



# Educational And Employability Status Of Tribals In Telangana State

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## Abstract:

This study of employability has been much discussed in tribal higher education policy and research contexts in recent years, as higher education has been re-positioned as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This article aims to review and synthesise the various arguments that have been made in favour of, or against, the adoption of tribals employability as a core purpose or value of higher education. The article makes use of the techniques of systematic review. It discusses the origins and meaning of the term employability, its application and practice, and the issues and critiques that it has raised.

**Keywords:** Employability, higher education, higher education research, systematic review

## Introduction

Education serves as a potent tool for individuals to ascend socially and economically, attaining power and status within society. It acts as a catalyst for equality, mobility, and empowerment, benefiting both individuals and society as a whole. The socioeconomic advancement of a nation hinges significantly on its literacy rate and the presence of a skilled, educated workforce. Education is often hailed as the remedy for various social ills and injustices, forming the cornerstone of successful social improvement initiatives. Economic progress and societal transformation are intrinsically linked to education. It plays a pivotal role in alleviating poverty and fostering improved living conditions. However, in India, socio-economic factors, political biases, and systemic discrimination have left Scheduled Tribes (STs) largely untouched by educational opportunities. India is a mosaic of various castes, creeds, religions, and communities, fostering a rich tapestry of diversity. However, this pluralism has contributed to a stratified and hierarchical social fabric. Among the most marginalized within this complex landscape are the Scheduled Tribes (STs), who face profound social, economic, and educational disadvantages.

## Definition of Tribes

A tribe is a group of people who share a common culture, ancestry, and often live in a closed society. In India, tribes are territorial communities with a specific area where their members live. They may also share a common name, dialect, or territory. Tribes are an important part of India's population and culture, and are scattered across the country. As of 2011, about 8.9% of India's population identified as tribal.

The distribution of tribal population is more in eastern, central, and western parts of the country. The following is the available data for the state and the union territories of India. Starting with Madhya Pradesh with 14.69% of tribal population, the highest of all, followed by Maharashtra with 10.08%, Odisha with 9.02%, Rajasthan with 8.86%, Gujarat with 8.55%, Jharkhand with 8.29%, Chhattisgarh with 7.5%, Andhra Pradesh with 5.7% and the like. Mizoram is the state with highest tribal population of 94.5% and Lakshadweep is the union territory with the highest tribal population of 94.8%. The north-eastern states constitute about 12% of the tribal population followed by the southern region with 5% and Northern region with 3% of their population. Odisha is having sixty two tribes (Census 2011).

The tribes have been referred to by various terms such as aborigines, aborigines, Adivasis, Vana jatis, forest tribes, hill tribes, primitive tribes, and more. According to the 2011 census, the tribal population in India stands at approximately 10.42 crores, ranking second globally after Africa in terms of concentration.

**Table 1**  
**Definition of Scheduled Tribes**

Sl. No	Census	Defined as
1	1891	Forest Tribes
2	1901	Animists
3	1911	Tribal Animists
4	1921	Hill and Forest Tribes
5	1931	Primitive Tribes
6	Government of India Act 1935	Backward Tribes
7	1941	Tribes
8	1951	Scheduled Tribes

The composition of tribal communities have undergone fluctuations over time. The number of Scheduled Tribes (STs) was recorded as 212 in the 1950 census, which increased in 1956 following the issuance of the Scheduled Tribes List (Modification) Order. According to the Anthropological Survey of India in 1967, this figure was estimated to be 314, while the 1971 census revealed 427 tribes. By the 1991 census, the count had risen to 573, and as of the 2011 census, it stands at 705. Until 1919, these communities were categorized under the umbrella term "depressed classes." However, Article 342 of the Indian Constitution empowers the President to specify STs through public notification, in consultation with the Governors of each state, subject to parliamentary revision.

The Constitution of India, under Article 366, defines Scheduled Tribes (STs) as tribal communities declared by Constitutional Order, as specified in Article 342. Currently, 574 tribes are identified under this provision. Additionally, various special provisions have been enshrined in Articles 46, 275, 330, 332, 335, 338, 340, and others to safeguard the interests of STs and shield them from social injustice and exploitation. These constitutional measures aim to ensure the welfare and protection of India's tribal communities.

## Origins of Employability

Employability evolves from traditional bureaucratic careers, where individuals can achieve career progression and access high-level positions. The components of employability, as illustrated in Figure 1.2, include:

- i) Presently, employment policies prioritize skill-based solutions to enhance economic competitiveness and work-based solutions for social development.

- ii) Job security and lifetime careers are typically reserved for a select group of individuals. The majority are concerned about the level and type of jobs they can attain in the future, as well as opportunities for promotion. Building strong bonds and demonstrating commitment fosters confident relationships with employers.

These shifts in employability underscore the importance of adaptability and ongoing skill development in navigating the contemporary job market.

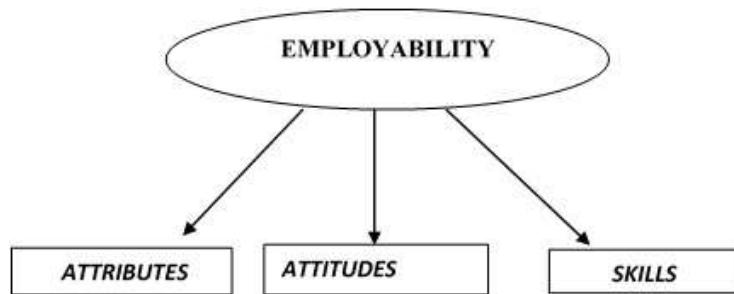


Figure 1.2: Categories of Employability

Absolutely, employability extends beyond simply fulfilling job responsibilities; it encompasses an individual's relative performance within the organizational hierarchy and their proficiency in specific tasks. It revolves around enhancing students' skills to excel in various roles, making them adaptable and capable of tackling diverse job responsibilities. In essence, it's about equipping individuals with the competencies needed to thrive in any job they undertake.

### Employability and Employment

These two words may share the same root word. However, they differ from each other. For one to be employed does not necessarily equate one being employable. Definitively, employment is the state of having a paid job. Employability, on the other hand, entails the attributes that make one able to gain and maintain employment. This means that employability is a determining factor for employment. But, in a failed system where nepotism, tribalism, and the likes are cases, employability may not necessarily determine employment. Nonetheless, it is advisable for one to find ways to increase his/her employability status.

Normally, one's employability is what guarantees one's employment. Additionally, one's employability may give him/her an edge in employment. So, at a time when many qualify for an employment, the most qualified is chosen on the basis of his/her employability rate.

For the individual, employability requirements:

- i) Knowledge in skills, subject, attitude and process.
- ii) The delivery of required knowledge and timely usage.
- iii) How is their first impression.
- iv) The situation within which one needs to work.
- v) The other requirements of the individuals may vary depending on their attitude and relation to job market.

## Education and Employability

Education and employability tend to be at odds with each other. While the vast majority of the population looks at education as a means of assured income and upward mobility, the system focuses on making it possible for the largest numbers to receive common education. This divergence leaves most of the students frustrated because they invest a prime part of their life and significant resources in acquiring graduate credentials.

With the exception of the education aimed at licensed professions, such as medicine, law, chartered accountancy, and engineering, there is a gap between what is taught in the academic institutions and what can be commercially applied in the economy. Much of the education produces graduates who are semi-prepared for the real world, at best. It is up to the graduates to become employable through further education or internships.

The education sector is responding to the rise of a new kind of economy and work. There is a proliferation of online and hybrid courses in a wide variety of technology skills. However, much of this boom in new education is opportunistic and the formal education system continues to trudge along parallelly. As a result, the job market is getting further distanced from the general education system.

Education policy makers and providers need to realize that the formal education will lose its relevance if it fails to keep up with the emerging technology's impact on employability. The covid crisis highlighted the vulnerability of traditional work and jobs and in the post-covid world, education must offer an adequate understanding of new technologies and deliver a high level of competence in working with digital tools and systems.

State engagement with employers is crucial for supporting unemployed graduates. The importance of collaboration between businesses and educational institutions in developing essential skills and knowledge for employment. They emphasized that educational providers play a central role in offering higher skills, access to international research, and fostering a culture of inquiry and innovation. Furthermore, they identified educational providers as integral components of the business supply chain, capable of supporting economic growth and overall economic success.

The challenges are:

- i) Opportunity to work based and work related learnings.
- ii) Candidates engagement with work related learning opportunities
- iii) Have strong relationship with the employers

## Importance of Employability Skills

The prevalence of generic employability skills stems from the fiercely competitive job market, where employers across all sectors prioritize adaptable individuals capable of navigating diverse situations. Unlike in the past, employability skills are less standardized and defined, with a growing emphasis on 'service orientation', highlighting the increasing importance of both information and social skills. Consider the following examples:

Employability skills are crucial for individuals seeking success in the modern workforce. Here are several reasons why these skills are important:

**Increased Job Opportunities:** Employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability make individuals more attractive to employers. Possessing these skills enhances their chances of securing employment across various industries and roles.

**Career Advancement:** Individuals with strong employability skills are better equipped to advance in their careers. These skills enable them to excel in their current roles, take on new challenges, and seek opportunities for growth and promotion within their organizations.

**Adaptability to Change:** In today's rapidly evolving work environment, adaptability is crucial. Employability skills such as flexibility, resilience, and openness to learning allow individuals to navigate changes in the workplace, whether it be technological advancements, organizational restructuring, or shifts in industry trends.

**Enhanced Productivity:** Employees with strong employability skills are more productive and efficient in their roles. Effective communication, time management, and problem-solving abilities enable them to complete tasks more effectively, contribute to team success, and drive organizational productivity.

**Effective Collaboration:** Collaboration is essential in most workplaces. Employability skills such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution facilitate effective collaboration with colleagues, leading to improved teamwork, innovation, and overall organizational success.

**Professional Development:** Employability skills contribute to ongoing professional development. Individuals who continuously develop and refine these skills are better positioned to succeed in their careers, take on new challenges, and pursue opportunities for advancement and personal growth.

## Challenges of Employment and Employability

According to Mamgain et al. (2015), findings from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) survey reveal that despite India experiencing high economic growth, the unemployment rate continues to rise, primarily due to population growth. The issue extends beyond unemployment; even the available jobs for youth often offer poor quality employment, leading to the underutilization of talent.

The proposed solution to this predicament lies in ensuring high-quality education and skill development. The government must prioritize initiatives aimed at improving education and enhancing the skills of the youth. By creating employment opportunities on a large scale, focusing on education, and nurturing the skills of the younger generation, India can address the challenge of rising unemployment and underutilization of talent.

## Educational Status of Scheduled Tribes

The Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India represent a marginalized and disadvantaged segment of the population. Despite numerous development programs and policies implemented by independent India, the quality of life for STs remains unfavorable. They face challenges such as low educational attainment, socio-economic disadvantages, and various social problems.

The ST communities often prioritize education less due to factors such as economic constraints, lack of parental awareness and involvement, traditional child-rearing practices, limited motivation, poverty, exploitation, discrimination from higher castes, socio-cultural barriers, and difficulties assimilating with non-tribal populations.

Comprising approximately 8.22% of India's total population, or about 85 million people, STs exhibit an overall literacy rate of only 32.2%, compared to 74.04% in the general population. Despite government efforts for their development, indicators reveal a low standard of living characterized by deep illiteracy, minimal education, and limited aspirations.

STs often lead simple lives closely connected to their natural environment, with cultural practices developed to suit their physical and social surroundings. These tribal groups have been documented in literature dating back to ancient times, including references in epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Their languages spoken, population sizes, and livelihoods vary widely, reflecting the diverse nature of ST communities across India.

The Government of India's Draft National Tribal Policy in 2006 identified 698 Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, a number that increased to 705 according to the Census of India 2011. These STs are spread across 30 States/Union Territories. The tribal population of the country, as of the 2011 census, stands at 10.43 crore, constituting approximately 8.6% of the total population. The majority, 89.97%, reside in rural areas, with 10.03% living in urban areas. The growth of the tribal population from the 2001 census to 2011 has been 23.66%, exceeding the growth rate of the entire population, which was 17.69% over the same period. While the rural tribal population increased from 10.4% to 11.3% between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the urban tribal population only marginally increased from 2.4% to 2.8%.

The literacy rate among STs has shown significant improvement, with both tribal men and women experiencing an increase from 8.53% in 1961 to 58.96% in 2011. Comparatively, the literacy rate for the total population increased from 28.30% in 1961 to 72.99% in 2011, with a 11.86% increase from 8.15% in the total population over the same period. However, despite these improvements, the literacy rate among STs remains lower than that of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the total population, both for males and females.

## Government Policies and Programmes for Tribal Education

The Dhebar Commission of 1960 identified several specific reasons for the educational backwardness of tribal communities. These included inappropriate and unattractive teaching methods employed by teachers, as well as the influence of poor economic conditions, which often compelled children to work alongside their parents to generate income, making education a luxury.

In response to these challenges, the Dhebar Commission recommended various measures to address the educational needs of tribal children. These included providing mid-day meals, clothing, free books, and other educational materials to tribal children in backward areas. Additionally, the commission suggested the establishment of schools in localities with at least 30 school-going children, with the provision of schools within one mile. It also proposed adjustments to school timings, vacations, and holidays to accommodate the social and cultural life of tribal communities.

Similarly, the Kothari Commission endorsed the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission, emphasizing the urgent need to provide five years of early education to all tribal children. Despite these efforts, the growth of tribal education remained slow due to high dropout rates and the widening gap between tribal and non-tribal communities. Consequently, higher education among tribal communities also suffered significantly.

The Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act of 1996 mandates that states with scheduled areas must grant significant decision-making powers to tribal communities concerning their development and governance.

In the 1970s, a centrally-sponsored government scheme established ashram schools exclusively for Scheduled Tribe children from elementary to higher secondary levels. However, the poor quality of education in these ashram schools has eroded confidence in education as a means of social mobility.

To address educational disparities among marginalized groups, including Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and minorities, the Government of India collaborated with five UN agencies—UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO, and UNFPA—to launch the Janshala Program. This initiative aimed to standardize and enhance primary education for these communities.

Although many centrally-sponsored programs for tribal development focus solely on education, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is India's primary program for universalizing elementary education. This initiative ensures free and compulsory admission, attendance, and completion of elementary education for all children aged 6-14 years, guaranteeing the right to equitable quality education based on principles of equity and non-discrimination.

The dropout rates among tribal communities remain alarmingly high, with rates of 35.6% in Classes I to V, 55% in Classes I to VIII, and 70.9% in Classes I to X in the academic year 2010-11, significantly exceeding the national average.

A study revealed that only 67% of low-performing Scheduled Tribe (ST) students completed education up to Class V, while 41.9% completed up to Class VIII, and merely 13.9% completed education up to Class XII. These statistics underscore the urgent need for government intervention to address dropout rates among tribal students.

- To mitigate this issue, the government must implement targeted measures to reduce dropout rates among tribal communities. This may include:
- Providing additional support and resources to schools in tribal areas to improve infrastructure, teaching quality, and student engagement.
- Implementing special programs and incentives to encourage tribal students to stay in school, such as scholarships, mid-day meals, and transportation assistance.
- Conducting awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of education and dispel myths or misconceptions that may discourage tribal families from sending their children to school.
- Collaborating with community leaders and local stakeholders to address cultural barriers and challenges that may contribute to high dropout rates.
- Offering remedial classes or academic support to struggling students to prevent them from falling behind and dropping out.
- Monitoring and evaluating dropout rates regularly to track progress and identify areas for improvement in interventions.

### Scheduled Tribes in Telangana State

In Telangana state, the concentration of 9.3% tribal population are situated all around area valleys and in the forest area.

**Table 2**  
**Demography of the Scheduled Tribes (as per 2011 Census)**

Sl. No	Demography	Population (in Lakhs)	Percentage
1	Total population	350.05	
2	Total ST Population	31.78	9.07
3	ST Population in ITDA Districts	16.83	52.96
4	ST Population in Non-ITDA Districts	14.95	47.04

Source: Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Telangana, Hyderabad 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017

**Table 3**  
**Tribes-wise Profile in Telangana State**

Sl. No	Sub-Tribe	District	Population (in Lakhs)
1	Lambada	All Districts	2046117
2	Koya	Khammam, Warangal, Adilabad and Karimnagar Districts (erstwhile districts)	486391
3	Gond	Erstwhile Adilabad District	297846
4	Yerukala	All Districts	144128
5	Pardhan	Erstwhile Adilabad District	24776
6	Kolam	Erstwhile Adilabad District	44805
7	Chenchus	Erstwhile Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Ranga Reddy, Warangal and Karimnagar	16912
8	Konda Reddy	Khammam	1016
9	Thoti	Erstwhile Adilabad, Karimnagar and Nizamabad	4811

Source: Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Telangana, Hyderabad 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017

**The Gond – Kolam Region** is situated in the hills and forest region of Adilabad district north of the Godavari River. Gonds and Naikpods and their dependent communities Pardhans and Thotis. Kolams, Andhs and Bhils inhabited the area.

#### **Educational Status of Scheduled Tribes in Telangana**

The literacy rate among the state averages 66.5%, while for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population, it stands at 49.5%. The data pertaining to the literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribe population is illustrated in Table 1.4.

Among the districts, Khammam exhibits the highest literacy rate among tribal communities, followed by Warangal, Adilabad, and Nalgonda. Even in urban centers like Hyderabad and Rangareddy, the tribal literacy rate is approximately 50.05%.

The tribal literacy rate in Khammam and Karimnagar districts is nearly equal at 52%, while Mahabubnagar district records a lower literacy rate of 42.29%. These statistics highlight variations in literacy rates among different districts, with some areas showing higher levels of educational attainment among tribal populations compared to others.

**Table 4**

**District-wise Tribal Population and Literacy Rate in Telangana State**

Sl. No	District	Total ST Population	Number of Literates			Literacy Rate		
			Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1	Adilabad	495794	130838	89084	219922	61.44	41.37	51.35
2	Nizamabad	192941	47085	28752	75837	57.97	34.25	45.49
3	Karimnagar	106745	28820	20090	48910	60.85	42.19	51.49
4	Medak	168985	40976	22146	63122	56.92	32.04	44.73
5	Hyderabad	48937	16659	12641	29300	76.09	62.08	69.34
6	Rangareddy	218757	62588	41495	104083	65.73	45.87	56.05
7	Mahabubnagar	364269	83464	45555	129019	53.71	30.44	42.29

8	Nalgonda	394279	104938	59065	164003	59.96	35.56	48.08
9	Warangal	530656	136361	90593	226954	57.81	38.96	48.45
10	Khammam	765565	200493	150974	351467	59.75	43.67	51.59
	Total	3286928	852222	560395	1412617	59.49	39.44	49.51

Source: Punnaiah, A. (2018). Issues and Challenges of Tribal Education: A Study of Telangana State. International Education & Research Journal 4(1): 50.

The disparity between male and female literacy rates persists across all districts, with female literacy rates consistently lower. To address this issue and uplift tribal communities, the government should prioritize efforts to improve female tribal literacy rates. By doing so, opportunities for self-employment can be created, helping to alleviate poverty among tribal women.

In Telangana, the government has taken proactive steps to promote quality education among Scheduled Tribes (STs) through various innovative programs. These initiatives include Telangana Gurukulam (TTWREI Society), Pre-Matric Scholarships, Post-Matric Scholarships, Ambedkar Overseas Vidya Nidhi, and coaching for TOEFL/IELTS/GRE/GMAT exams. These programs aim to empower ST students and provide them with the necessary skills and resources to pursue higher education, including opportunities for professional studies abroad. By investing in these educational initiatives, the government can help bridge the gender gap in literacy rates among tribal communities and foster socio-economic development in the region.

### Issues and Challenges in Tribal Education

Analyzing the real issues faced by the tribal population in accessing education reveals a complex interplay of socio-economic factors that contribute to their marginalization. Poverty is a pervasive issue among tribal communities, both in rural and urban areas. Limited access to resources, coupled with their low socio-economic status and political marginalization, exacerbates their educational challenges.

Illiteracy is another significant barrier to education among tribal populations. Many tribal individuals lack basic literacy skills, further hindering their ability to access educational opportunities and break the cycle of poverty.

Additionally, the relative lack of access to developmental measures and essential facilities further compounds the educational challenges faced by tribal communities. Despite planned efforts for development, the benefits often fail to reach these marginalized groups, leading to continued deprivation and exclusion.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach that tackles poverty, illiteracy, and socio-economic marginalization simultaneously. Efforts to improve access to education must be complemented by initiatives aimed at enhancing socio-economic opportunities, promoting community participation, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources. Only through comprehensive and inclusive strategies can we address the systemic barriers that prevent tribal populations from accessing quality education and realizing their full potential.

Issues and challenges in tribal education are multifaceted and require comprehensive strategies to address effectively. Some of the key issues and challenges include:

**Access to Education:** Many tribal communities live in remote and rural areas with limited access to educational institutions. Lack of schools and educational infrastructure, as well as inadequate transportation facilities, hinder tribal children's access to education.

**Quality of Education:** Even when schools are available, the quality of education in tribal areas often falls short. Schools may lack qualified teachers, proper teaching materials, and conducive learning environments, leading to substandard education outcomes.

**Language Barriers:** Language barriers pose a significant challenge for tribal children, as many tribal communities have their own distinct languages and dialects. Lack of instruction in their native language can hinder learning and academic performance.

**Socio-economic Factors:** Poverty, socio-economic marginalization, and cultural factors contribute to low educational attainment among tribal communities. Many tribal families struggle to afford school fees, uniforms, and other educational expenses, leading to high dropout rates.

**Cultural Relevance:** Traditional tribal cultures and customs may not always be adequately reflected in the curriculum, leading to a disconnect between students' cultural identities and their educational experiences. Incorporating indigenous knowledge and cultural perspectives into the curriculum can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of tribal education.

**Gender Disparities:** Gender disparities persist in tribal education, with girls facing additional barriers to access and retention. Deep-rooted cultural norms and practices may prioritize boys' education over girls', limiting girls' educational opportunities and perpetuating gender inequalities.

**Teacher Training and Support:** Teachers working in tribal areas often lack training and support to effectively address the unique needs of tribal students. Professional development programs and ongoing support for teachers can help improve teaching quality and student outcomes.

**Transition to Higher Education and Employment:** Tribal students face challenges transitioning from school to higher education or employment. Limited access to higher education institutions, lack of career guidance, and inadequate job opportunities in tribal areas contribute to high levels of unemployment and underemployment among tribal youth.

Addressing these issues and challenges requires a holistic approach that involves collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, tribal communities, and civil society organizations. Investments in infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum development, and community engagement are essential to ensuring equitable and inclusive education for tribal children and youth.

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