



Problems of Higher Education Among Tribes in India - With Special Reference to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

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Abstract: *There are more than 700 tribal communities spread in a majority of the states in India. They live in interior forests, remote areas or on hilltops with difficult terrain which are difficult to access. This research focuses on the growth of higher education within the framework of preferential treatment and supportive measures for the benefit of different social groups, namely, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, minorities and women. The study also reviews the policies which influence the mode of functioning of higher education. The policies are built on the framework of equity, equality and mainstreaming. The affirmative policy for the scheduled tribes' builds equity and mainstreaming which leads to policies on equality. In our Indian society which is multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic there are many parameters such as gender, caste, and region are vital in defining access to higher education. Lastly, the educational policies and programmes are unable to include the complex social reality within a single framework and are, therefore, unable to bridge the gap between policy and practice.*

Keywords: *Higher Education, Adivasis, PVTGs, Scheduled Tribes*

Introduction

Gaining knowledge infuses with it dignity, identity, confidence, courage and ability which are important especially for the weaker sections of the society to understand their problems of poverty and deprivation and seek solutions by availing socio-economic and educational programs extended to them. (Pradhan 2011).

Education, which opens up to the wider world is one of the most important cultural superiority of the population. Education has become a part of the strong foundation of our modern society, a major revenue of social mobility, a central agency of social distribution and

consequently an object of political debate and social polity as urgent and as important as poverty, sickness or unemployment. Education is a necessary part of all human beings. The Government of India had taken many efforts through educational policies to enhance the educational level of the population. But, tribal education status is very low due to the poor financial condition, migration, attitudes of parents and teachers towards education, language problems and health issues.

The study is based on the supposition that the beliefs and practices of these native groups are acting as resistant membranes in their contribution in formal education. The



universal elementary education policies are not fully utilized to achieve better participation. Further, the negligible participation of girls from PVTGs needs serious consideration. The Right to Education Act, 2009, which envisioned to increase enrolments is not sustaining, rather resulting in dropouts or non-participation. In such context, examination of mechanisms of enrolment, resistance from people, interventions of external agencies, incentives and follow-up activities would provide a framework to understand the obstacles for girls from PVTGs to participate in formal education.

Education is a cultural process, which includes schooling as well as training by agencies other than school. It diverges from culture to culture in space and time. Education is an indicator of growth, it is only a means for development at the same time education is a device used for economic, social and cultural growth. The tribal groups who have very few opportunities for education need to be continuously and consistently brought into the execution of this strategy for growth and development. After independence, the government implemented various schemes for the upliftment of STs, yet, the tribals are far behind the general population and the SC population in literacy and education. The literacy level of the tribals is much below the literacy level of non tribals due to isolation, remoteness, poverty, poor health condition, hostile environment and blind belief system. The isolation of the tribal communities leads to their inability to access goods and services of the government, which has resulted in their backwardness, pre-agricultural level of technology, declining population, low level of literacy in comparison to others.

During the fifth five-year plan period the Government of India planned to put singular emphasis on integrated development of the tribal groups who were identified as tribals who are more primitive, whose population was declining and lived in secluded areas with minimum facilities. 75 such groups were identified and were known as Primitive tribal groups but later they were known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Who are PTG/ PVTG?

PVTGs can be part of a tribal community or a sub-tribe or a tribe by themselves. In other hand, among them hundreds of tribal communities living across the length and breadth of the community, some are relatively more isolated, archaic, vulnerable, deprived and backward. These tribal groups are the most neglected among the tribal. While we have entered their territory, we have seen that they live in small, scattered habitats in remote and inaccessible areas.

Definition

“The groups of an aboriginal who constitutes simple and small scale societies, are culturally homogenous, have lifestyle isolated and inaccessible tracts of hill and forests and continue to pursue an archaic way of life and absorb the change slowly, are known as PVTGs”.

Importance of Higher Education

Higher education has become very important not only for the governments but also for the entire society, as this higher education assures the job security and make degree holder extra employable which is dropping the burden of parents and the respective governments. Higher education is designed as per the need and demand of the market, which make the degree holder more employable.



Research Methodology

The research design used for the study is descriptive and also exploratory. The present study explains the educational level of tribal population of India, the level (%) of higher education in particular. The study is based on the 2011 census report.

Objectives

Literacy among Tribal Population in India

A comparison of literacy rates of STs with total population (in percent)

Category / Census (Year)	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total Population	28.3	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99
Scheduled Tribes	8.53	11.30	16.35	29.60	47.10	58.96
Gap	19.77	18.15	19.88	22.61	18.28	14.03

Source: Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Statics Division Government of India, P.13

According to census report 2011 the literacy percent of total population of India was 72.99 percent whereas the literacy percent of schedule tribes was 58.96 percent. The gap between the literacy level of tribes in comparison to overall literacy level of the general population is 14.03 percent.

Problems of higher Education in Tribal Areas

There are many important issues and problems in the field of tribal education to be addressed. They are as follows:

- Medium (language) of study: Medium is the biggest problem for higher education. It is the biggest restraint confronted by the tribal population. The mode of language till 10+2 is local language and the mode of Higher education is purely English. This is the biggest limitation which tribal students face during their higher education.
- Less Applicants: Only 12.6% of urban tribal population have either the graduation or post graduation qualifications. Whereas only 1.6% of the tribal population of India, who is

- To understand and identify the main problems of the tribal students pursuing higher education.
- To suggest corrective measures that can be transformed into policies for the betterment of tribal students pursuing higher education.

residing in the rural part of the country have the graduation or post-graduation qualifications. It indicates that there will be very few applicants for professional education from the tribal communities. Because of the less number of candidates, most of the professional/ higher educational institutes are not located in tribal areas.

- Less Number of Professional Institutions in Tribal Areas: Since there are very less number of graduates among tribal population, the aspirants for further higher/professional education is limited. This implies that there would be no takers even if a professional study institution is opened in a tribal area.
- Family’s Economic Condition: Generally, the family income of tribal population is very low so they are not in the position to bear the high expenses of their children’s education.
- High Course Fees: Generally, the fees structure of professional courses are



very high and the income of tribal population is very low.

- Family Support: The family support is very essential for any student especially for a professional course student. The attitude of parents should be supportive for the students.
- Lack of Foresightedness: Due to lack of education the tribal communities are not able to foresee the returns of education. Initially, higher education demands heavy investments as a form of course fees and it does not yield any immediate results to their parents. So they prefer their children to engage in some employment so they could support the family income.
- The Physical Barriers: The tribal population mostly lives in forests, mountains, remote hilly areas and difficult terrains so it's difficult to start and maintain any higher education institute in these areas, so that tribal population could easily access to these institutions.
- Lack of Infrastructure Facilities: Basic amenities like roads, electricity, water, railways internet, telecommunication etc., are not available or the access is very low in the tribal areas. This is also a main problem.
- Problem of Teachers: Above all if government takes an initiative and open any higher education institute in the tribal areas for the welfare of tribal population, most of the faculty members do not want to work and stay in these tribal areas.
- Problem of Vacant Teaching Positions: Because of lack of literacy level in tribal areas it is difficult to find quality local teachers for professional/ higher education institutes. Those outsiders recruited

as faculty and staff use their appointments as a launching pad. The moment they find any good opportunity near their native places they just go there on transfer. This creates again the shortage of faculty members in that institute situated in tribal areas.

Suggestions for humanizing excellence of Higher Education in Tribal Areas

- Provide study materials in local language as much as possible.
- Special classes for English language should be organized to uplift the level of English among tribal students pursuing higher education.
- The parents of tribal students should be provided counseling sessions and they must be educated about the importance of their children's education and that the money they have spent on their children as course fees is an investment not an expenditure.
- Scholarships should be provided to these tribal students of professional education, as, fee structure of these professional courses are very high and income level of tribal population is very low.
- Government should try to appoint local teachers as much as they can for the professional/ higher education courses because local teachers will not quit the institution and serve for a longer period of time.
- There should be proper monitoring for these institutions offering professional/ higher education. Higher level government officials should monitor these institutes at a regular basis.
- public private partnership (PPP) means is very important to bring



quality in professional and higher education sector. In tribal areas the academic institutions should be opened and run on PPP basis.

- In academic institutions offering professional/ higher education in tribal areas the industry-academia connection must be there.
- In these professional institutions the syllabus of the course should be job oriented. It would help the tribal students to get the jobs immediately.
- Government should try to increase the quantity of academic institutions in the tribal areas.

Conclusion

The tribal population is way behind from the mainstream population of India with respect to higher education. There are low densities of higher education institutions in tribal areas as compared to other parts of the country. Most of the tribal population resides in difficult terrains and because of this geographical isolation this tribal population often are unable to enjoy the fruits of developmental reforms. Government of India and respective state governments are placing lots of effort to uplift the level of this tribal population, government has achieved some success but still a lot to be done.

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