development of the Scheduled Tribes in the independent India.

TRIBAL GROUPS, HABITATIONS AND ACCESS TO SCHOOL FACILITIES

There are 573 major tribal groups in India, each one associated with a specific geographic area, some more dispersed than others. Most have their own language, which is generally different from the 'mainstream' language of the state in which they live. There are a total of 270 such tribal languages. Tribal people tend to live in two main types of situations: (a) in 'mixed' (tribal and nontribal) rural communities, within reach of educational and other opportunities and resources, and (b) in habitations that are small in size and located in relatively inaccessible hilly or forested areas of the country. About 22 per cent of tribal habitations have a population of less than 100 people, a further 40% have 100-300 people, and the rest around 300-500 people. The distribution of tribal people in these types of settlements varies markedly by state, district and even block, calling for different strategies to be used in different areas to provide elementary education to tribal children. The proportion of children out of school in remote tribal areas is usually higher than among tribal children living in non-tribal areas. The main reasons for this are the limited educational infrastructure available in tribal areas because of their remoteness; tribal hamlets being cut off from main villages or well-populated rural areas by geographic features; the difficulties faced by children living in smaller habitations in accessing existing formal schools; and so on.

Other reasons for low school enrolment among Scheduled Tribe children include the reluctance of Scheduled Tribe families to educate their children - in addition to the high illiteracy among Scheduled Tribe parents; they may not value the education available, particularly in relation to its opportunity costs. Children are crucial family workers in the tribal economy which includes agriculture as a main occupation, cattle grazing, labour on work sites, collecting firewood or other minor forest produce, stone quarrying, mining, and home-based work such as processing forest produce. Low levels of learning are found among tribal children not only because of household factors and problems with the language of instruction where this is not their mother tongue, but to other school-related variables. The District Primary Education Programme has shown that the achievement gap between tribal and non-tribal children can be narrowed by attention to classroom transactions and the school environment.

THE TRIBAL POLICY - FOCUS ON FORMAL EDUCATION

Realising that Scheduled Tribes are one of the most deprived and marginalised groups with respect to education, a host of programmes and measures were initiated ever since Independence. Elementary education has remained a priority area in all the Five Year Plans and received special attention from the Tribal sub-plans (TSP) from the 5th Five Year Plan onwards. Education of Scheduled Tribe children is considered important, not only because of the Constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities.

Formal education is the key to all-round human development. Despite several campaigns to promote formal education ever since independence, the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes has remained low and the female literacy rate still lower compared to the national female literacy rate. Alienation from the society, lack of adequate infrastructure like schools, hostels and teachers, abject poverty and apathy towards irrelevant curriculum have stood in the way of Scheduled Tribes in getting formal education. In order to extend the benefit of education to the Scheduled Tribes, the policies for the Scheduled Tribes envisages that Scheduled Tribes are included in the national programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan run by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Schools and hostels are opened in areas, where no such facilities exist. At least, one model residential school is located in each tribal concentration area. Education is linked with provision of supplementary nutrition. Special incentives like financial assistance, pocket allowance, free distribution of textbooks and school uniforms are provided. Teaching is imparted in the mother tongue of Scheduled Tribes, at least up to the primary level. Educated tribal youths are given employment as teachers, wherever possible. This will obviate the need to employ teachers belonging to far-off places who find commuting is as difficult as staying in a village with no basic amenities. Pedagogy is made relevant so that the Scheduled Tribes do not find it as alien. Curriculum and co-curriculum include aspects of meta skill up gradation of tribal children. Curricula for meta skill up gradation are to include aspects of tribal games and sports, archery, identification of plants of medicinal value, crafts art and culture, folk dance and folk songs, folk paintings etc.. Emphasis is laid on vocational / professional education. Polytechnics are set up for studies in subjects like forestry, horticulture, dairy, veterinary sciences etc.

Not only the policies developed specially for the Scheduled Tribes have focused on education, but also the National Policies on Education 1968 and 1986 have made special mention relating to education of the Scheduled Tribes. NPE 1986 recognised the heterogeneity and diversity of the tribal areas, besides underlining the importance of instruction through the mother tongue and the need for preparing teaching/learning material in the tribal languages. This policy document specified among other things the following:

- Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas.
- There is need to develop curricula and devise instructional material in tribal language at the initial stages with arrangements for switchover to regional languages.
- ST youths will be encouraged to take up teaching in tribal areas.
- Ashram schools / residential schools will be established on a large scale in tribal areas.
- Incentive schemes will be formulated for the Scheduled Tribes, keeping in view, their special needs and lifestyle.

The Focus of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

The infusion of the SSA programmes into the tribal habitations has greatly helped in overcoming the problems of managing the schools and reaching the unreached habitations, regular training to teachers and availability of SSA funds to the teachers for developing teaching learning material etc. The BRC/CRC facilities have been extended to tribal habitations for continuous monitoring of the schooling activities in the tribal habitations.

What does the Quantitative Data on Literacy Reveal?

The literacy scenario of the Scheduled Tribes in general is below the literacy rate of the general population of the country. However, there are tribal groups across the States/Union Territories, where the literacy rates are not abysmally bad and in fact are either at par or higher than that of the literacy rates of general population, for e.g. in the State of Assam the Kachan Tribe has a literacy rate of 81.4%, Rabha Tribe has a literacy rate of 76.2%, and Mikir has 61.3%. In case of the state of Chhattisgarh, Halba Tribes has 74.1%, and Oraon has 62.2%. In Gujarat, the Rathawa Tribe has 75.9%, and the Dubla Tribe has 62.4%. In the State of Rajasthan, the Dhanka Tribe has 61.8% and in the State of West Bengal, the Bhutia Tribe has 72.6%. A study of literacy position of these tribal groups in various states can show the path of development that can be suggested for application in other tribal areas and the success stories can be replicated in order to achieve literacy among the Scheduled Tribes

There is a definite improvement in terms of the literacy rates when compared to the 60s when the literacy rate was only 8.53% and has gone up to 47.1%, in 2001. However, this literacy rate is below the national literacy rate of the country. There is a need for bringing the Scheduled Tribes at par with the general population at the earliest as the gap between the general population and traditionally marginalised social groups - namely Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes – refuses to disappear (Govinda 2001).

The gap between the general and the Scheduled Tribe children in terms of literacy rate during 1960s was 19.77, while it was 23.15 in 1971, 27.22 in 1981, 22.59 in 1991 but has decreased to 17.90 during the year 2001. The various educational interventions in terms of school provision and enrolment drives by roping in the out-of-school children has enabled to contain the enlarging gaps of literacy between the general and Scheduled Tribe population. There is also a decline in the dropout rates among the Scheduled Tribe children in the primary and elementary stages compared to the past years. The percentage of out-of-school children has also showed decreased tendency.

A look at the literacy rates of the Scheduled Tribe population in various states indicate that except for the North Eastern States, the literacy rates in various states tend to be below the literacy rates of the nation. However, the proportion of the tribal population varies from state to state. Some states have low population and low literacy rates while some have high tribal population and low literacy rates and vice-versa. For instance, the state of Andhra Pradesh has 6.6 per cent tribal population and the literacy of the Scheduled Tribes is only 37.04%, while the state of Arunachal Pradesh has 64.2% tribal population and has literacy rate of 49.62%. Assam seems to have a better literacy rate which has tribal population of 12.4% and literacy rate of 62.52%. It will be observed that there is disparity in the literacy rates in the states. Some ought to have literacy rates far below the national literacy rate while some are making efforts to be at par with the national level. Perhaps the gap between the general and Scheduled Tribe population in the 2011 census in terms of their literacy rates will also come down.

Educational Programmes in the Tribal Areas - Interventions

The tribal habitations are generally devoid of any other private schooling structures. In the absence of the entry of these private schools, the government schools whether they are managed by the education departments or the tribal welfare departments have to take up the challenges of educating the Scheduled Tribe children. So far, the residential Ashram schools and small schools exclusively created in the tribal habitations have been instrumental in providing schooling facilities to the tribal children. But to due to sparse population spread and inaccessible terrain habitations creating residential schools was not possible. Some of the specific interventions being promoted for tribal children under Sarva Shiksha Aviyan (SSA) are:

- Setting up schools, education guarantee schools (EGS) and alternative schools within one kilometre of all habitations for non-enrolled children and dropouts;
- Alternative schools provide flexibility in terms of timing, learning modalities, etc.;
- Upgrading EGS schools to regular schools after two years;

- Attaching Crèches and pre-school sections (*anganwadis* and *balwadis*) to schools in tribal areas to relieve girls of sibling-care responsibilities.

Several states have relaxed the norms to set up schools - for example, in Andhra Pradesh, habitations with 20 school-age children can have a school; in Karnataka, the norm has been reduced to 15 children for an EGS school especially for tribal areas. In remote tribal habitations in the north-eastern states and Jammu & Kashmir, EGS schools can be opened with only 10 children. Andhra Pradesh has already set up community schools in all habitations with 15 children or more, Kerala with 20, and Madhya Pradesh with 40 children. Other innovative approaches to covering tribal children include “contract schools”, “forest schools”, summer camps, seasonal hostels, and mobile teachers. Ashram schools are found

Strategy for Tribal Participation

The SSA programme calls for community ownership of educational activities through effective decentralisation. This involves Panchayati Raj Institutions (in case of ST habitations PESA), School Management Committees (SMCs), NGOs and women’s groups. Programmes can involve tribal people in decision-making at several levels. At the district level, representatives of tribal people can participate in the annual planning and local-level decision-making, in overseeing a variety of educational activities, and in providing feedback on the programme to higher authorities. At the block and village levels, locally-elected Scheduled Tribe representatives and teachers can be members of School Management Committees (which include the Scheduled Tribe members of the local village *panchayats*). In predominantly tribal areas, Scheduled Tribe men and women are involved in community mobilisation efforts which include enrolment drives, village meetings, etc. Traditional tribal organisations and local leaders are often involved in these activities. Local approaches to community mobilisation are tribal fairs and festivals to promote education, and traditional media and art forms for communication. Finally, there is an emphasis on recruiting tribal teachers as well as on selection of tribal candidates to fill vacant teacher posts in formal schools. Teachers are also to be consulted in the preparation of district plans. The Right to Education Act (2009) has laid emphasis on providing qualified trained teachers in each and every school of tribal habitations without recruiting any private or contractual teachers. This is another major challenge for the Tribal Development Departments in the tribal dominated states in ensuring qualified teacher force in the schools, besides many other basic school entitlements of RTE.

Institutional Arrangements

The District and State Education Offices have officers specifically designated to ensure that the provisions for the special focus groups and for tribal areas and children are implemented. When necessary, the district units can draw on the expertise of NGOs and other institutions which have worked with tribal people in the field of education. Such expertise is available and is particularly useful in the community mobilisation and pedagogical dimensions. Specialised institutions (such as the District Institutes of Education and Training etc.) are also available to assist in the development, implementation and management of activities as required. Trained staff is required to carry out the special activities in tribal areas with the necessary sensitivity and diligence. The educational system and several of the related institutions have outreach capacity which can be utilised and developed as needed to serve tribal areas. Specialists in tribal education are often engaged in the planning and monitoring activities of the SSA programmes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The educational progress of Scheduled Tribe children are monitored through the project Education Management Information System (EMIS). EMIS data are analysed at district and state levels. The EMIS relates school-level data to community information gathered through surveys. Schools are encouraged to share all information with communities (including information on grants received). Notice boards are put up in schools for this purpose. This intends for both transparency and accountability to communities. In addition, the SMCs or user groups, including tribal people, are responsible for continuous monitoring of activities in their areas, and provide feedback to local teachers and officials. The user groups can interact

with local groups during their activities, such as village meetings, enrolment drives, etc. Data on indicators enables monitoring of progress. These indicators are: 1. Opening and functioning of schools in tribal habitations in tribal and non-tribal areas; 2. Enrolment and retention of tribal children in schools in tribal and non-tribal areas; 3. Learning achievements of tribal children compared with other groups; 4. Availability of tribal teachers, teachers speaking the local tribal language, teachers trained to deal with tribal children (attitudinal training), and administrators sensitised to tribal issues; 5. Availability of instruction and instructional materials in the local tribal languages; 6. Functioning of facilities such as CRCs and BRCs serving the needs of tribal children; and 7. Availability of other schemes and incentives to facilitate school attendance of tribal children.

Ashram schools – A Context Specific Intervention

One of the major interventions in the field of educating the Scheduled Tribe children is that of the Ashram schools which have been in vogue for the past many years, and have been functioning in the tribal areas. The main objectives of the Ashram schools as envisaged by the various committees and commissions are: 1. To wean the children away from an atmosphere which is generally not conducive for the development of their personality and outlook; 2. To impart general formal education; 3. To impart training on socially useful vocational/crafts along with the general education; 4. To encourage tribal traditions like folk dances so that the schools are not only mere learning places but also centres of cultural activities; 5. To provide close interaction between the teacher and taught through increased individual attention; and 6. To reduce the dropout rate and to improve the retention capacity of the schools. Ashram schools are, in general, residential in nature and the inmates are provided with facilities of boarding and lodging. Moreover, they function within highly structured and systematic framework. The broad policy guidelines for the Ashram schools as envisaged by various committees and study groups on tribal welfare programmes are: 1. Ashram schools should be inter village schools; 2. Ashram schools should be opened in such areas where normal schools cannot be opened; and 3. Most backward tribal groups should be covered. The working pattern, structure and level of education in Ashram schools differ widely among states. In some of the states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, they are mostly run by voluntary organizations as private aided schools. Whereas in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Ashram schools are exclusively under the Tribal Welfare Department of respective state governments. Both primary and post basic levels of education are available in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Odisha. In case of Madhya Pradesh, Ashram schools are usually up to middle stage and at the secondary stage, these are called 'Model Schools'. In Rajasthan, all the Ashram schools cover either primary or middle school stage. In Andhra Pradesh, Ashram schools have primary, upper primary and secondary stages of education. In Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, Ashram schools are co-educational, whereas in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, the Ashram schools are separate for girls and boys. Ashram schools in Odisha are provided at primary, upper primary and secondary levels. Vocational education is imparted in some of the secondary schools (Sujatha 1983; Patel 1991; Panda 2000).

Status of Ashram schools in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Maharashtra and Odisha

The states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Maharashtra and Odisha have Ashram schools functioning for more than four to five decades. The efforts by these state governments in creating special provisions in these scheduled areas through the TSP, MADA and SCA. The tribal development departments are working towards the development of the Scheduled Tribes and are also providing them education. In order to ensure proper development, the central government is also providing special funds for educational pursuits of these tribal dominated states. These Ashram schools have been established with a special cause of fitting into the culture of these tribal societies and provide education to them with a purpose of holistic development of these children and bringing them to the mainstream of the society has a wide range of facilities.

In 2006-07, there were 597 Ashram schools serving the primary, middle and higher levels of schooling in the state of Andhra Pradesh. They have different terminologies such as *Gurukulas* and Ashram schools specifically serving in the tribal areas. These schools are under the purview of the Tribal Development Department of the State and the funds are provided by the state government and Special Central Assistance provided to manage these schools. The Ashram schools in Andhra Pradesh are mostly having good physical facilities and the day-to-day necessities of the tribal children are taken care by the school. It has specific time table and the State government has initiated primers in various tribal languages with the SCERT, Education Department and Tribal Development Department for the benefit of the predominant tribal groups (around 9 primers for tribal groups are being developed). The SSA is deeply involved in providing academic support to these Residential Schools of Andhra Pradesh.

The State of Odisha has also Ashram schools since 1950s. In 2006, there were 143 residential Sevashrams and 457 non-residential Sevashrams at the primary level, 112 residential Ashram schools having classes 1- 10 and 5-10, and 155 boys Ashram High Schools and 91 Ashram High Schools for girls with classes 5-12 and 8-12 etc. Residential Ashram schools of Odisha are also managed by the Tribal Welfare Department and the State Education Department is supposed to provide the academic support. The SSA has enabled these schools to obtain certain grants/funds to the teachers and the schools, as well as the BRC/CRC personnel have started visiting these schools for providing academic support. The State government has recently embarked upon creating Model Residential Ashram schools/Central Ashram schools by upgrading the existing Ashram schools.

The State of Chhattisgarh is one of the youngest states and was carved out from the state of Madhya Pradesh. Unlike the Ashram schools of Madhya Pradesh, where the residences are separate and the schools are separate, the Residential Ashram schools of Chhattisgarh have both the residence and the schools together as has been envisaged in the objective of the Ashram schools in the country. In 2006-07, there were 389 Ashram schools for tribal boys and 247 for tribal girls and 251 co-educational Ashram schools at primary and middle levels with strength of 51,785 students. The state has taken great initiative in improving the facilities of the old schools and has tried to create good physical facilities for the schools. The SSA intervention has been prominent in terms of providing funds and teaching learning material to these Ashram schools. However, there are no institutional arrangements for providing training to these teachers in the state. There are teacher vacancies, which needs to be filled on urgent basis. The schools serving in the interior and particularly the Primitive Tribal Groups need more attention and special programmes for their development, and there are certain tribal groups where the population is under threat (Hill Korbas).

The Tribal Development Department of the government of Kerala has taken initiatives in providing 13 Model Residential Ashram schools (up gradation) and improving the facilities of the existing Residential Schools in the state. The SSA has also initiated process of providing academic inputs to the Ashram schools in the state. The Central Assistance for the Ashram schools which are being provided to these schools is being utilized positively. The other free ships to the children and facilities are provided as per the norms of the Ashram schools with full days food provisions etc.

The state of Maharashtra has government managed Residential Ashram schools as well as aided Residential Ashram schools under the Tribal Development Department for the Scheduled Tribe Children. In 2007-08, there were 449 government managed Ashram schools and 507 Ashram schools under the government aid category. The total strength of the government managed schools was 1, 62,702 students and the aided Ashram schools had 1, 69,000 students. The aided schools receive 100 % grant on account of the salary of the teaching and other staff, grant @ Rs.500 per child per month for hostel, food and other provisions as well as contingency and annual building maintenance grant. In addition to these two categories of Ashram schools, the Zilla Parishad also provides schools in the tribal habitations. There are 8445 ZP managed primary schools, 864 secondary schools and 151 Hr. Secondary schools. Out of the

449 existing government Ashram schools, 328 schools had been upgraded to Ashram Secondary Schools with a provision of higher classes. The state has 144 Kendirya Ashram schools (Central), which have additional facilities in order to provide support to the neighbouring schools and function as leading schools.

The Challenge on the part of State Level Administration

The tribal development departments in the states get state level funds and central assistance. However, their administrative mechanisms need revamping. As the education wing is only looked after by certain officials with additional charge and the checking of schools is carried out only in order to check whether the funds provided are being utilised properly or not, while the various academic activities to be performed by the Ashram schools are left unchecked. Only the enrolment and disbursement of funds as per the strength of the children are taken into consideration for providing the funds etc, but the important question of effective management of the Ashram schools - provision of training to teachers, filling of the vacant posts of teachers, provision of teaching learning material in time, maintenance of the classrooms are left uncared. In addition, the requirement of the Ashram schools in terms of various physical facilities such as good class rooms, separate hostel rooms for the children, school boundary wall, provision of safe drinking water either in the form of bore wells or tap water and storage of water, kitchen, grounds for sports, lavatories and bathrooms for the children (especially for girl children) residences for the teachers and hostel superintendent and regular maintenance of these physical facilities remains a major problem.. The children have to use the classroom for hostels in the night, protection in the form of boundary walls are not available, basic facilities of drinking water, electricity is also a major problem. The Tribal Development Department of Maharashtra during 2007-08 has initiated school building renovation activities for the Ashram schools. In case of Madhya Pradesh, the concept of Ashram School is different. The hostel (Ashram) is separate from the school and the hostels have no linkages with the schools. At times, the children are free to attend the EGS centres or other schools available in the vicinity. The Ashram schools in the State of Odisha also suffer from resource crunch and the physical condition of the school building is starving from lack of maintenance. Vacancies of teachers and lack of teaching learning material are also impediments in the effective functioning of the Ashram schools. The age old unrevised rules still are applicable for the up gradation and development of schools as well as allocation of funds for schools which do not serve the present situation of education and schooling and the RTE act provisions. The school heads function with hardships and are responsible for the low performance of the schools (Panda, 2008).

Challenge in terms of providing continuous Training

Another biggest hurdle is lack of provision of capacity building and training of teachers serving in the Ashram schools in general in all the states. The Education Departments of various states have made no provision of training and orienting the teachers and the heads of Ashram schools. The Tribal Development Departments have not created such structures and facilities. Moreover, they have not created adequate linkage with the SCERTs and DIETs. The National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) has been continuously involved in providing training to the administrators and heads of Ashrams schools in many of the states of the country. However, these efforts needs to be replicated at the state levels. A variety of researches conducted on the planning and administrative issues in the Tribal areas of the country by NUEPA, provides a plethora of inputs in effectively managing the schools in the tribal areas. The issue of selection, recruitment and posting of teachers in the Ashram schools and the schools serving in the tribal areas has remained a great concern all over India.

Challenges faced in utilisation of reservation in education and employment

When a tribal child compares himself / herself with that of the non-tribal child studying in a college or a higher education institution, the tribal child remains aloof and avoids participating in many of the learning activities, as they feel in secured of their levels of participation in the learning process. They lack confidence because, they understand the multiple disadvantages they have faced and the way they have

learnt in the schools at the initial levels is not adequate enough to compete with the advantaged groups, some may dropout, some may just reach the levels of pass percentages, and some of them try to get into some lowly paid employment where, they are comfortable without any competition. Perhaps this kind of inadequate participation and obtaining access to the new knowledge is difficult for them to obtain at higher levels of education makes them feel inadequately equipped to continue leading to lower participation and utilisation of facilities in higher education and employment.

Facilitating Inclusiveness in Educating Tribal Children

The poor tribal child gets excluded in terms of getting support from home, family, peers and siblings. The parents in general have no check on the learning of the child. None of the family members ensures whether the child is regular at school, attendance, home work, class work, and learning at home. The parents seldom meet the teachers or go to the school in order to interact with the school staff in order to understand the performance of their child. The parents remain excluded and generally avoid interacting with the teachers as majority of them do not have minimum literacy to understand what is being taught in the school. Here begins the cycle of exclusion among the tribal children. This gradually snowballs to dropping out among the tribal children are to settle down with little education from the school as well as lower employment levels, and this process has been repeating from generation to generation resulting in the low levels of participation among the tribal children in education over the past six decades leading to exclusion from the main stream of development in the country.

CONCLUSION

In order to achieve inclusiveness among the tribal communities in the various developmental pursuits of the country, a holistic approach of understanding the multiple disadvantages faced by these tribal communities is necessary. As well as all the developmental activities such as education, adult education, health, food and employment should be interlinked and have a combined influence on the tribal communities as a whole. Multipronged strategies of initiating basic education in the tribal areas have to be created to address the issue of multiple disadvantages faced by the tribal communities as well as the tribal children. The provision of residential Ashram schools is only one of the many strategies to bring about inclusive development in the tribal areas.

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