



Promoting Educational Opportunities by addressing educational inequalities among the Tribal Children in the Palamu Region of Jharkhand

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Abstract: This study focuses on the impact of private schools in improving educational opportunities for tribal children in the Palamu region of Jharkhand, India. The research highlights the key role played by specific private schools in increasing enrollment and reducing dropout rates among Scheduled Tribe students. These schools, such as St. Joseph School, St Teresa School and St. Xavier School, Mahuadanr of Palamu division have significantly improved access to quality education for tribal communities, contributing to their socio-economic advancement. The study recommends concerted efforts to address educational disparities faced by Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and tribal children, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions to support educational equity in rural India. Overall, the research provides insights into effective strategies for promoting educational equity and empowering tribal communities in the Palamu region.

Key words: quality, educational opportunity, private schools, enrolment, drop-out

1. Introduction

Education emerges as a pivotal instrument for empowering individuals from Scheduled Tribes, facilitating economic advancement, enhanced employment opportunities, and heightened health awareness. By emphasizing the importance of advanced education, skill enhancement, and effective utilization of governmental programs, the transformative impact of education in mitigating societal disparities and fostering rural progress becomes apparent. Education equips individuals with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions regarding health, family planning, and financial matters, while also enabling them to access government services efficiently, advocate for their rights, and contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress. Education emerges as a pivotal instrument for empowering individuals, leading to economic betterment, enhanced job opportunities, and heightened health awareness. By underscoring the importance of advanced education, skill development, and the effective utilization of governmental initiatives, the transformative potential of education in addressing societal disparities and advancing rural development becomes apparent.

Moreover, private schools such as St. Joseph School, Mahuadanr, St. Teresa School, Mahuadanr, St. Xavier School, Tewahi, and St. Xavier School, Garu, along with schools in Barwadih in Scheduled Tribes areas, have played a pivotal role in promoting educational opportunities for the better future of Scheduled Tribe communities. These educational institutions have been instrumental in expanding access to quality education and fostering a conducive learning environment for students from marginalized backgrounds. Initiatives undertaken by these schools have not only improved enrollment rates but also aimed to reduce dropout rates and enhance academic outcomes among Scheduled Tribe students. By providing a platform for holistic development and skill enhancement, these schools have contributed significantly to nurturing the potential of students and empowering them to pursue higher education and secure a brighter future.

As educational participation varies across states, rural and urban areas, and gender lines, it is evident that specific attention must be given to addressing the educational deprivation faced by SC/ST and tribal children. While there has been progress in enrollment, exclusion remains a pressing issue that calls for a comprehensive approach to tackle inequalities in access, retention, and academic achievement. The journey towards ensuring equal access to education for all, especially in regions like Jharkhand and its tribal communities, requires concerted efforts to bridge the educational gap and pave the way for a brighter future for the marginalized sections of society.

2. Book Review

According to a survey conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 1999, there are an estimated 38,000 unrecognized primary schools in rural India, highlighting the prevalence of these private institutions in larger villages. This trend underscores the growing importance of private schooling in the educational landscape, a phenomenon that is not always fully captured in government reports and statistics. The role of private schools in elementary education has been increasingly recognized, though not always accurately reflected in government data and statistics (Kingdom, 1996). There has been a significant rise in the number of private schools, including a large number of unrecognized institutions, that cater to students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across urban, rural, and remote areas in India.

According to data from the Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998), 91.3% of SC children in rural primary schools and 64.6% in urban areas are enrolled in schools run by the government and local bodies. At the middle school level, a larger proportion of SC children are found in privately managed schools, particularly in urban areas where 49.6% are enrolled, compared to 32.9% in rural areas.

Notably, there is a visible trend of SC children enrolling in private elementary schools. A significant portion of the increase in primary school enrollment among SC boys between 1986 and 1993 has been attributed to private unaided schools, as cited by Tilak and Sudershan in Nambissan and Sedwal (2002). This suggests a growing preference for private education among the SC community, even as the majority continue to attend government-run schools, especially at the primary level.

Yet, as highlighted by Velaskar (2003), the reality is that private education for these economically disadvantaged students often falls short in terms of quality. The exorbitant costs and sacrifices required by families to access private schooling may not yield commensurate benefits for the students. The commoditization of education

through privatization has resulted in a situation where the promise of better quality education is not always realized for marginalized communities, despite their efforts to access private schooling options.

Scholarly works by Chalam (1993), Pathy (2000), Punalekar (2000), and Sundar (2006) elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of this crisis, underscoring the urgent need for holistic interventions and policy reforms. The disruption of traditional tribal economies, the rise of tribal elites, and the widening gap between the privileged and the marginalized within these communities highlight the complex socio-economic realities faced by tribal populations.

This calls for a comprehensive understanding and a concerted effort to address the systemic issues that have led to the erosion of tribal livelihoods and the perpetuation of their disenfranchisement, in order to ensure the well-being and empowerment of these historically marginalized communities.

3. Educational Initiatives in Palamu Region:

Private schools such as St. Joseph School, St. Teresa School, and St. Xavier Schools in Mahuadanr and Barwadih have played a pivotal role in promoting educational opportunities for Scheduled Tribe communities. These schools have been instrumental in expanding access to quality education and fostering a conducive learning environment for students from marginalized backgrounds. Initiatives by these schools have aimed to improve enrollment rates, reduce dropout rates, and enhance academic outcomes among Scheduled Tribe students. The schools provide a platform for holistic development and skill enhancement, contributing to nurturing the potential of students and empowering them to pursue higher education.

4. CURRENT EDUCATIONAL SITUATION in PALAMU REGION

The role of education, facilitated by Christian missionaries in several regions of Palamu Division, has initiated significant social and political transformations among tribal populations. However, gaps persist in addressing the unique educational needs of isolated tribal groups, necessitating tailored interventions for their holistic development. Published insights examining the educational landscape of Scheduled Tribes internationally can provide valuable perspectives on inclusive policies and programs for marginalized tribal communities globally.

The contemporary landscape of tribal societies reveals a nuanced understanding of social dynamics, particularly in the context of political assertion and the widening gap between tribal elites and the broader population. A critical examination unveils the disruptive impact of capitalist encroachment on traditional tribal livelihoods, exacerbated by governmental and corporate interests leading to widespread disenfranchisement. Large-scale land alienation, resource exploitation, and forced displacement due to infrastructural projects have plunged many tribal groups into severe economic distress, marking a stark departure from their erstwhile prosperity.

From the initial emphasis on basic school infrastructure and scholarships to the programs such as the provision of free textbooks, uniforms, and specialized hostels for marginalized students have sought to enhance access and retention rates among SC/ST children, addressing the historical barriers to educational attainment.

By situating these educational provisions within the broader discourse of social equity and historical justice, this analysis underscores the imperative for sustained dialogue, evidence-based policies, and community-driven collaborations to uplift tribal communities and ensure a more equitable educational landscape for SC/ST groups in Jharkhand. In the context of tribal communities, the significance of education cannot be overstated. Without proper education, tribals may find themselves unable to fully leverage the benefits of government loans and subsidies. Consequently, they may resort to private money lenders, often facing exorbitant interest rates that can surpass the principal amount borrowed. Conversely, with access to education, tribals can optimize the utilization of government financial aid, thereby enhancing opportunities for self-employment or business ventures. For those engaged in agriculture, education can facilitate increased productivity through the effective utilization of available resources and technologies.

Moreover, the absence of adequate education may hinder tribals from accessing various governmental facilities and support systems tailored for their development. Education equips them with the knowledge and skills to navigate and capitalize on such resources, including the possibility of securing loans for pursuing higher education abroad. This, in turn, can lead to elevated educational qualifications and improved prospects for higher income generation.

5. Key Findings of the Survey

Role of Private Schools: St. Joseph School, Mahuadanr, St. Teresa School, Mahuadanr, St. Xavier School, Tewahi, and St. Xavier School, Garu, and schools in Barwadih, have been instrumental in expanding access to quality education. These schools foster a conducive learning environment, leading to improved enrollment rates and reduced dropout rates among Scheduled Tribe students. Holistic development and skill enhancement are emphasized, empowering students for higher education and brighter futures.

Importance of Education for Rural Transformation: Scheduled Tribes form a crucial segment of the rural populace. Collaborative efforts involving government, private initiatives, and community engagement are essential for equitable education. Education must not marginalize ST communities; pathways to socioeconomic advancement should be accessible to all.

Challenges and Progress: Despite progress, many Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children still lack educational opportunities. Enrollment rates have increased, but attendance and completion rates remain low. Gender disparities persist, with girls lagging behind boys. Scheduled Tribes often lag behind Scheduled Castes in educational indicators.

Future Work: Equitable Access: Addressing inequalities in access of education at the same time prioritizing educational opportunities for marginalized communities.

Regional Focus: Conducting further studies specific to Jharkhand and tribal communities. Given the context of Jharkhand, urgent attention is needed to bridge educational gaps for tribals in order to understand local challenges and tailor interventions accordingly.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is indisputable that the increase in enrollment of Scheduled Tribe communities in standard one is overshadowed by a concerning trend of high dropout rates later on, primarily attributed to academic setbacks and stagnation. This pattern results in significant wastage of resources, encompassing financial, temporal, and human energy investments. The evident scarcity of students from these communities in secondary and tertiary education levels presents a considerable challenge. Within the scope of rural development, Scheduled Tribes merit attention as an essential segment of the rural populace.

Education not only equips individuals to make informed decisions in areas such as healthcare, family planning, and financial management but also empowers them to access government services efficiently, advocate for their rights, and contribute meaningfully to the nation's advancement. Hence, the significance of education in achieving "Rural Transformation" remains paramount, with Scheduled Tribes constituting an integral rural demographic that must be duly acknowledged in the pursuit of development and equity.

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