



Education for Social Inclusion of Tribal: An Indian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

There is a wider acceptance of the fact that education and development are inextricably linked to each other. Any informed being in today's world can easily understand the capacity of education in terms of making individuals productive in socio-political and economic affairs in society and the process of nation-building. The educational process that takes place throughout life, continuously, is contributing to the successful overcoming of obstacles for the social inclusion of individuals and eliminating the root causes of social isolation. As a lever of economic independence and stability, education is a mechanism for strengthening inclusion and overcoming the marginalization of individuals and social groups of society or individual societies on a global level. Several research findings underpin that effective intervention in education leads to an increase in the ability to fight poverty. Well before the recent visible circumstances involved with education, there have been common concerns followed by numerous State's initiatives for taking education to the marginalized sections of society. In India, a considerable tribal population is found to be marginalized and has been left at the receiving end in all aspects of development. In this paper, an attempt has been made to put the subject matter together relating to policy concerns and initiatives of the governments for the education of the tribal population in India. This paper also covers the facts concerning the challenges and obstacles on the ways of implementing various programmes and schemes of education meant for the tribal population in India. Through this paper an attempt has been made to point out the weaknesses in the existing endeavours and suggest measures for ensuring the social inclusion of tribal children in holistic way in terms of developing their capacity, getting access to opportunities in the school as well as the tribal society with respect and dignity.

KEYWORDS: Tribal, Social Inclusion, Policy Perspective, Issues and Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Social inclusion through the means of educational endeavours are found as the means of fighting against the prejudices, biases and discriminatory attitudes in the society and it creates a community where educational opportunities for all section of society is ensured. It is seen to be defined in relation to social exclusion. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that to achieve equality in society the core principles of human rights should be non-discrimination. It declares that, without regard to colour, sex, language, faith, political or other opinions, national or social origin, birth and status, everyone should be entitled to human rights and freedoms. In educational setting social inclusion covers all aspects of socialization, peer relationships and group dynamics. Equitable educational opportunities ensure academic, social and psychophysical involvement and development of the children of every section of society. In inclusive social setting everyone's feelings, experiences and talents are valued and it provides opportunities to develop their potentials and dream. In the context of India, the majority of tribal children are out of the school, geographically and socially not connected with the mainstream society and they lack access to basic education therefore it becomes a major challenge for the government to ensure social inclusion of tribal in education (Nambissan, 2006). Although India advocates inclusive growth and the Constitution of India allows reservation to backward classes in education and jobs but still there is lack of access to quality education and skill development. The tribal students live in socially impoverished circumstances and lead a life of helplessness. Since the living habits of tribal are embedded with their culture, tradition, and beliefs they fail to mix with ordinary people who live in the plains. The constant social disadvantage has a detrimental effect on their cognitive ability, as a result of which they struggle to attain academic, social and other achievement and their educational growth varies fully from that of non-tribal students (Muthukumar and Tamilenth, 2013). Even after seven decades of independence, the tribal people are still lagging from the development. Still high dropouts and illiteracy rate is high among the tribal in comparison to other communities (Rupavath, 2016). Teaching tribal children presents a special challenge to teachers, policymakers and administrators more so especially when it is a composite classroom with children from both tribal and non-tribal cultures. It raises several difficulties and dilemmas for teachers, such as the medium of instruction for teaching tribal students, as well as adoption and assimilation of cultural practices. The issue is further complicated by the fact that language varies not only within a limited geographical area but also among the various tribes and sub-tribes (Kanungo & Mahapatra, 2004). The policy intervention and initiatives to mainstream the tribal population have not made the expected progress in these regards and their participation in education and other development increasing in snail's speed.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

There are several opportunities and interventions for the inclusion of tribes in India. The central government and respective state government have brought many structural and procedural measures, policy intervention and initiates to create an inclusive environment and provide facilities and opportunities to the tribal people for their educational advancement and improving the quality of life in particular and their economic, social and political inclusion at large. The Tribal Sub-plan strategy (1974-75) aims to ensure the socio-economic

development of tribal people. The Tribal Sub Plan has been proposed with the emphasis on the thought that inclusive development is not possible without the elimination of exploitation and deprivation of marginalized people in any field. It aims at reducing the poverty and unemployment of tribal, improving the quality of life by providing sufficient educational and health services, physical and financial security against any kind of oppression and exploitation. To prevent exploitation and ensure inclusion, it has proposed few measures such as marketing of agriculture produce of tribal, redemption of the debts through the legislature and executive measures. In 'Tribal Panchsheel', Jawaharlal Nehru then Prime Minister of India had given five fundamental principles to uplift the tribal people while preserving their culture. 'Tribal Panchsheel' allows the tribal people to develop with their genius without imposing alien values on them by protecting their forest rights, not interfering in their administration and practices. Further, it proposed to train the tribal people in the work of administration and development and measure the results of development by the evolved human character rather than by the statistics. The National Tribal Policy (2006) proclaimed to look at the issues of development and protection of tribal in an integrated and holistic manner. It acknowledges that the majority of tribal are still poor, malnourished, has low literacy rates, and are at risk of being displaced. Hence, it aims to provide specific solutions to each of these issues through a long-term approach incorporating the Tribes into mainstream society, ensuring all-round development without disturbing their distinctive culture. It also aims to provide an encouraging environment where their traditions, customs and the regime of rights can be preserved and protected, prevent alienation of tribal land and restore wrongfully alienated lands, provide for compensation of social and opportunity cost and empower the tribal communities to participate in local administrative promoting the self-governance and self-rule as per the rules and provisions. In 1960, Dhebar Commission especially emphasized the educational aspect of the development of tribal and suggested to use of the tribal language and cultural resources, such as folklore, songs and history in teaching tribal communities. It looked-for re-orientation of required teachers, curriculum revision, and creation of instructional materials based on tribal life, culture, and language. It recommended to appoint the teachers from the tribal community, the opening of teacher-training centers in the tribal areas and provide the mid-day meal, clothing, free book, reading and writing materials, etc. to all the tribal children in backward areas. Recognizing topographical factors, the commission also proposed to open schools in tribal areas with at least 30 school-aged children and that school schedules, vacations, and holidays be changed to accommodate tribal social and cultural life. The need of education for tribal in India was also further highlighted by Kothari Commission with great emphasis and attention. In view of this, the Kothari Commission endorsed the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission with a note of urgency that "intensive efforts" must be made to provide for five years of early education to all tribal children by 1975-76. In order to achieve the literacy rate among tribal, the Commission also suggested the need to educate parents simultaneously. National Policy on Education, 1986 had covered the aspect of tribal education starting from primary education to higher education. It endorsed to open Anganwadis, primary schools and Adult Education Centres in Tribal areas with special emphasis on increasing cent percent enrolment and retention in school of tribal children in the age group of 6-11 by 1990. It had recommended to develop the course content, instructional and learning materials in tribal language and culture, and establish residential

schools and Ashram schools, provide incentive, scholarships and remedial classes for the tribal with special emphasis on technical, professional and para-professional courses in higher education. The recent development in these regards is the enactment of the Right to Education Act 2009. This is one of the historic Acts, mandates free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 to 14 in India under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution. The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. It requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats for children of weaker sections (to be reimbursed by the state as part of the public-private partnership plan). Children are admitted into private schools based on economic status or caste-based reservations.

INITIATIVES

There has been increasing emphasis on the inclusion of tribal in education in India. Based on the policy measures many initiatives and schemes such Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamika Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan have been undertaken by the Government of India with a special focus on the tribal component. Besides these separate residential facilities, concessions, scholarships, fellowships, books, stationery and other equipment are provided to tribal students. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan launched during 2001-2002 for universalizing education at the elementary level primarily focused on the education of girls, schedule tribe, schedule caste and other disadvantaged section of society. Efforts have been made to mainstream the tribal students in all activities under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Many interventions have been taken based on micro-planning for the children belonging to tribal communities. The major interventions of this programme are engaging tribal communities in the organization of school with special focus on needs of children from their community, special support of teaching, appointing teachers from the tribal community, ensuring participation of tribal communities in school management committees, establishing alternative facilities of schooling in remote and unserved habitation and providing residential facilities, incentives and context-specific intervention as required. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan launched during 2009-2010 intending to universalize secondary education and to make good quality of education available, accessible and affordable to all given special focus to the economically weaker sections of the society, and other marginalized categories like SC, ST, OBC and Educationally Backward Minorities. It focused to provide free lodging/boarding facilities for tribal and residential schools, cash incentives, uniforms, books, and separate toilets for tribal girls. It also provides flexibility to local units for the development of context specific intervention for SCs, STs, development of local specific teaching-learning material and ensures representation of SCs and STs in SDMC. Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan also aims at improving equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities of higher education to SC/STs and socially and educationally backward classes and promote their inclusion in higher education. It made the interventions for the inclusion of disadvantaged and educationally backward section of society including the students of tribal community in different components such as providing assistance for construction of hostels for tribal students, girls, funding the states for equity initiatives in a priority basis, and providing financial assistance and remedial coaching these

marginalized group. Samagra Shiksha launched during 2018-2019 as an integrated scheme which subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madyamika Shiksha Abhiyan and Teacher Education emphasizes on equitable, inclusive and quality education at all level of school education. The scheme was launched with the vision to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education following the Sustainable Development Goal for education i.e. (i) SDG 4.1. Ensuring free, equitable and quality primary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes and (ii) SGD 4.5. Eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education. The scheme also supports States in implementing the Right to Education Act, 2009.

Provision of accommodation facilities and residential schools are the major determinants initiatives to ensure educational participation of any marginalized sections of society in India. Hence, Government provides accommodation and residential school facilities for social inclusion of tribal because most of the tribal people belong to the hilly and remote areas which are properly not connected with the rest of the modern world. During the third five-year plan period, a plan for providing hostel accommodation for tribal girls was introduced, and a similar plan for Tribal boys was launched in 1989-1990 which was merged in the tenth five-year plan. This scheme aims to provide hostel accommodation to peripheral tribal students who are unable to continue their education due to financial constraints or their residence's location. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) is a girl's empowerment scheme launched by the Government of India in July 2004 to set up fully residential upper primary schools in rural areas for girls primarily from SC, ST, OBC, and minority groups. The initiative is being introduced in educationally disadvantaged areas of the country, where female rural literacy is lower than the national average and the gender gap in literacy is higher than the national average. It works for the most oppressed Indian girls at a critical juncture in their lives, and it plays an important role in fostering incremental change, beginning with improving teachers' and students' values, perceptions, and expectations, with the great goal of educating girl children so that they can cope with society with ease (Tali, 2019). With the aim of providing quality education to tribal students, the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) scheme also supports the establishment and operation of quality residential schools for Tribal students. Admission to these schools is based on the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya model, which begins in Class VI. The organizational structure, manpower and educational expertise for the Tribal welfare residential educational institutions are on par with Navodaya Vidyalaya Model pattern. Besides accommodation and residential supports, scholarship, fellowship and financial assistance are provided to the tribal students by the Central and State government to support them in the education system meeting the expenses of tuition fee, games, library visit, medical facilities, security dispositive and purchasing study materials. In this regard, the Post- Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Tribe scheme was introduced to encourage the tribal students pursuing Post-Matriculation in professional, technical as well as non-professional courses in the various recognized institution by providing them financial support. Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme (RGNF) encourages the tribal students to pursue higher education by providing them financial assistance for facilities like HRA, contingency, purchasing books, participating in National, International Seminar and doing project work during Course

related the areas of research which can assist them to play as a leader in society lead of the community. In the Scholarship Scheme of Top Class Education, meritorious tribal students pursuing studies at degree/post-degree courses in 127 listed institutes in the field of management, medicine, engineering, law and various commercial courses are encouraged by providing them financial assistance. National Overseas Scholarship Scheme provides financial support to those meritorious tribal students including Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) students pursuing higher studies in foreign accredited universities in certain subjects at Master Level, Ph. D and Post-Doctoral research programmes, in the field of Engineering, Technology and Science. Vocational Training and Special Coaching for Tribal scheme aim to develop the skill of tribal students depending on their qualification and present market trends. It is aimed at upgrading the skills of the tribal youths in various traditional/modern vocations depending upon their educational qualification, present economic trends and the market potential, which would enable them to gain suitable employment or enable them to become self-employed. Tribal students coming from poor families are provided free coaching so that can compete with others.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

There are several reasons for the deprivation of tribal in education ranging from structural and procedural causes. Many tribal habitats are inaccessible and as a consequence, development there either lacking or is sub-standard. Abject poverty and lack of proper education compound the problem of tribal people. The tribal' subsistence economy is so closely controlled that children are either a part of their economic operation or play supporting roles in families' economic pursuits. This has been the case for many tribal households engaging children in agricultural and other allied activities makeup the acculturative process (Brahmanadam and Bosubabu, 2016). Some of the students didn't get parental support in their study at home because of parent illiteracy and not seriousness regarding the study of their children. The illiteracy of parents and their attitude towards education and also lack of relationship and motivation between teacher and parents bring a huge gap in the social inclusion of tribal students in education (Kerai, 2017; Behera, 2014 and Hansdah, 2016). The physical distance to school is often cited as a barrier for children in India. Studies found that the tribal people mainly live in remote areas and study in government schools where schools are not equipped with sufficient numbers of teachers, classrooms, teaching-learning materials and lack of motivation, self-confidence and role models which become deterrents in their social inclusion in education (Probe, 1999, Erigala 2012 and Daripa, 2017). Still, there are instances of exclusion in the classroom where Tribal and Dalit students, in particular, have been given differential treatments by the teachers and peers. They have been discriminated in a different form in the classroom by abusing tribal children verbally, addressing them by their caste names, not giving individual attention and moral and emotional support (Nambissan, 2010). Besides these, the shortage of skilled teachers is a big problem in imparting education to tribal children. The teachers' irregularity in the classroom fails to establish a communication bridge among the tribal students. Lack of accommodation and other essential facilities in villages make them irregular in the schools. Official/regional languages are used in most states for classroom instruction, and tribal children at the primary level do not understand them. Since they only speak their mother tongue, these languages seem to them to be exotic. And the non-tribal teachers also do not

understand tribal language and they teach in specified formal languages. The medium of instruction is a major problem while classroom transaction and communication process for the tribal students. Thus, all problems and issues reduce the value of tribal education (Behera, 2015; Hansdah, 2016 and Honarkeri, 2018).

CONCLUSION

It is visible that there are several initiatives taken by the Government of India. However, in the 21st century, the educational endeavours for tribal, which potentially intend to bring the latter to the mainstream of development are posed with complex nature of challenges. It is high time which demands a holistic approach to deal with the challenges more productively and sustainably. Besides infrastructural and financial supports, there is a need for a positive attitude on the part of the enforcing agencies and responsible stakeholders. As far as the possible emphasis should be given to implementing the existing policies, schemes and initiatives with the involvement of direct stakeholders i.e., tribal community. Furthermore, economic incentives and life skill education should be given to the tribal considering the economic status of the family. The physical distance of the school should be minimized by increasing the number of schools in general and adequate number of residential schools in particular equipped with all the facilities which are essential for the proper and smooth functioning of the educational institution. School curriculum should be based on local culture, folklore, history, traditions and language of Tribal along with shifting the schedule as per the requirement. The Pupil Teacher ratio should be minimized by recruiting the adequate number of teachers in the tribal area. Proper supervision on the functioning of the school, the teaching-learning process should be promoted and an inclusive educational atmosphere should be created in schools so that the inclusion of tribal become successful and the dream of inclusive growth will be fulfilled.

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