

Strategies of Tribal
Education for Intervention
Digumarty Bhaskara Rao
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Strategies of Tribal Education for Intervention

—*Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra*

State Project Coordinator
OPEPA, Orissa

The District Primary Education Programme envisages improvement of tribal education and girls education in backward regions of India to reduce social disparities. Orissa is a state with acute problems to be addressed in the field of tribal education. On the basis of field experience in the tribal areas, I have witnessed the following seven major issues and problem in the field of tribal education. They are:

- The physical location of the village and the attitude of tribal parents.
- Teacher related problems.
- Problems of the tribal students.
- Teaching learning materials and the primers.
- The irregularities in the educational institutions.
- Lack of inspection/supervision.
- Social and Cultural problems.

The above problems are discussed in detail below.

The Physical Location of the Village

1. The tribals inhabit the forests in a scattered manner. Most tribal villages have a population below 100. So, it becomes impossible to open up separate schools in each village where the required students strength is not available. On other land, tribal habitations remain segregated from each other by some physical barriers like rivers, nalas and forests. So these physical barriers create a hinderance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighbouring village. To give an instance, in Kalahandi District, there are about 714 villages where there is

no primary school within 1 km. radius. But in 522 villages the population is estimated to be below 100. In such a case the tribal children are deprived of schooling facilities.

A STATISTICAL PROFILE

The Scheduled tribes constitute the most backward group among the weaker sections in Orissa. There are 62 tribes in Orissa with a population of 70,32,214 which constitutes 22.21 % of the total population of the State. These figures of 1991 census provide valuable information on the demographic structure of the population.

The tribals constitute 47% in Gajapati District, 56% in Rayagada, 21% in Kalahandi, 21% in Bolangir and 12% in Dhenkanal District of Orissa. The high concentration of Saora tribe in Gajapati and Kandh tribe in Rayagada with their typical ethnolinguistic formation added with inaccessible hilly tract are the major causes of their cultural retention.

The literacy rate of the scheduled tribes population in the State is 18.10% of which 27.93% are male and 8.29% are female. The lowest rate of female literacy rate in Orissa is in Koraput (1.93%) and Kalahandi (4%). Southern Orissa constitutes the highest tribal population in the state with a very low percentage of literate people. The literacy rate for the ST population in Orissa according to 1991 census is 22.31 % as against the state literacy rate of 49.09%. The ST female literacy rate of the state is 10.21 % which is lower than the ST male literacy rate of 34.44%.

The tribal people of Orissa earn their livelihood through marginal agriculture, slash and burn (podu), depending on forest land products and wage labour. Most of the tribal people have a low economic profile and lead a miserable life.

2. Economic Condition : The tribals depend on forests for 8 months and on agriculture for 4 months. The children of 4 to 6 age group are found to be helping their parents in collection of forest products. In this situation, parents do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools.
3. Attitude of the parents: Tribal parents are basically illiterate.

Their illiteracy does not permit them to understand the long term values of education. As education does not yield them any immediate economic return, they prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which supplements the family income and strengthens the family economy. Further a few parents who have become aware of the values of education, fail to accord education to their children as they cannot afford finances for it.

4. Village Education Committee: In Orissa, VECs have been constituted to preserve and monitor the functioning of the schools. Till now people are not aware of the role of the VECs. Neither the villagers nor the members of the VECs take any active interest to enhance enrolment and attendance of children in primary school.

Teacher Related Problems

1. The relationship between teachers, schools and the villagers is quite thin. In tribal villages, villagers have virtually no relationship with the teachers. Teachers do not get any accommodation facility in the village, which makes them irregular which hampers the normal routine of a school. Further, the apathetic attitude of the villagers, and their simplicity provide ample scope to the teachers to act according to their sweet will.
2. The appointment of untrained teachers in tribal areas diminishes the values of education. However, recently the Government has started posting trained teachers in tribal schools which is a welcome step.
3. The Lack of special incentives for the teachers in tribal areas serve as a demotivating factors for the teachers and degrades their efficiency. Teachers feel that their own children would be illiterate in tribal areas.
4. Teachers have a preconception that tribal children are average students, also they don't take special care in promoting tribal education.
5. The pre-conceived notions of the teachers that the tribal children cannot grasp anything beyond nature, forest and agriculture create barriers in expanding primary education among the tribal areas.
6. The non-tribal teachers adopt an attitude of indifference to tribal languages, traditions, cultures and life-styles. They fail to

perceive the human values ingrained in these folk cultures. When they try to impart an education which neglects these human values and culture, they fail to make it interesting for the tribal children.

7. The ideas of the non-tribal teachers about tribal environment and culture is narrow and hollow. For this they fail to cite examples from the surroundings and make the concepts complicated for the tribal students. The in built creativity of tribal children remains unknown to the teachers.
8. Teachers face wide gulf between the language used in the books and the native uses while teaching the tribal students. They simply opine that the content of the text books is beyond the comprehension of the students, so teaching becomes futile.
9. No special training on tribal languages, cultures or current problems is being imparted to the teachers serving in tribal areas.
10. Children's engagement in household works agriculture coupled with parent's indifference towards their children's studies deprive the teachers to render their services in the classroom.
11. No effort is made on the part of the higher authorities and the tribal masses to curb the frequent absenteeism among the teachers. The lack of a frequent and recurrent inspection mechanism no doubt aggravates the situation.

Tribal Students

The survey conducted in Koraput and Kalahandi districts shows that only 12% to 30% tribal children attend the school. The reasons for this mass non-attendance are as follows:-

1. Helping parents at home.
2. Discharging sibling care responsibilities.
3. No positive environment or inspiration for students at home.
4. School environment is uncomfortable and horrifying.
5. Teachers inflict heavy punishment and do not help in studies.
6. No regular supply of study materials.
7. Parents have migrated from the village to earn their livelihood because of drought or other natural calamities.
8. Teachers do not bother whether the child comprehends the teaching or not.
9. The content and language of the primers are beyond the

comprehensive ability of the tribal children. They don't find any example or experience of their environment in the books.

10. No health care facilities for the children suffering from malaria, skin diseases and anaemia.
11. Children contribute their physical power to supplement the family income.
12. The school timings hamper the routine household work of the tribal children.

Teaching Learning Materials

Even if cultural differences are marked on regional basis in the state of Orissa, the Government has prescribed uniform primers at primary school stage. Among the 62 tribes found in the state, 25 tribes have their own language and for them Oriya language appears to be an alien language.

Even though the National Education Policy has insisted on teaching the children in their mother tongues at the primary level, this has not been implemented for the tribals. The educationists have thoroughly neglected the tribal language and culture and have ignored the problems of tribal children while framing books for them.

So far as study materials are concerned, the following problems came to light:

1. The language used in the books are beyond the understanding of the tribal children.
2. Sometimes the local teachers also get swayed way by the bookish language and don't try to communicate in the tribal languages. As a result teaching seems to be artificial for the tribal children.
3. The contents of the primary school books are less practice oriented and are more factual and abstract.
4. Teaching at primary schools ignore the local nature, culture and environment.
5. There is dearth of study materials and kits in the class rooms.
6. The kits that have been provided to the schools under the Operation Black Board Scheme are not properly utilised by the teachers.
7. Books are not supplied to the schools at the session beginning by the Tribal Welfare Department and the Text Book Press. This irregularity found in the supply of books creates problems both for the teachers and students. Further, stipends are not given in

due time.

8. Further school fails to work out the idea of utilising the services of the local architects, painters and artists at a low cost to prepare some of the educational kits for the children.
9. If given scope the children can build up their own museum.

Condition of Primary Schools

1. The school buildings are in broken condition and hence not attractive.
2. Lack of care and repair makes it difficult to sit in the collapsing class rooms.
3. Children of 2/3 classes are accommodated in a single class room.
4. Neither the villagers nor the VEC take any active interest to preserve and protect the school building. They preserve the impression that it is the Government outlook and not theirs.
5. No accommodation arrangement is being made for teachers either in the school or in the village.
6. The tribal habitations remain in scattered forms. So, they don't fulfill the needs of the required amount of child population to open a school within 1 km. radius. So, in the tribal areas schools remain far away from the habitations.
7. The number of Ashram schools is scanty. Ashram schools are best fitted for the tribal children.
8. In the primary schools, no effort is made to provide incentives and scope to music, dance, games, paintings, etc. which remain as latent potentialities with a child.
9. In a school, a tribal child undergoes mental stress and strain. A fear free environment is required for their proper development.
10. Physical barriers and communication difficulties also keep the tribal children away from the schools.

Lack of Inspection

1. School inspectors (at the block and district level) are not active in solving problems associated with the primary schools in the tribal areas.
2. The surveys bring to notice that the block level inspectors have not inspected all the schools in their areas.

3. Inspectors do not provide equal importance to the schools of hill areas as they give to the schools of plain areas.
4. The tribal teachers remain indifferent to tribal education. They are also marked with some mental stress.
5. The non-tribal teachers adopt an apathetic attitude towards tribal school management.

Social and Cultural Problems

The community life, the economy, the life style, the traditions of the tribals and their outlook of the world is totally unique. All these have got their humanitarian values and cultural significance. But they have not found recognition in the ideas of local inspectors, teachers, parents and policy planners. The root cause of this can be attributed to the stratification system and the tribal and non-tribal attitude. Thus, a strong consciousness and pro-tribal attitude have not been built up among the people. The NGOs have no doubt taken some steps in this area. But how far the efforts of the NGOs will be successful in changing the institutionalised practices of society is still doubtful. The greatest problem is, the tribals have come to recognize the modernization and the demands of time. But they are not coming forward to bring reforms in the educational status and economic standards. Now a strong campaign is needed for this. The voluntary agencies should try to launch this campaign on a long term basis with constructive ideas.

STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION

Physical Location of the Villages

1. A realistic survey should be made in the tribal areas as regards how many children are not coming to schools and about the actual number of schools required.
2. To open up NFE centres in those villages, where there is no school at all.
3. To open up more number of Ashram schools.
4. School buildings having atleast 2/3 rooms should be opened up.
5. To open up pre-school centres.
6. To install tube wells near the schools.
7. To make provisions for toilets.
8. To provide accomodation facilities for the teachers.
9. The school timings in the tribal areas should be fixed keeping

in harmony with their MFP collection and agricultural seasons, school timings should be changed at the block level. The holiday patterns should be changed accordingly keeping in view the cultivation period/MFP collection seasons.

To Increase the Potentialities of the Teachers

1. The teachers should be associated with the day-to-day life-style of the villagers.
2. To provide residential accommodation for the teachers.
3. To enhance the relationship between teachers and students.
4. To appoint trained young teachers in tribal areas.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

A. To organise gram sabhas by summoning the panch, die villagers and their leaders.

B. To identifying the issues involved in education & to sort out their solution from the people.

C To make the parents understand the values of education through literacy campaigns.

D. To associate the villagers in the various cultural functions (Pujas, national celebrations, children's fairs, meetings).

E. The parents should also invite the teachers to join in the various festivals organised in the villages.

E The educational and the developmental responsibilities of the school should be entrusted to the villagers.

G. To organise Mahila Samities to increase literacy among the women and to enhance the attendance rate among the girls.

5. The training programmes for teachers should highlight more of tribal problems.
6. Consciousness should be created among the VEC members and parents to check teacher's absenteeism.
7. Special incentives and allowance should be provided to the teachers working in tribal areas. They should be transferred to plain areas after serving 3/4 years in tribal areas.
8. Special training to tribal teachers and special coaching to tribal students.

9. The teachers should have knowledge about the tribal environment and local tradition.
10. The teachers should be given tribal language training. The Academy of tribal Dialect and Culture, Bhubneswar is imparting a tribal language programme.
11. Social source book for teachers may be prepared to develop the tribal knowledge such as folk songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, play songs, traditional games, dance, music etc. to impart joy of learning through the folklore and bridge the gap of home culture and school atmosphere.
12. The teachers should use the colloquial native language while teaching the tribal children.
13. The school time table be co-opted with the agricultural and social necessities, which will facilitate the parents in economic development and educational development of the child.

Tribal Students

In order to bring the children of 6-14 age groups to the pale of primary education, the following measures are to be taken:

1. To open up ECCE centres in tribal villages.
2. To open up NFE centres (where there are no schools).
3. The teachers should establish a healthy rapport with the tribal students and create a positive environment for them.
4. The authorities should take care to supply the books at the proper time.
5. The parents should provide scope to their children to learn their lessons at home.
6. Instead of teaching the students about world view or national issues, ample scope should be given to them for local visits.
7. To provide free of cost health services.
8. To keep harmony between school timings and daily routine work and agricultural work.
9. The teachers should command love and affection from the students.
10. The children should organise their traditional games, folk dance and music in the schools.

Study Materials and Books

1. The study materials needed for class room teaching should be provided in time. The materials and the textbooks provided under Operation Black Board Schemes and Welfare Department should be properly utilised. Services of the local architect, painters, artists should be utilised to build up required study materials.
2. Preparation of the text books and supplementary readers: The text books should be based on the traditional knowledge and folklore of the tribals. The Chart on page 287 shows the linkage that can be established between the tribal folklore and MLL text books.

Conditions of the Educational Institutions

1. More number of residential ashram schools are to be opened in tribal areas.
2. Constructing houses for the teachers.
3. VEC to take up the responsibilities of the school.
4. To open NFE Centres in the scattered tribal habitations.
5. To decorate the classrooms with the art of tribal girls.
6. To increase dignity of labour in the minds of the children by creating green gardens in the school compound.

Social and Cultural Issues

Communal life forms a basic parameter of the tribal society. It finds manifestation through the various festivals and cultural celebrations. If the teachers can participate in these occasions by giving due regards to the tribal culture, then they can build up a good educational centre in the village. In the tribal village, the teacher should be a learner, more specifically a 'seeker' of local knowledge from the tribal culture, which would ultimately turn into a global knowledge. The oral tradition in teaching must be an important device to develop the personality of a tribal child from its own cultural environment, instead of creating an artificial blurred personality dissociated with home and school environment. To bridge the gap of the socio-cultural environment with that of the school curriculum exploration of rich tribal folklore can be helpful in the promotion of tribal education.

