

Multicultural Education: A Way forward for Promoting Educational Status of Scheduled Tribes

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Abstract

India has largest Scheduled Tribe population in the world. In India north and central part are dominated by Scheduled Tribe population. Education is the only catalyst for the upliftment of this oppressed tribe. But most of the schools do not blend well into the tribal environment, fails to inculcate the tribal culture and also fails to provide appropriate pedagogy, appropriate medium of instruction, provide less motivation and less opportunity to think freely. For these reasons the teachers, curriculum and other teaching-learning process face lots of challenges for education of tribes. In this context different dimensions of multicultural education can be maintained for the educational development of those tribal students. Multicultural education is an approach which is an important concept for reforming school and also helps to promote educational equity for the students coming from different background. Through multicultural education social justice can be promoted. In this paper the researchers try to know the educational status of Scheduled Tribes in India with highlighting the challenges faced by them in education system and lastly focus on the role of different dimensions of multicultural education for promoting educational status of Scheduled Tribe.

Keywords: Scheduled Tribe, Educational Status, Multicultural Education.

Introduction

India is a country where different groups of people from various linguistic, socio-cultural, racial backgrounds live in a single nest irrespective of their caste, class, race, religion etc. Scheduled Tribe population is one of them and India has largest Scheduled Tribe population in the world. In India north and central part are dominated by Scheduled Tribe population. Education is the only catalyst for the upliftment of this oppressed tribe in educational background. It is found that the degree of level of educational development of the Scheduled Tribe is quite uneven within different states. The states in north eastern India like Mizoram,

Nagaland and Meghalaya are educationally developed states. On the other hand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have larger number of tribal population; literacy status is very low in these states than the north eastern region. It is very serious concern that relative to majority of population the educational status of tribes is very discouraging. According to 2011 census literacy among Scheduled tribe (58.96%) is less than the national average (74%). Though government makes their sincere effort for the educational development of ST through different schemes in school level, but there is a huge gap between policy planning and its implementation in most of the states of India. Most of the schools do not proper content integration taking into consideration tribal environment; school culture is not also based on tribal cultural context, appropriate pedagogy also not followed for their proper education, medium of instruction also not in mother tongue which is the main factors for educational backwardness of these tribal students.

In this context different dimensions of multicultural education can be effective for the educational development of those tribal students. Multicultural education is an approach which is an important concept for reforming school and also helps to promote educational equity for the students coming from different background. Through multicultural education social justice can be promoted. Reconstruction of school culture is one of the vital goals of multicultural education so that students coming from different backgrounds can get equal chance for their proper learning. School curriculum, textbooks, medium of instruction reflects the inequality that exists in a society. With the help of this multicultural education school can be restructure so that tribal students can acquire knowledge in diverse classroom.

Five dimensions of multicultural education by James A. Banks

James A. Banks developed the concept of five dimension of multicultural education in the year of 2004, which are content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school culture. The concept of each dimension is different from other but they are overlapped or interrelated while practicing.

Content integration means dealing with variety of contents from different cultures into the main subject area to teach various key concepts, theories and principles of main subject area. This content integration should be logical.

The knowledge construction process describes teaching exercises that allow students to figure out how cultural assumptions, researchers' prejudices and writers of textbooks have an impact on construction of knowledge. This can change the way on which students and teachers interact and view the knowledge. It helps student to become a knowledge producer not merely knowledge consumer. According to various multicultural theorists, no information exists that is not affected by cultural assumptions.

The prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education mainly helps students to develop democratic racial attitudes. It is helpful for students to grow understanding how

context of schooling and the attitude and beliefs of dominant groups influenced upon ethnic identity.

An equity pedagogy means when teacher modify her/his teaching which will foster academic achievement of the diverse group of students. While using equity pedagogy teachers can use variety of teaching approaches and style. Co- operative techniques of teaching is also used here. The teacher should be culturally responsive while using equity pedagogy. Culturally responsive teachers also use the “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010).

An empowering school culture means to restructure the different cultural dimensions of a school so that students from diverse groups can treated equally. All the stakeholders of a school can change the school culture and make it more conducive for the students coming from different background. To create empowering school culture relationship among various groups coming from different cultural background is an important aspect. Different goals, norms and even on cultural practices reflect in this relationship. An empowering school culture makes teachers to reform their planning and instruction while teaching. Shared responsibility to all the stakeholders may be more accepted features for empowering school culture.

Objectives

In tune with the above spelt context the main objectives of the research are-

- To know the educational status of Scheduled Tribe population in India.
- To highlight the challenges faced by the Scheduled Tribe in their education system.
- To focus on the role of different dimensions of multicultural education for promoting educational status of Scheduled Tribe.

Methodology

This paper is prepared on the basis of secondary data like literacy rate of Scheduled Tribe, learning outcome, percentage of students with medium of instruction of study English or same as that of language spoken at home for different levels of attendance and relates these with learning achievement and the dropout rate of Scheduled Tribe. Researchers also go through some national and international journal related to multicultural education and tribal education of India to explore the educational status and challenges faced by tribe and how it can be overcome using different dimensions of multicultural education.

Educational status related to teaching-learning process of Scheduled Tribe

In this section researchers try to show some statistical table to shed a light upon educational status of Scheduled Tribes. To know the existing status of Scheduled Tribe students the

researcher will observe the literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio and dropout rates of Scheduled Tribe students and their comparison with rest of the general students. The lack of proper medium of instruction lead to poor learning outcome as well as higher dropout rate of these tribal students than the rest of others students belonging to Scheduled Caste and general category.

Comparative literacy rate

Table 1. Comparative literacy rate of all social group and Scheduled Tribe (in Percentage)

Census Year Social group	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
All social group	28.3	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99
ST	8.53	11.3	16.35	29.6	47.1	58.96
Gap	19.77	18.15	19.88	22.61	18.28	14.03

Source: census data (1961-2011)

For the Scheduled Tribe in India literacy rate increased from 8.53% in 1961 to 58.96% in 2011. While the corresponding increases of all social group was from 28.30% in 1961 to 72.99% in 2011. If we look at the above table it is clear that the gap of literacy rate of Scheduled Tribe compared to all social group always remain more or less 15% or above. This gap clearly indicates the low literacy trend of ST compare to the all social group.

States having literacy rates less than national average

Table 2. States having literacy rates less than national average for Scheduled Tribe

Sl. No.	State/UT	Literacy Rate
	India	58.96
1	Andhra Pradesh	49.2
2	Madhya Pradesh	50.6
3	Jammu and Kashmir	50.6
4	Bihar	51.1
5	Orissa	52.2
6	Rajasthan	52.8
7	Tamil Nadu	54.3
8	Uttar Pradesh	55.7
9	Jharkhand	57.1
10	West Bengal	57.9

Source: Census 2011

The above table depicts that 10 states, as per 2011 census, have a literacy rate lower than the national average of 58.96 percent for the Scheduled Tribe population. About 34 percent among the total tribal states is under the national average literacy rate. Which means that their literacy rate remains low compared to the national average, despite Government efforts to promote education among the Scheduled Tribe.

Students with medium of instruction of study English or same as that of language spoken at home for different levels of attendance

Table 3. Percentage of students with medium of instruction of study English or same as that of language spoken at home for different levels of attendance

Language mainly spoken at home	Percentage of students	Primary		Upper primary		Secondary		Higher secondary	
		Medium of instruction							
		same as that spoken in home	English	same as that spoken in home	English	same as that spoken in home	English	same as that spoken in home	English
Hindi	46.6	79.1	18.3	81.5	15.4	83.6	14.1	81.5	17.5
English	0.2	65.5	-	81.5	-	86.4	-	83.3	-
Bengali	7.9	80.1	6.5	86.9	3.9	87.5	5.0	86.0	7.3
Bodo	0.1	37.3	10.4	37.3	6.3	47.6	10.4	-	28.1
Dogri	0.2	0.2	84.4	-	76.0	-	85.6	-	96.2
Santhali	0.4	-	1.4	-	1.5	-	6.3	-	8.5

Source: NSSO, 71st round (2014)

From the above data it is clear that there is lack of schools in primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary where tribal language is used as a medium of instruction. The percentage of use of Bodo language is high than the Dogri or Santhali. But any of the tribal language is not used as a medium of instruction in higher secondary stage. Dogri used as a medium of instruction in primary schools in only 0.2 percent schools. Santhali is not used as a medium of instruction to any of the school stage. On the other hand Hindi, English and Bengali are used as a medium of instruction above 80 percent of the schools.

Learning outcome

Table 4. Class X exam result

Gender Social group	Boys	Girls
Gen.	86.05	87.3
SC	76.63	77.28
ST	69.65	67.38
OBC	81.23	82.77

Source: U-DISE 2014-15

Learning outcome is the important indicator to know the educational progress of any students. If we observe the above table it is clear that class X result of Scheduled Tribes is very low among all social groups. The result of girl tribal students is lower than the boys' students. That means the tribal students are lagging behind than the other category students. Their learning achievement is low due to lack of appropriate pedagogy while conducting

teaching-learning in classroom, lack of proper curriculum and also not using mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Average annual dropout rate

Table 5. Average annual dropout rate of Scheduled Tribe and general category student in Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary classes

Class	Boys		Girls		Total		
	ST	All	ST	All	ST	All	Gap
Primary	7.02	4.36	6.84	3.88	6.93	4.13	2.8
Upper primary	8.48	3.49	8.71	4.6	8.59	4.03	4.56
Secondary	24.9	17.2	24.4	16.9	24.68	17.06	7.62

Source: Data Source: For School Education: National University of Educational Planning & Administration, (2014-15) New Delhi (website: <http://dise.in/>)

The dropout rate among Scheduled Tribe students are increasing class wise. In primary stage the average dropout rate is 6.93 which are increases in upper primary stage that is 8.59. But the average dropout rates among Scheduled Tribe are drastically high in secondary stage which is 24.68. On the other hand the average dropout rate of all category is not high like Scheduled Tribe. The gap between Scheduled Tribe and all categories is gradually increases as per class. In primary classes the gap is 2.8, in upper primary classes it is 4.56 but it drastically increases in secondary classes which is 7.62.

Challenges faced by the Scheduled Tribe in education

Though Government has taken step forward to improve educational status of Scheduled Tribe (Daripa, 2017), but from the above discussion it is clear that the educational status of Scheduled Tribe is not up to the mark as compared to other social groups. They are lagging behind in terms of learning achievement. The dropout rate among Scheduled Tribe is also high than the rest of the people. Why these people are lagging behind in terms of education need to be addressed. There are many dynamics factors related to the educational status which create discrepancy in the education system of Scheduled Tribe. Some of these challenges are described in this section.

Lack of culturally responsive pedagogy

Researches resulted that most of the teachers showed less exposure to the tribal culture. They are not aware about uniqueness of the tribes' cultural pattern. These are affecting their teaching learning process. So in schools where tribal students are enrolled, there is lack of culturally appropriate pedagogy which does not use the language and different cultural aspects of tribes that has impact on students' identity formation. For make the learning more appropriate one teacher should use culturally appropriate teaching. It gives value to the cultural knowledge and also diverse needs of the students; it accepts the strengths of the

students while teaching (Gay, 2010). But due to lack of culturally responsive pedagogy, tribal students are less accountable for reflective thinking (Pradhan, 2015).

Communication gap in classroom teaching

Wells notes that ‘the relationship between teacher and learner must at every stage of development be collaborative....an attempt to negotiate shared meanings and understanding’ (Wells 1985:39) (quoted by Nambissan 1994:2752). The language used as a medium of instruction in classroom has a great impact on students’ acquisition of knowledge of any subject (Sahu, 2014). Classroom interaction determines students’ enrolment and dropout rates. Classroom interaction mainly depends on interaction between students and teachers. Effective communication is basic requirement for the benefit of both students and teachers in teaching learning process. But in tribal classroom it is striking aspect that there is a huge communication gap between tribal students and non tribal teachers in most of the schools in India. For this communication gap teacher fail to facilitate any significant and affirmative action to the tribal students.

Lack of proper curriculum

The curriculum for educating tribal students is not framed as per their relevant cultural context though The National Curriculum Framework 2005 recommends to put importance to local cultural while making textbooks. Nambissan (2013) has rightly pointed out that though there is a provision of NCF 2005 that the curriculum should be developed by taking into consideration of tribal culture means local context but most of the schools follow mainstream. There is mismatch between children’s respective environments and the curriculum. So this is forcing them to move out from the school. They are afraid of to lose their dignity of their culture and identity.

Lack of script in tribal language

Language without script has no place in education system. Appropriate teaching learning is not possible due to lack of script in tribal languages. As a result tribal children started lagging behind in education. In India, until very recent times most of the tribal languages are unwritten, they don’t have script of their own and also officially unrecognized. Some languages are treated as dialects. Some claim that it requires high cost for developing literature and curriculum in tribal language. So due to lack of script in tribal language textbook are not prepared based on these languages.

Lack of textbooks in local language

The textbook followed in the schools mostly dominated by the state language. Tribal children tend to speak in their home language. They have limited contact with the state language. The language used in the textbooks the tribal students is incompatible with it which is discussed in literatures (Nanjunda 2008; Apte and Lama 2008; Dessai and Kulkarni 2008) (quoted in

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies 2016:56). For that reason they are faced problem while acquainted with classroom teaching learning process and also with the texts used in textbooks.

Gap between school and family culture

In teaching learning process the gap between school and family culture become hurdle for the students to understand the school culture. The home culture does not provide any conducive environment for proper learning (Haseena & Mohammed, 2014). Though school culture attracts the students for academic work but on the other hand family culture discourages them. This is one of the important causes for underperformance in the school. It is very difficult for teachers to follow a meaningful pedagogy for the tribal students which can meet the gap between home culture and family culture.

Role of different dimensions of multicultural education for promoting educational status of Scheduled Tribes

Five dimensions of multicultural education which are discussed previously would be the base for promoting multicultural education for any schools. These five dimensions are more or less equally important for promoting educational status of Scheduled Tribe. Multicultural education is a movement for equality and social justice. In the previous section ‘educational status of Scheduled Tribe’ it is clearly observed that educational inequality prevails in many context of educating Scheduled Tribe. So, in this section researcher mainly shed light upon the role of different dimensions of multicultural education for promoting educational status of Scheduled Tribes in India.

Content integration

Education of Tribes can be developed through the content integration which is one of the major components of multicultural education. Curriculum should be more inclusive for teaching tribal students. Curriculum should represent tribal culture (Purshottam & Dhingra, 2017). Many time celebration of different cultural festivals is the main cause of prolonged absenteeism of the students in school (Sujatha, 2016). Curriculum should be based on different themes related with tribal life. Extracurricular activities also needed for the overall development of those children. While making annual schedule vacation and holidays should cater with tribal festivals. Folk culture is the heart of tribal culture which can be included for enriching the curriculum. Sports like archery, football and other popular local sports in extracurricular activities should be beneficial for reducing drop outs (Brahmanandam & Bosu, 2016).

The knowledge construction process

One of the major constraints in tribal education system is the dual system of administration. One is tribal welfare department and another one is education department. Tribal welfare

department mainly deals with the welfare of tribal life including education. But there is lack of educational expertise in this department. On the other hand educational department mainly deals with all plans and programmes of their educational development. So, there is domination of educational department prevails in textbooks and curriculum of tribes. These biases become hindrances in knowledge construction of tribal children. But school must change the concept and tries to help the students to learn through reflective thinking. That knowledge may boost them to think about their own society (Mahapatra, 2010).

Prejudice reduction

Teacher who teach in tribal areas have their own biases regarding tribal culture. These biases are reflecting while teaching in the classroom. Most of the teachers are outside the tribal tracks so they have less exposure about tribal culture (Maharana & Behera, 2018). In order to eliminate these biases the teacher should familiarize themselves with tribal culture with the help of short orientation programme before joining in the school (Sujatha, 2016). For construct biasfree knowledge, tribal teachers can be recruited in schools.

An equity pedagogy

The teacher should be culturally responsive while teaching the tribal students. Equity pedagogy makes tribal students an active citizen of a democratic country. The teacher should be familiar with the tribal culture. S/he should citing examples while teach in class. In Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, Multilingual Education (MLE) has been implemented. Though there are many constraints for implementing MLE but if proper steps can be taken to implement this programme it will remove problems related to language issues while teaching. The acceptance of MLE programmes also energies equity pedagogy for the tribal students.

An empowering school culture

School culture should promote equity to all the students coming from diverse background. When tribal student go to school first time they are only familiar with their mother tongue. There is a huge gap between the language which is used in school and home. So, if possible introduction of tribal language as a medium of instruction mainly in primary stage in any school culture of tribal areas may helpful for their learning. Supplement of teaching material should be done which will relevant for tribal students. The school building made in tribal areas also should take into consideration of their local weather context (Sujatha, 2016). In most of the tribal areas the habitations are small in size, infrastructure, number and quality of teacher is an issue there. So there may be an alternative by establishing residential school or school complex for those tribal students. Last but not the least annual school calendar should be based on the local and cultural context of tribal areas.

Conclusion

There are two types of concept existing in the education system of tribes in India; one is 'tribal education' and another one is 'development of education among tribes'. Tribal education mainly deals with cultural tradition of tribal life. On the other hand formal education deals with development of education among tribes. So there are two contrasting views which are existing. To have a tribal education there should be school in tune with the tribal culture for example ashram school, Eklavya School etc. Different policy programmes take initiate for the development of tribal education in India. There is a policy provisions for recruiting local tribal group as a teacher in tribal areas. Also there is cultural specific orientation for non-tribal teachers who posted in tribal areas. There is large number of tribal areas where there is a conflict zone for different movement. So promoting education is very difficult task in those areas. In this context the different dimensions of multicultural education may promote educational development of Scheduled Tribes in India. At broader level attempt should be needed to more on inclusion of tribal children and retaining their cultural aspects instead of fully integrating or assimilating them into formal education. Tribes have their own unique indigenous knowledge in terms of health, natural resource management, disaster management, craft etc. Somehow in formal education these things do not find place. With the help of content integration these things should be documented. The only change in the education of tribes is in access but not much in quality. So, there is need to major shift in policy document which focus on quality aspects as well as curriculum by taking into account uniqueness of tribal culture.

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